DIOARAMAS OF THE SUBLIME: PSEUDONATURE AND FADING FEMININITY IN AMERICAN LITERARY NATURALISM

by

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ABSTRACT

The study of American literary naturalism frequently relies on a handful of defining characteristics—plots of decline, aesthetic realism, and an emphasis on the deterministic forces beyond human control, to name a few. These characteristics often play out against the backdrop of late nineteenth-century urban settings fraught with the anxiety of a recently industrialized culture on the brink of modernism, and scholarship on naturalism tends to focus on the city. However, the emergence of pseudonatural spaces—areas of cultivated organic aesthetic such as parks or gardens—within that city setting has not been explored. Drawing on relevant ecocritical, psychoanalytical, and feminist theory, this project examines the depiction of these spaces in American literary naturalism and argues that representations of pseudonature emerge as a result of a unique overlap of cultural forces and reveal a new set of anxieties about the arrangement of the modern world. Chapter I introduces the concept of pseudonature and works toward both a definition for the material space of pseudonature and an understanding of the historical/cultural context into which this iteration of "Nature" emerges. Chapter II performs a close-reading of the pseudonature in three primary texts—Stephen Crane's *Maggie* (1893), Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* (1900), and Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth* (1905)—through an affective ecocritical lens, focusing on the transcorporeal relationship between pseudonature and the female characters with which pseudonatural spaces are closely associated. Chapter III provides a psychoanalytic account of pseudonature, with a sustained reading of Frank Norris's *McTeague* (1899) in the context of the Mark Seltzer's "body-machine complex" outlined in *Bodies and Machines* (1992). This chapter combines psychoanalysis with feminist geography in order to explore the

psychological implications of built spaces in the texts as reflective of human forms. Chapter IV applies the "body-machine complex" to the female bodies in these novels and explores the commodification of the female body through the lens of Stacy Alaimo's concept of "toxic bodies" in *Material Feminisms* (2008), extending that commodification to the body of pseudonature with which the female form is linked. The final chapter makes a case for the scope of pseudonature in American art since this period and concludes with a reflection on how this project complicates an understanding of naturalism which has relied on complacent notions of inevitability in forces of culture.

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CHAPTER I: DEFINING PSEUDONATURE

An Exercise in Symbolism

Consider the golf course. The scene is this: well-to-do middle-aged white men possessing a homogeneity of privilege set about for a day of leisure characterized by several crucial characteristics. The outing is spurred by a need to disrupt the routine of a busy working man, to get outside without the risk of encountering any actual wilderness, and to ensure a safe return to the life lived beyond the green.

The course is emblematic of the natural, yet it is usually inhabited by those who experience an urban lifestyle, or at least a civilized one. The land itself is a contained space marked by the outdoors but lacking the authenticity of being "natural." It has been divvied, plotted, pared down into manageable, or perhaps conquerable, chunks. The markers at each of the 18 holes might as well be the flags of an ambitious surveyor. The space offers a facsimile of the natural in what is in fact an elaborately orchestrated imitation of nature, one that requires massive upkeep, one that invites the use of vehicles (golf carts) to navigate it, one that we might most closely associate with businessmen taking a day off, or worse — conducting an open-air business meeting, allowing the outdoors to become a continuation of the boardroom. It is an arena for them to engage in a pseudo-escape within a manmade imitation of nature that is in fact part and particle of the system in which their lives operate.

And that is to say nothing of what happens once these men enter the pseudoescape. Armed with vehicles, caddies, equipment and all the proper attire, the

upper echelon of the patriarchy set about slinging clubs all over this fertile landscape, trying desperately to sink the ball into all available openings. (To offer the description of phallic seems insultingly obvious.) The holes themselves are almost as comically womblike, dark spaces hidden in the folds of a feminized landscape, waiting to be entered and thus conquered.

This somewhat heightened symbolic reading of the golf course might seem a far cry from relevant to a critique of American literary naturalism, which serves as the focus for this project, but it functions to drive, pun intended, the ultimate point home. Certainly, the golf course offers an on-the-nose, if not exaggerated, example of these moving metaphorical parts, but this example also serves to clarify the spatial reading that this project seeks to perform upon similarly sanitized and constructed pseudonatural spaces which we canonically associate with late nineteenth-century American literary naturalism. And historically speaking, the example of the golf course is not as removed as one might assume from the novels of American literary naturalism with which this dissertation largely deals.

The golf course became a staple of American culture in the period of turnover between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, more specifically between the 1880s and America's participation in World War I, as George B. Kirsch notes in his 2009 social history of the sport, *Golf In America* (2). Thus, the peak of the nation's fascination with the golf course coincides almost exactly with the chronological bookends within which

we traditionally situate the movement of American literary naturalism.[1] We might venture, then, to claim that the two possess potentially related reflections of cultural fixations of the era by the mere coincidence of their existence. Some of the shared anxieties in question are those inherent to a newly industrialized society, calling for a new navigation of the landscape, shifting social dynamics between men and the "New Woman," and an evolving consumer culture, all of which we might simultaneously read as emerging in both naturalist texts and the advent of the golf course.

The golf craze, as Kirsch would have it, swept the East Coast during the 1890s (5) due to a unique combination of the enthusiasm of Scottish immigrants and, much more crucially, the changing American attitudes toward work and leisure, the economic mobility that accommodated those changes, and the emerging growth of suburbs, which allowed the physical space (and perhaps the boredom) necessary to carve out places in the evolving American living community for golf courses (8). Kirsch points out that the advent of the golf course coincides with the emerging suburb culture (or lack thereof), a process he refers to as "residential decentralization," indicating that the demographic responsible for popularizing golf was the same demographic experiencing enough financial comfort to buy into the mythology of the American dream and haul it to the suburbs (10). All of this to say, the golfing fad was one that became almost

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[1] The phenomenon of American literary naturalism, of course, extends beyond these finite chronological boundaries, and we may read inklings of naturalist sensibility prior to the 1880s as well as later evolutions of naturalism in the years beyond World War I. This project focuses primarily on this time period, however, because it is considered the heyday of naturalism in American literature, a period during which naturalism was uniquely centered in the American literary consciousness, and therefore uniquely reflective of larger cultural concerns being dealt with in literary art.

instantaneously associated with economic and social privilege, despite Kirsch's rallying cry that the public golf course, especially, welcomed a slew of marginalized groups to its democratized grounds.

In fact, the lengths to which Kirsch must go (including budget-crunching and calculating male to female golfer ratio) to rebuff the stereotypical associations of wealth and masculine privilege with the golf course only serve to reinforce the pervasiveness of the sense that golf was the new trend for rich white men who could afford the day off. Kirsch quotes an early twentieth century American historian, William Garrott Brown, writing in 1905, "'Empire, trusts, and golf — these are the new things in American life'" (qtd. in Kirsch 1). Almost a hundred years later, Wendell Berry writes that golf is a "purely consumptive" activity for "executives" whose physical lives are artificial in light of their purely mental work (57). (Sounds about right.) What's more, the very notion of hitting the links was branded from the get-go as a method of restoration for this very demographic, the hard working American capitalist whose time in the dirty, hectic urban business center called for a restorative foray into nature (17). Kirsch notes that the game flourished in part because of a widespread belief among a certain social class that "the game was beneficial to the players' health, spirit, and nerves" (17). In 1905, the editor of *Golf* magazine called it a "revivifier"; Brown himself described it as a "method of returning to nature" (qtd. in Kirsch 18). Crucially, though, the early twentieth century voices of the golf community also acknowledged that the game of golf was a game of self-reliance, a struggle of the individual over the challenges presented by nature, not each other (19). The presence of privileged and powerful men, shoulders ripe for the rubbing, is secondary to the microcosmic, video-game version of the triumph of the

rugged American individual over challenging terrain which the golf course presents to a handful of very lucky gentlemen with eyes on the horizon for new conquests.

This exercise in symbolism is not for its own sake. One only has to revisit the opening lines of William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), which describe a busy golf course through Benjy's eyes — "Through the fence, between the curling flower spaces, I could see them hitting" (23) — to acknowledge a possible sexual innuendo inherent in a game that involves hitting so many balls into so many holes. I do not begin with the golf course as chosen exemplar because of any singularity of the philosophy it suggests in its creators toward land, man, or nature. Rather, it serves as exemplar because it is perhaps the most obvious example of the phenomenon to which forthcoming analysis of other constructed pseudonatural spaces refers. It is the work of applying the symbolics of the golf course onto other, similar spaces of manufactured organic aesthetic — specifically the urban parks and gardens that recur in novels of American literary naturalism — which reflect similar patriarchal American values in more insidious, and thus perhaps more harmful, ways that this project undertakes. The golf course reading crystallizes the components necessary to perform a psychoanalytic reading of these spaces of pseudonature[2] within canonical works of naturalism. This somewhat crass reading of the golf course illustrates a complicated overlap of hegemonic cultural forces and the pseudonatural enclaves constructed within that culture. It is this overlap which

[2] The term *pseudonature* will be defined as it functions within this project in coming sections, but may be succinctly understood as a category for spaces constructed within otherwise "civilized" areas in imitation of nature and its organic aesthetic.

my project examines through reading these spaces in similar terms as this comparatively tongue-in-cheek reading of the golf course.

The Prequel to the Golf Course: A Quick Study in American Wilderness

The phenomenon of the emerging golf course culture of the 1890s did not manifest in a vacuum. Before the phenomenon of pseudonature can be thoroughly unpacked, it is necessary to first examine the tradition of discourse surrounding nature, and the writing about nature from which this phenomenon springs. The conversation surrounding what an industrialized American attitude toward nature might be had been percolating for the better part of the nineteenth century, and the advent of American golf culture might be read as a mere side effect to the attendant sensibility that man needed encounters with nature to be healthy and well-rounded. It is perhaps this sensibility, in the wake of a century fixated on ideas of progress, that ultimately gives way to the impulse toward creating public parks: little pockets of nature that serve as a source for that coveted spiritual restoration.

From the earliest days of the American experiment, a dichotomous idea of what constituted "wilderness" informed the American orientation to land and nature. The juxtapositions of nature and culture became defined in terms of the Puritan work ethic driving settlers of the colonial era to the land of the free in the first place. A history of the conception of nature expressed by those early Americans reveals an orientation toward wilderness as hostile, uncertain, and in need of cultivation. In *Wilderness and the American Mind* (1967), Roderick Nash explores some of the universality of the early

settlers' experience of wilderness, citing wilderness symbolism in the Judeo-Christian tradition as emblematic of all that is alien to man — "an insecure and uncomfortable environment against which civilization had waged an unceasing struggle" (8). Within this schema, wilderness poses a threat to survival, a threat against which man must measure his own progress, and out of this relationship to nature springs the "conception of the earthly paradise," most notably visible in the mythology of the Garden of Eden (8). Paradise, then, is the state of existence achieved when the adversary of nature has been conquered in the interest of civilization. Nash writes, "Under the most desirable of all conditions the living was easy and secure because nature was ordered in the interests of man" (8). Out of the myth of paradise, then, the human relation to wilderness emerges as one of combat: "Safety, happiness, and progress all seemed dependent on rising out of a wilderness situation. It became essential to gain control over nature" (9). The hostile wilderness, in this conception, is just raw material for the project of civilization, and if the mythological weight of the Garden of Eden is as an emblem of a paradisiacal ordering of nature into an environment that meets the needs and fulfills the pleasures of man, then the project of civilization also becomes the project of garden restoration, of recreating a space for human living consistent with the paradise myth. As Nash puts it, the earliest Americans gravitated toward wilderness not as their final destination, but in order "to carve a garden from the wilds" (35).

But even in the process of recreating paradise, man falls victim to the "grass is greener" mentality. As soon as the project of civilization, that project of garden restoration, comes into enough fruition to be realized as imperfect in its attempt to recreate a state of paradise, the conception of the hostile wilderness enters into a process

of reversal in response to a new sense of unease experienced by those dwelling in the city which was once that very unease's antidote. Nash describes the impetus for abandoning the "hostile" conception of wilderness as a result of the reality that "modern man feels as insecure and confused in an urban setting as he once felt in the forest among wild beasts" (3). As the industrial revolution began to take hold, and the rarity of civilization (as opposed to wilderness) dwindled, the lure of the city as foil to the unknowable wilderness began to lose its import. In humans' eternal capacity to romanticize whatever their current station is not, the appeal of nature as an escape from more civilized realms began to take hold of many an American thinker in earnest as the nineteenth century marched onward. Nash suggests that "any place in which a person feels stripped of guidance, lost, and perplexed may be called wilderness," and increasingly, it seemed, that place was no longer in nature (3).

Enter romanticism, the philosophical revolution which Isaiah Berlin describes in *The Roots of Romanticism* (1965) as "the greatest single shift in the consciousness of the West" (1). Nash describes the movement as one that defies definition "but in general it implies an enthusiasm for the strange, remote, solitary, and mysterious" (47). On the heels of European waves of romanticism, which prized the individual over the system and the mystery of nature over the certainty of civilization, America, too, found its way to a more romantic mode of intellectual attitude toward the middle of the nineteenth century. Romanticism is difficult to define in its particulars, as it is a lack of particulars which romanticism seems to prize; rather, in a deviation from the predominant rationality of the Enlightenment era which preceded it, romanticism embraced the great mysteries of the individual's internal state as well as the unknowns of the universe, and frequently turned

to chaotic, unknowable wilderness as emblem of all that remained uncharted in the realm of earthly, and human, experience. Nash notes that a new outlook was swiftly infringing upon old ways of conceiving of nature and wilderness: “With the flowering of Romanticism in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, wild country lost much of its repulsiveness. It was not that wilderness was any less solitary, mysterious, and chaotic, but rather in the new intellectual context these qualities were coveted” (44). As Nash explains, this reversal of orientation is not a reversal of the qualities projected onto the wilderness; the wilderness is as mysterious, unknowable, and spiritually complex as ever. The shift is one in philosophy from fearing those attributes as threats to the sanctity and safety of the well-ordered Puritan community to prizing those qualities of nature as they are reflected in, and experienced through, the individual human being. Instead of conceiving of the wilderness as a hostile foe to the project of civilization, the onset of romantic thought brought with it a shift toward an attitude of admiration for these vast, unknowable qualities of nature, projections of the same vast, unknowable qualities of man’s internal life with which romantic thought was frequently preoccupied.

No other quality found in wilderness was as coveted as that of the “sublime” by romantic thinkers — an affective response of the individual encountering what might be described as *big* nature, wild landscapes which dwarf the individual in comparison — and none more chronicled by the big names of English romanticism in their poetry. The sublime most probably conjures up a few lines of William Wordsworth or Percy Shelley in the far reaches of the literary mind, but at its core, the phenomenon of the sublime is one that, perhaps Wordsworth and Shelley would agree, can be experienced universally. Nash describes “sublimity” as suggestive of “the association of God and wild nature”

(46). He distinguishes “wild nature” as “the clearest medium” by which man experiences God’s works, writing, “Spiritual truths emerged most forcefully from the uninhabited landscape, whereas in cities or rural countryside man’s works were superimposed on those of God” (46). In these traditional understandings of the sublime, its import is directly tied up in nature, inextricable from the glory of the natural universe which prompts these associated feelings in the witness. However, in associating the sublime with pseudonature—a manmade creation—this connection becomes slightly more complicated. In an update to the discussion of the sublime, Lee Rozelle, in *Ecosublime* (2006), points out that while the sublime is historically *associated* with interactions with nature, it is in fact an occurrence which takes place within the psyche of the observer as a result of that interaction (4). Rozelle’s positioning of the sublime is as an interaction with place instead of exclusively with what Nash calls “wild nature.” This understanding of sublimity opens the door for an exploration of sublime interactions within spaces characterized by manmade construction, such as pseudonature, in addition to the spaces associated with wilderness.

In distinguishing between the manmade “superimpositions” and the nature upon which they exist, we get at the crux of much of the discussion of ecocriticism and the concept of environment, which is the problematic categorization of nature vs. culture. It is perhaps this false dichotomy between the two seemingly mutually exclusive realms of the naturally occurring and the manmade that allows for romanticism’s emphasis on the “spiritual truths” of nature, obscuring the reality that all which is manmade is also comprised of the materials of nature. This is perhaps the fundamental problem with which Western environmental discourse must continually grapple: the ingrained belief

that culture (that which is manmade, constructed by the individuals who comprise a society) is somehow distinct from and inherently opposed to nature and the sublimity it offers. To choose a side is to fail to understand the concept of environment as encapsulating all that is, natural and cultural, as part and particle of the same material earth. This fundamental divide, and its inherently flawed logic, will be at the core of the chapters to follow, and at present, it offers a window of understanding into the conception of the nature/culture divide that allows for the concept of the sublime to gain traction in philosophical and artistic minds of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The British romanticism of the eighteenth century would give rise to the American transcendentalism of the mid-nineteenth century, and within it the notion of sublimity, and the necessity of escaping culture to experience it, would continue to rear its head.

In *The Environmental Imagination* (1995), Lawrence Buell explains how this nature/culture divide afforded by the "canonization of nature" in romanticism allowed American culture to define itself by its own lack of culture, and ample wilderness, "converting a seemingly irreparable disadvantage (cultural underdevelopment) into an asset" (56). Against the backdrop of centuries old European civilizations, suddenly America could carve for itself, in addition to the ever-coveted garden, an identity from the wilds. The maturity which the relatively new nation lacked could be made up for in sweeping natural vistas, untapped resources in frontier landscapes, and a seemingly unending space upon which America might play out its national drama. (We might say that America became a nation defined by its space rather than its time.) In a period which also marked a communal impulse toward defining a national American literary identity, a simultaneous emphasis on nature over culture as spiritually restorative took hold of the

transcendental writers who would become fixtures in the public intellectual discourse of the era, not to mention cornerstones of American thought in the years to come. Transcendentalism, a direct descendant and proponent of romantic thought, also engaged with notions of wilderness that had experienced a reversal from an earlier Puritan distaste. The most notable figures of American transcendentalism are no doubt Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, gaining traction in the 1840s and 1850s, respectively, for their emphasis on these new tenets of the human experience: a spiritual understanding of nature and man as interconnected by a link that should be protected from those pesky "superimpositions" described by Nash. Emerson's *Nature* (1849)[3] evokes the sublime in situating nature and spirit as closer in proximity to each other than any of man's creations on the earth. Emerson emphasizes man's individual relation to nature, espousing such ideas as the "perpetual presence of the sublime" (9) in the stars above, and urging man to an awareness that "Nature is the symbol of spirit" (20). Emerson's orientation to the sublime is one that would become the foundation of transcendentalist thinking, with a particular emphasis on the values of self-reliance, solitude, and an original, individual relationship between individual men and the spiritual value of their natural surroundings, a spiritual value which categorically could not be experienced in city centers. Buell calls these ideas about nature versus culture "enabling myths" of "exurban spaces" that allow for the romantic thread of the sublime to continue to weave its way into American public discourse (56). These ideas about nature's restorative capacity allowed further entrenchment into the definitive categories of nature

[3] Emerson's *Nature* was originally published in 1836, but the text quoted here is a reprinting of the later 1849 edition, which included the *Addresses and Lectures*.

and culture, and allowed for nature to continue to be perceived by those seeking an alternative to an increasingly industrialized society as the antidote to the culture imposed upon it.

The period of societal upheaval in the mid to late nineteenth century encapsulates its own inherent irony: that the philosophical trend was one of nature-oriented, introspective, anti-establishment romanticism and the economic imperative of the day was a steady march toward full industrialization and urbanized living. In other words, it is no coincidence that the sudden onset of a desire to escape urban living for the restorative capacities of the once-"hostile" wilderness emerges in the American consciousness at around the same time that the railroad emerges upon its soil. Leo Marx notes that certain historical minds would refer to this era as the "take-off,"[4] a period (in this case roughly between 1840 and 1860) in which the final impediments to a fully industrialized society are shed in favor of exponential economic expansion (26). Marx, of course, situates the images of the railroad at the imaginative center of this era of change: "The locomotive, associated with fire, smoke, speed, iron, and noise, is the leading symbol of the new industrial power. It appears in the woods, suddenly shattering the harmony of the green hollow, like a presentiment of history bearing down on the American asylum" (26). With the advent of the railroad gaining (pun-intended) steam, the ruler by which American life had previously been measured was suddenly subject to an entirely new set of measurements. James Howard Kunstler, writing on the divvying of American spaces in his *The Geography of Nowhere* (1993), describes the changing societal landscape of the

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[4] Marx attributes the coinage of the term "take-off" to W.W. Rostow in particular.

period as one that began to be measured on the scale of industrial intercity exchange rather than on the scale of the individual human being (34). In *Walden* (1854), Thoreau famously asserts of this new dynamic and the anxieties therein, “We do not ride on the railroad; it rides upon us” (76). Technological advances and newly expanded cities allowed for the scale of American commerce to expand rapidly, causing an equally rapid evolution of the average American’s daily life in tandem. Where wilderness once posed an existential threat to the human untethered to a safe zone of cultivated community, that same civilizing impulse now threatened to obscure nature entirely. Suddenly, it seems, the force of the civilizing impulse took its place at the top of an unequal power dynamic over the wilderness it once sought to conquer.

In realizing the inevitability of that unequal power dynamic, a sudden anxiety of preservation emerges, perhaps not in most Americans, but in a handful of those in positions to do the preserving. If, as previously noted, we might conceive of the push to “carve a garden from the wilds” as a desire to both create a livable community safe from the threats of the wilderness and to exist within that community free of existential threat, the garden eventually carved by this industrial push ultimately leaves much to be desired. The Romantic idea of nature then comes into play as an antidote to the force that now exists beyond the scale of human man: that of an industrialized society. Nash describes this new phenomenon of cynicism toward cultural achievement: “Wilderness appealed to those bored or disgusted with man and his works. It not only offered an escape from society but also was an ideal stage for the Romantic individual to exercise the cult that he frequently made of his own soul” (47). The inward turning he describes, that cult of the internal, is really a seeking of solace in the wilds within, the great unknowns of the mind,

as an alternative to the now out-of-balance relationship between nature and culture in which the man is forced to live. Out of this impulse, and the reverence for nature beyond city walls it entails, there emerges a new idea about preserving some of the qualities of wilderness in the physical realm, perhaps as an offshoot of this new reverence for the wilderness within.

A push for parks emerged out of this new tension between the desires of the individual and the dominance of industrialized urban living. The restorative power of nature — provided by those brief encounters with the sublime — was increasingly coveted. Though the national parks movement would come later in the nineteenth century, circa 1872's establishment of Yellowstone National Park, the forces pushing it were more unconsciously directed by the need to preserve wilderness. Nash points out that, in the early phases of the movement toward conversation, the wilderness was "preserved unintentionally" (108). He describes the public perception of large scale parks as a museum mentality, regarding the large swaths of preserved frontier as preservations of natural oddities for casual observation; from a policy standpoint, he notes that preservation's modus operandi was "not to justify the park positively as wilderness, but to demonstrate its uselessness to civilization" (112-3). Fueled by an increasing impulse to capitalize on all that valuable American space, preservation of major parks was mostly a happy side effect of relegating the wilderness, which was not helpful to the project of garden restoration to the wayside.

Urban parks, on the other hand, were an earlier response to the increasing industrial dominance of the nineteenth century, and a more conscious answer to the

anxieties of living in such industrialized urban centers. In 1844, American poet William Cullen Bryant wrote a piece for *The New York Evening Post* called “A New Public Park,” and in it he called public officials to “give our vast population an extensive pleasure ground for shade and recreation in these sultry afternoons, which we might reach without going out of town.” This call to action, almost three decades before the first real conquest of the conservation movement, would mark one of the first public calls for the establishment of Central Park in New York City, a pseudonatural space whose history offers an illustrative case study in some of the considerations we must make when analyzing similar spaces.

At the center of this particular example of the phenomenon of the urban park in the nineteenth century is Frederick Law Olmsted, a man who Nash, among others, labels as the father of landscape architecture. Olmsted would become responsible for a number of urban parks, public spaces, and generally well-known landmarks, but in 1857, Olmsted began planning what would become Central Park. A 1977 article by Robert Lewis situates Olmsted’s views on public space within the spectrum of “frontier” and “civilization,” the concept of the frontier encapsulating all that Olmsted viewed as harmful to the project of civilization (389). More contemporary analyses of Olmsted’s legacy continue to situate Olmsted as firmly on the “civilization” side of that spectrum, that — in the time of Olmsted, rather recently coined — term which, Lewis notes, served as “the rallying cry of the intellectual elite” (397). One of those contemporary analyses comes from Andrew Menard’s “The Enlarged Freedom of Frederick Law Olmsted,” which conceives of Olmsted’s ultimate agenda — what Lewis might refer to as his republican communal vision (386) — as an ongoing project of internal improvement

within major urban centers thriving during his lifetime (524). This project, Menard notes, worked against the frontier end of the spectrum of Olmstedian thought that Lewis describes. It is taken for granted by such discussions that the political negotiation of midcentury America was essentially a negotiation of what to do with the space designated as America, and as others subscribed to the individual freedoms afforded by frontier mythology, or the distant curiosity of budding national parks, Olmsted's spatial concerns seem to be with creating spaces of aesthetic pleasure within major metropolitan environments that worked toward completing his vision of a homogenous, civilized, and systematically improving society.

Olmsted equated freedom with a highly cultivated environment — ideally dictated by his own values — in which the needs of an individual within a society are met, leaving that individual free to engage in self-improvement (mind you, only the brand of self improvement allowed by that aforementioned cultivation). Menard suggests that Olmsted operated on the philosophical premise of "the malleability of the human mind requiring a society fit to shape it" (512). In opposition to the contemporaneous Jacksonian notion of the frontier as a "constant source of hope and renewal," Olmsted's own views of the West, and the impulse of many Americans to go out and conquer it, were seen as a source of "lawlessness and chaos," a "seductive emptiness," which posed a threat to the *real* project of freedom: that of a system of internal improvements that work to equalize experience and enlarge personal freedoms (524). It is useful to conceive of Olmsted's views of freedom alongside philosopher Isaiah Berlin's "Two Concepts of Freedom" in which Berlin muses on "positive freedom" versus "negative freedom." An entire breakdown of these two definitions would require a much more complete

definition, but in the simplest terms, Berlin's positive freedom is conceived of as a "freedom to," a freedom afforded by a safe and need-meeting set of circumstances in which an individual may flourish, and negative freedom as "freedom from" — a total freedom from interference on the individual from any external forces which might dictate those circumstances (178). The poles of positive and negative freedom, by the broadest of strokes, might loosely correspond to Lewis' poles of "civilization" and "frontier." Olmsted's republican vision of homogenized, elevated society no doubt aligns with the conception of positive freedom — and his ultimate desire was to participate in the construction of the circumstances by which that positive freedom was experienced in creating his bountiful, beautiful urban parks. Menard places Olmsted firmly in this camp, the camp which might argue, as Olmsted does, "the idea that freedom was enlarged, not diminished, by calculated, systematic restrained improvement" (528, 526).

Despite the inherent risk of the negative freedom of the frontier, Olmsted also acknowledged an element of its inherent unknowns as beneficial to the human psyche, or at the very least the American psyche. Part of that system of restrained improvement that Olmsted found so desirable would require a replenishment of sorts in the phenomenon of the urban park. Bryant's call for a "pleasure ground" offering respite from the New York heat foreshadows a sense of parks as necessary supplements (one cannot help but to make the metaphorical leap to vitamins ameliorating the effects of an unhealthy diet) to urbanized living, a sense that would inform much of Olmsted's opinions on park creation and cultivation. In 1866, Olmsted mused on the role of urban parks in a document meant to justify imminent plans for building what would become Prospect Park in Brooklyn, New York:

> Is there any pleasure which all persons find at all times in every park, and if so, what does that pleasure depend on?… The answer unquestionably must be, that there is such a pleasure, common, constant, and universal to all town parks, and that it results from the feeling of relief experienced by those entering them, on escaping the cramped, confined, and controlling circumstances of the streets of the town; in other words, a *sense of enlarged freedom* is to all, at all times, the most certain and the most valuable gratification afforded by a park. (5, emphasis added)

Here is Olmsted's philosophy of parks laid bare: that they serve as the salve to modernized living needed by every individual who inhabits those places which are "cramped, confined, and controlling." Crucially, as Menard, too, points out, it is not an actual enlargement of freedom experienced by park-goers, but the *sense* of it. The park might then be read as an helpful illusion, a temporary stay against the chaos that awaits in the city upon the individual's return. As part of Olmsted's great republican vision, the urban park is an antidote for all that is unpleasant about living in the cultivated realm, the place in which positive freedom might be achieved. And in providing the antidote to urban living, he perhaps acknowledges some of its more poisonous tendencies.

These are the stakes upon which the invention of pseudonature emerges. These questions — of the vastness of the American wilderness and what to do with it, of how to organize the space allotted to civilization, of how to reckon with the sensory realities of living in those spaces when the organization exposes its flaws — are the questions to

which the creation of pseudonature responds. The question that remains is whether it is a sufficient answer.

These movements from Puritan skepticism of the wilderness, to romantic and transcendental appreciation of its sublime offerings, to the anxiety of preserving natural spaces all come to a head in the creation of spaces that are constructed to *seem* natural, just as Central Park was constructed to give a *sense* of enlarged freedom. Tracing the evolution of the treatment of wilderness at the hands of American culture tracks a psychological evolution from the fear of uncertainty to a distinct distaste for the known, to a need for escape from what has become certain. The project of pseudonature then becomes the project of ameliorating this state of culture-wide psychological distress. The need to conserve national parks, to preserve the wilderness in some distant capacity, allows for a civilization of the frontier. The need to create "pleasure grounds" in city centers brings the frontier into the fold of civilization. The efforts toward the preservation and creation of parks in these forms in the late nineteenth century then can be seen as an effort, perhaps an unconscious one, to stabilize the dwindling wilderness that culture continued, increasingly, to push to the margins, without disrupting the dominance of that culture in any significant, systemic way. And if wilderness, at the most basic level of human symbolism, represents that which might be cultivated into a more perfect garden, then what more do these pockets of nature say about American cultural anxieties at the time?

If we assume, as we will, that wilderness serves symbolically as the great unknown waiting to be cultivated in the image of society, then the push toward

preservation and natural recreation must be read as the desire to preserve cultural possibility. As the realities of industrialization began to set in, and to make their unpleasantness known, society begins to realize that the spaces representative of that opportunity for cultivation are dwindling. Suddenly the anxiety of conquering the wilderness evolves into the anxiety of preserving the unconquerable as a space upon which we might project our hopes at future cultivation, a hope for a more appealing attempt at garden restoration. At the end of the century, though, no matter how much wilderness America had managed to preserve or recreate, the arrangement is static; wilderness is preserved to offer the *sense* of possibility, yes, but the arrangement also unequivocally bars the enactment of that change upon its soil. Within city center, the park, a fundamentally pseudonatural space, offers a facsimile of the frontier freedom rendered static from afar. The emerging phenomenon of pseudonature, then, is not evidence of the aforementioned preservation impulse, or the rugged American individualism informing it, but a pacifier for the individual who is forced to contemplate what might be within a space firmly locked into that which already is.

A Definition for "Pseudonature"

From a practical standpoint, the term "pseudonature" refers to any space of constructed organic aesthetic that appears against a backdrop of cultivated, manmade society, much like Central Park. Such spaces include urban parks, gardens, conservatories, or spaces of natural aesthetic otherwise enclosed by manmade construction. An emblematic example of the sort of space to which this term refers can be

seen perhaps most clearly in Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth* (1905), in many ways the germ of this whole project. Few scenes are more memorable than the *tableaux vivant* scene of Wharton's novel, in which Lily Bart, the protagonist, performs as a piece of stylized "living" art, all-too-appropriately choosing to emulate the late 18th century painting *Mrs. Lloyd* by Sir Joshua Reynolds, which features a delicate female figure posed against a natural backdrop. The immediate aftermath of this memorable moment, however, is of more interest to the discussion of pseudonature. Following the scene, Lily is guided by Lawrence Selden, romantic (and perhaps also Romantic) supporting role to Lily's centerstage, to a quiet garden, removed from the bustling house full of socialites:

> She hardly noticed where Selden was leading her, till they passed through a glass doorway at the end of a long suite of rooms and stood suddenly in the fragrant hush of a garden. Gravel grated beneath their feet, and about them was the transparent dimness of a midsummer night. Hanging lights made emerald caverns in the depths of foliage, and whitened the spray of a fountain falling among lilies. The magic place was deserted…. (Wharton 144)

The scene is described in lush, paradisiacal terms and offers a respite for Lily and Selden from the onlookers of the society which they wish to shirk, only for the pair to express their innermost desires (confessions of love, a passionate kiss) before abruptly returning to the "brightness of the room beyond" (145). The two linger in the darkness of pseudonature and entertain their emotional freedoms for only the briefest instant before being faced with the reality of the party which surrounds them, and into which they must reenter at some point. (The only question is of sooner or later, and Lily chooses sooner.)

This space is an emblem of the pseudonature which this project attempts to define, track, and interpret: a small pocket of seemingly natural setting constructed within, and as a part of, an otherwise civilized arena. The emotional trajectory that we may observe in Lily and Selden as they navigate these spaces is equally representative, as the space of pseudonature allows characters to imagine the notion of a freer, more instinct-driven existence beyond the societal confines which linger mere feet away, patiently awaiting their return to its physical holds and its psychological ones by the mere fact that there is nowhere else for the character(s) to go.

The careful reader will note that there emerges a pattern across texts of American literary naturalism of these spaces of pseudonature. Lily's emotional experience across manmade constructions of respectively "natural" and "civilized" aesthetics offers an illustrative example of the imaginative function of pseudonature across a number of these naturalist texts. Within this phenomenon, naturalist characters navigate the spaces of pseudonature in tandem with periods of emotional upheaval or overflow, periods that deviate in some manner from the societal expectations that seem to cling more closely to them on the opposite side of the garden wall. The argument that arises is that perhaps the space of pseudonature offers a temporary salve to the woes of the urban, societal existence that encapsulates and inherently confines said space; in other words, pseudonature invites characters living otherwise rigid existences to experience grander feelings, imaginings, or instincts (more romantic ones, we might say) within its deceptively constructed walls without ever threatening to disrupt the world that turns beyond them. This project seeks to make a case for the imaginative function, as outlined generally above, of pseudonature in works of American literary naturalism such as

Stephen Crane's *Maggie, a Girl of the Streets* (1893), Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* (1900), Frank Norris's *McTeague* (1899), and, as already suggested, Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth* (1905).

Engaging in any discussion of nature in the nineteenth century, including defining this category of pseudonature, requires a more in-depth discussion of American romanticism and the transcendental writings of Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson than breached in our quick study of American wilderness. Emerson, of course, sets the stage for the relation of nature and man as a focal point for these nineteenth century philosophical musings. There is no shortage of examples from Emerson's body of work of his fascination with this relation, but a straightforward example of his tendency to link man with the natural can be seen in the opening passage of his 1836 essay on "Nature," of "transparent eye-ball" fame (30), where he describes the effect of encountering natural beauty on the individual: "The flowers, the animals, the mountains reflected the wisdom of his best hour" (29). Despite the philosophical debt that must be paid to the transcendental path forged by Emerson, this project engages more directly with the tradition of Thoreau's *Walden* (1854) and critical interpretation of its effects, like that of Lawrence Buell in *The Environmental Imagination* (1995), due in large part to its own closer engagement with the material realm of an individual's surroundings. Buell's exploration of Thoreau in this text is a staple of the discussion of American environmentalism, as it envisions a tradition of American environmental writing that hinges on Thoreau's *Walden* and his experience of nature as a sort of fulcrum upon which the spectrum of American environmental thinking may balance. In the American literary tradition, Thoreau is often thought of as the implementer of Emerson's philosophizing,

the American individual who enters into the rugged American landscape in search of a true natural experience. It is the going and doing, as opposed to the writing and the talking, that seem to give Thoreau the necessary ethos to find himself in the center of the discussion of American environmentalism. Buell's reading of Thoreauvian influence lends itself to the possibility that the centrality of Thoreau's nature writing to the American environmental consciousness may also be partially a result of the fact that his work emerges at a time when physical societal spaces were beginning to undergo a radical upheaval, and *Walden*, while it experiments in the most idealistic imaginings of a natural existence removed from the confines of civilization, is also explicitly, fundamentally rooted in a specific physical space, yielding a more practical, tangible experience of nature to Thoreau's writings as opposed to the more theoretical Emersonian one. It is this emphasis on Thoreau's actual encounters with the nature in question and the marked effects that those encounters have on his individual experience of the world that cements him at the center of the American associations with nature that Buell, and many others since, attribute largely to Thoreau and his *Walden.*

Taking the tradition of Thoreauvian individual experience of nature into account, and Leo Marx's canonically regarded exploration of that experience in *The Machine in the Garden* (1964), we may understand the experience of nature as an experience first and foremost of a sensory kind. Marx allows us to understand the experience as sensory most effectively by demonstrating its sensory violation in his reading of Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Sleepy Hollow" episode. Marx describes Hawthorne's experience of nature as a "state of being in which there is no tension either within the self or between the self and its environment" which is interrupted by the shrill whistling of a train in the

distance (13). This concept of the "Sleepy Hollow" episode sets up the central image (that of the machine intruding upon the garden) of his critical work and underscores the argument to be made about the effect of pseudonature. The experience of nature that we read in episodes like these is understood by both character and reader via the sensory experiences of the character: the manner in which the individual body and mind is affected by the natural space within which the character interacts. This notion that physical space yields a particular emotional response draws the work of Kyle Bladow and Jennifer Ladino's *Affective Ecocriticism* (2018) into the situation of pseudonature's affects; the emerging field of affective ecocriticism reads environment alongside an awareness of affect theory in order to yield an ecocritical conversation that acknowledges how "place profoundly shapes our emotional lives" (2). Bladow and Ladino offer the suggestion that the dynamic between self and environment can be unpacked in order to reveal the dynamic emotional responses that a particular material surrounding can generate (8). The discussion of the sensory experience of nature as outlined by Marx feeds into an affective ecocritical reading of the sensory changes undergone in encountering pseudonature. Understanding the imaginative function of pseudonature in works of naturalism relies upon an understanding of literary experiences of nature as fundamentally sensory, since pseudonature perhaps most fundamentally functions as sensory restoration and reprieve from the comparative sensory onslaught of the modernized world.

This sensory reprieve aligns with most transcendental and romantic philosophy about the restorative powers of nature. We need only to turn to the chapter of Thoreau's *Walden* (1854) dealing in "Sounds" to highlight this orientation to the sensory serenity

sought out by likeminded wanderers. In one exemplary passage, Thoreau bemoans the intrusion of the noise of a cattle-laden freight train interposing in his natural solitude; he writes, “So is your pastoral life whirled past and away. But the bell rings, and I must get off the track and let the cars go by; […] but I cross it like a cart-path in the woods. I will not have my eyes put out and my ears spoiled by its smoke and steam and hissing” (115-6). Thoreau’s concern here is explicitly with avoiding any sensory impact on his experience of nature, an impact which he describes as a spoiling of the senses. The implication is that the experience of nature which has surrounded Thoreau in previous passages is something that has the potential to be spoiled in the first place, something pure, pleasant, and serene. This orientation reflects a philosophy borne out of an earlier Romanticism, the philosophical father figure of American transcendentalism in the vein of Thoreau. We can trace Thoreau’s experience of sensory restoration in nature to the likes of William Wordsworth’s 1798 “Lines” above Tintern Abbey, which offers the suggestion that even the recollection of an encounter with Nature might offer similar solace. Wordsworth writes of the “beauteous forms” (22) in his memory of the natural vista described:

> To them I may have owed another gift,
>
> Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,
>
> In which the burthen of the mystery, in which the heavy and the weary weight of all this unintelligible world,
>
> Is lightened: — (36-41)

Wordsworth's lines demonstrate the affective impact of the sensory experience of nature as an opportunity to remove the mind from the psychological weight of society by removing the body from societal spaces, the same affective impact that Thoreau describes in *Walden*, and the same affective impact that Lily experiences within the garden walls. The tracing of this phenomenon in the literary imagination over these romanticist varietals— through configurations of this effect as the "sublime," Emerson's transparent eyeball, or Thoreau's capital-N Nature— places the discussion of pseudonature within this tradition of romantic thinking, seemingly at odds with what we might traditionally define as tenets of naturalism.[5]

This centuries-old and transatlantic romantic movement being traced across the Atlantic, and a couple of centuries, is the philosophical ghost that haunts Lily Bart in that garden; the trajectory is one of comparative sensory overload (sensory distress, or perhaps the despair of chaos) within a civilized realm as negated by entrance into the aesthetic beauty of natural surroundings. However, an application of this romantic philosophy to the likes of Lily is somewhat obviously complicated by the fact that the same experience of sensory and emotional release offered by Nature in romanticism is experienced within the confines of pseudonature, a manmade structure or otherwise artificial space of natural aesthetics. (One has to wonder whether the transparent eyeball can indeed still see within this confines.) The evocation of nature as healing is something that is widely acknowledged by scholars, including Timothy Morton, who writes in *Ecology Without Nature* (2007), "The 'thing' we call nature becomes, in the Romantic

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[5] These traditionally accepted tenets of naturalism will be outlined in later sections, but suffice it to say for now that an optimistic transcendental oneness with nature is not one of them.

period and afterward, a way of healing what modern society has damaged" (22). The crucial caveat here is that Morton acknowledges that there is a "thing" called nature, but it is not nature itself which holds this healing power. Morton makes the claim that capital-N Nature[6] is a concept rather than an actual reality, writing, "'Nature' is an arbitrary construct, empty of independent, genuine existence behind or beyond the texts we create about it" (22). Morton's acknowledgement sets up a crucial understanding of the idea of Nature as a construct rather than some inherent and grand spiritual force exerting its benevolence over us, an understanding that allows for pseudonature's effect on the psyche in these naturalist novels to be read as further evidence that Nature as separate from man does not exist in the way we commonly imagine it in literature.

To define pseudonature then, we need a third category in addition to the manmade pocket of nature and the collective artistic understanding of Nature, a category which may be most easily labeled as simply the earth. The third category is organically occurring reality out of which these manmade constructions are also comprised, not the "thing" we call Nature, but the material reality of nature which inspired the construct in the first place. (Few would contest the frequently pleasing qualities of that third category, be it sunset or seaside.) Nature as concept is a deviation from that third category, a separation of man and the natural world in order to form the sort of relation that Emerson and the like identify in which the human experience is projected onto the landscape. We construct a relationship with nature, which is then treated as Nature— a force seemingly

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[6] The term Nature, as opposed to lower-case nature, will henceforth be used when referring to Nature as a construct in the collective literary imagination, or otherwise as a philosophical idea rather than an acknowledgement of the material reality of the earth.

acting beyond the scope of our individual wills despite originating in the eye, or rather the mind, of the beholder. Then, we turn to this relationship for spiritual comfort, sensory restoration, and a reflection of ourselves and our values in a landscape that, according to literary naturalism, should be indifferent to our individual existence. The third category, that of the physical reality of the earth, allows us to understand pseudonature as a more obvious permutation of that projection than Nature, as it is a material facsimile of that thing we were already projecting upon — Nature, once-removed. Pseudonature, then, is a projection of a projection. It is not only an orchestration of actual nature; it is an orchestration of the sensory effect that man's imagination allows him to experience in nature by engaging with the idea that Nature exists beyond the realm of that imagination.

Once this artistic, imaginative understanding of pseudonature has been established, we must also return to a cultural and spatial context of a changing orientation to land, landscapes, and the living environment undergone by the American consciousness, as previously noted in discussion of the changing concept of wilderness and the birth of the park. It has already been noted, but benefits from reiteration, that the material body of America was in the process of being divvied to its last corner in the decades leading up to the advent of American literary naturalism. We see this historical moment traced in Roderick Nash's work on wilderness and the impulse toward its preservation during this period, and in more contemporary thinkers such as the (briefly) aforementioned James Howard Kunstler. In *The Geography of Nowhere* (1993), Kunstler notes that the space of the American city was being divvied in tandem with this larger idea of wilderness preserved. Kunstler states, "In the second half of the nineteenth century, city life changed more dramatically than any time since the Renaissance. The

American city embarked on a pattern of growth that would ultimately consume it" (35). The nation was evolving in shape in both of these arenas, the so-called wilderness (wide swaths of Western land being delineated as preserved) and within the urban center (experiencing a massive overhaul at the tail-end of the industrial revolution). The coincidence of these varietals of American spatial organization beg the question of the possibility of a larger cultural anxiety or preoccupation informing them; in other words, perhaps these phenomena are simply two sides of the same cultural-moment-coin. In bringing the historical and cultural context of the emergence of actual places of pseudonature together with the artistic tradition of nature into which imagined spaces of pseudonature enter, the spaces of pseudonature created in the literature of this time period can be seen to effectively take on the symbolic weight of the cultural changes being simultaneously felt by American society.

Bernard Rosenthal's *City of Nature* (1980) forges into this territory in tracing these spatial developments, leaving critical room for the implication, then, that the same type of cultural questions answered in the preservation of wilderness were being mirrored and solidified in the cityscapes reshaping simultaneously. Rosenthal's study operates on the suggestion that "the geographical space [of America] offered room for establishing or reestablishing social, economic, political, or religious order suitable to individual desire" (22). The reshaping of the American landscape, in the scheme of Rosenthal's framework, is then just a practical manifestation of an ideological reshaping of the national identity or value system. In turning to the city as the orbit around which America's natural mythology spins, Rosenthal also evokes the romanticism that informs that natural mythology, and cites an intriguing nuance to its aims in a chapter aptly named "The

Urban Garden." Rosenthal notes that the Romantic's depiction of nature is much less concerned with "the spiritual fate of America as the spiritual fate of the self" (167). He elaborates, "Romantic solutions were private, not collective; salvation tended to be for the individual, not for the group" (167-8). Rosenthal's commentary here refers to the emotional journey of the figure experiencing a transcendental oneness with nature, which can be read alongside his insistence that spatial negotiation is the negotiation of cultural ideas to productive ends where pseudonature is concerned. When Rosenthal's claims are extended to the spaces of pseudonature, we may read into pseudonature a set of implications about forging democratic territory in addition to experiencing emotional freedom for the individual: namely that though this space exists for ideological negotiation, the nature of the experience is intended to change only the individual without disruption to the system beyond. In keeping with our Lily Bart example from Wharton's *The House of Mirth* (1905), though Lily and Selden imagine a different set of socioeconomic circumstances in which their love could be socially enacted within the confines of the garden after the *tableaux vivant* scene, this act of imagination has no tangible effect on the structure of the world beyond it. This somewhat contradictory dual purpose of the pseudonatural space also opens up the critical possibility of placing individual desire and larger cultural desires into direct conversation with each other, demonstrating both the restorative quality of pseudonature and the much less benevolent cultural directions that isolated restoration might be revealing about American spaces.

Psychoanalyzing Pseudonature

The field of psychoanalysis, at which many a good skeptic is now inclined to balk, was established during the same period of turnover between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in which we have situated the heyday of naturalism. During the 1880s and 1890s, Sigmund Freud's career was taking off in earnest, with his ideas being disseminated to a wider audience and beginning to gather the cultural momentum which we recognize today as supremely influential in spite of contemporary critical reluctance, and not without good reason, to engage with certain claims of the Freudian line of thinking. The contemporaneity alone piques one's curiosity as to connections which might be divined between the emerging psychoanalytic lens and the problems of American literary naturalism. When engaging in such a reduction of psychoanalysis as reading the golf course as so many wombs and phalluses, it is easy to relegate psychoanalysis to the margins of theoretical thought, but in addition to contemporaneity, a thematic overlap as well as a temporal one exists between the types of problems being tackled in the realm of naturalist literature and that of psychoanalysis. The shift toward modernity that humanity was experiencing during this time was one of adaptation (or perhaps lack thereof) to the industrialized modern life as the world barreled toward the twentieth century and its myriad problems. This shift, and subsequent struggles, created the same turmoil out of which both psychoanalysis and American literary naturalism were born, the turmoil involved in navigating a world that had expanded far beyond the scale of an individual human being. At the core of psychoanalysis is an examination of the dissatisfaction with societal life that plagues the individual human being and the ways it might be understood or remedied, and that same dissatisfaction with civilization is also

seemingly the driving force behind the desire for sensory restoration via nature that yields the construction of pseudonature, a temporary stay against that despair. In applying psychoanalysis to the discussion of pseudonature, then, we invite a contemplation of the shared anxieties which are philosophized about in psychoanalysis and embodied in the construction of pseudonature, garnering a deeper understanding of the psychological and sociological preoccupations of society manifested in the existence of pseudonature which these thinkers were attempting to diagnose in real time.

A foray into Freudian thinking offers us a basis upon which we might more sincerely construct the aforementioned golf course metaphor. In *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930), Freud offers the suggestion that "genital love," which results in formation of the family unit, is the foundation of civilization, and that "genital love" is reflected in the structures of that civilization. Freud situates the desire inherent in genital love somewhat in opposition to civilization and its structures, noting that the initial impetus that informs the creation of civilization is also restricted by its very formation (50). Herbert Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization* (1955) expands on Freud's situation of society and desire by even further emphasizing the incompatibility of the two: "Left free to pursue their natural objectives, the basic instincts of man would be incompatible with all lasting association and preservation [of civilization]" (11). Marcuse suggests, therefore, that these urges must be corralled in order to foster that preservation: "The instincts must therefore be deflected from their goal, inhibited from their aim. Civilization begins when the primary objective — namely, integral satisfaction of needs — is effectively renounced" (11). Of perhaps more interest to this discussion is Freud's assertion that the formation of civilization is man-driven, both reliant upon man's

experience of genital love and the restriction of it, which the civilization he builds necessitates (50-1). Freud writes, “The work of civilization has become increasingly the business of man…what he employs for cultural aims he to a great extent withdraws from women and sexual life” (50-51). A feminist, Freud is not, but in making a case for the impulse of the cultural consciousness at the turn of the twentieth century toward a masculine-ordered society, this contemporaneous perspective offers a striking insight. Freud’s dynamic suggests a siphoning of the livelihood of the feminine by the men who hold a dominant position in society, and in the process of its organization, in order to complete the task of civilization, a process of emotional restoration of the individual not unlike that which we have seen projected upon Nature, an entity which is collectively imagined as derived from a feminized[7] landscape.[8]

Returning to patterns emerging within the golf course reading, these Freudian notions offer a method of viewing much more complicated sets of masculine and feminine material constructions, one informed by a commonplace of psychoanalysis to which Freudian scholars, like Norman O. Brown in *Love’s Body* (1966), have intellectually acquiesced—that the project of psychoanalysis is the process of reading phalluses and wombs into every respectively convex and concave material object: “To return to symbolism, the rediscovery that everything is symbolic...a penis in every convex

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[7] The tradition of conceiving of land and nature as a feminine body is, of course, an extensive one. More in-depth exploration of the implications of the femininity of Nature will be conducted in later sections.

[8] Freud’s text also engages with the relation of the ego to the external world in that maturity of ego results in a loss of an intimacy between earlier “ego-feeling[s]” (15) of inclusivity with the world around it; this will offer an interesting complication to the idea of transcendence in the larger project, as this feeling Freud describes strikes one as not unlike the moment of the sublime and the loss of innocence which precludes it.

object and a vagina in every concave one — is psychoanalysis" (191). Part of acknowledging this pattern of sexual symbol as ubiquitous in our surroundings is avoiding the assumption of intention that causes the aforementioned skeptic to balk; it is not an assertion of intentionality. The makers of civilization do not set out with the purpose of constructing so many phallic and vaginal structures. Rather, it is a current flowing under the surface of consciousness informing those constructions, something which we become aware of only in retrospect. Take Otto Rank's musings in *The Trauma of Birth* (1952) as an illustration of this point: "What it is essential to understand is the psychological mechanism, by means of which every 'discovery' is only a rediscovery of something latent, and the whole process of culture, as reflected in myths, is only a human creation of the world on the pattern of one's own individual creation" (85-6). The latency to which Rank gestures here is of paramount importance. It is not the intentionality of man to form a culture in his own image; however, it is the current which unconsciously informs all possible intentionalities.

Rank's illustration also serves as a reminder that wombs and phalluses are not the limit of this self-reflective construction of the thing we call culture. Rank writes: "Starting from the most primitive discoveries of culture such as fire and implements up to the most complicated technical machinery, it can be shown that these are not only made by man, but are also formed according to the image of man, whose anthropomorphic world view thus gains support" (85). It is the assumption, then, that the ordered world is the reflection of the human form, that man creates a structure unconsciously designed to reflect the human body in a manner which reinforces that anthropomorphism. Because man is unaware of the psychological self-centeredness at the root of these constructions,

the manlike nature of the manmade world is experienced as mystical, a kinship between man and surroundings that exists due to larger than life forces, perhaps fate or God, rather than the result of man's unacknowledged inner impulses channeled into all of human endeavor. To the man unaware of the internal psychological force dictating him to experience the world as an extension of his own form, encountering his own image in the surroundings is experienced as mystical rather than a consequence of humanity's own action.

In responding to the work of Rank, particularly to *The Trauma of Birth*, Ernest Becker's *The Denial of Death* (1973) acknowledges a reputation of Rank's ideas as reductive and "exaggerated," oversimplifications of the complexities of psychoanalysis born out of a misdirected eagerness within the discipline (xiii). And yet, Becker, among many others, also acknowledges the wide-reaching insight of Rank's body of work and approach to psychoanalysis, upon which his project crucially relies. At any rate, it is with the framework represented by these suggestions that civilization was (and ever is) unconsciously formed in the image of man's body, a framework engaged by a number of psychoanalysts, that this project is concerned. This project seeks to entertain this framework, with its potential exaggerations, as a productive lens by which we may complicate and nuance an exaggerated reading of pseudonature in similar bodily terms, and by which we might further understand the psychological anxieties with which both scholar and novelist were grappling during the period of cultural turnover in which naturalism resides.

Problems in the Existing Literature

The aforementioned sense of mysticism that is perceived in unknowingly encountering a world unconsciously ordered in man's own image serves as one of the more colossal problems with which naturalists grappled. This sense of mysticism derived from encountering larger-than-life forces is a preoccupation of many works of naturalism, not to mention the literary critics who tackle them. Eric Carl Link explores this quality of experiencing the world in mystical terms in his work *The Vast and Terrible Drama* (2004), which attempts a redefinition of American literary naturalism, particularly in regard to Frank Norris, as a crucial element that bucks George Becker's canonized definition of naturalism as an "explicit philosophical position taken by some realists, showing man caught in a net from which there can be no escape and degenerating under those circumstances; that is, it is *pessimistic materialistic determinism*" (Becker 35, emphasis added). In many ways, Becker's definition can help us understand the tropes and patterns by which we can identify naturalism. Becker's evocation of these three crucial keywords does indicate much of what makes naturalism naturalism, which we might generalize as possessing a plot of decline in which the protagonist feels the effects of forces beyond the control of the individual will (heredity, environment, random chance, etc.) in a natural universe indifferent to that individual's happiness, fulfillment, or survival. There indubitably emerges therein a certain pessimistic quality, and Charles Walcutt, in *American Literary Naturalism: A Divided Stream* (1956), takes the pathos of the plot of decline one step further, referencing a naturalist trend of the (much more dramatic-sounding) "chronicle of despair" (21). The issue that many find with Becker's assessment of naturalism (and those who share his orientation) is that it is a reductive one

which hinges upon the assumption of a shared philosophy between all naturalists, a kinship that does not always seem to exist.

Naturalism is also defined to an extent by a reliance on aesthetic realism; the events of the naturalist novel, however potentially exaggerated, are based in a realistic universe. Naturalist writers sometimes considered themselves embarking on a phenomenological sociological endeavor, in which the true nature of man would be observed and reported, and yet, as we have already seen in the briefest discussion of pseudonature, traces of less empirical ways of thinking (like mid-nineteenth century American transcendental leanings) linger in many of the works that Becker and the like wish to place under this three-pronged umbrella term. Addressing this discrepancy, Link argues that the Becker definition assumes the aesthetics of realism and the philosophy of pessimism, which does not leave room for the justification of the presence of “mystic strains” in naturalists like Norris, whose works defy the idea that naturalism must rely exclusively on material causation (Link 12). The strain of mysticism to which Link points us in order to complicate canonical definitions of naturalism is interpreted in his work of literary criticism as faded vestiges of earlier American romanticism being employed in naturalist texts and setting them apart from the philosophy of the realism mirrored in their aesthetics. Other literary critics identify this strain in Romantic terms as well, including Diana Hope Polley, in *Echoes of Emerson* (2017), which entertains the notion that romanticism also bleeds into realism. All to say, these fluidities of literary critical borders serve not just to complicate the classification of this mystical strain of naturalism, but rather underscore the very problem of categorization.

Link's redefinition of naturalism to include mysticism, or romantic deviation, creates a new set of definitive limitations which do not and cannot encapsulate the full extent of naturalist aesthetics and philosophy due to its insistence on reinforcing a false dichotomy between the real, or worldly, and the romantic, or imagined. Link merely updates Donald Pizer's long-held tenet of naturalism that the problem of its protagonists is a problem of the duality of man: a tension between the civilized self and the brute. Pizer describes this tension as an "ethical dualism" particularly noticeable in Norris' work, "in which nature's indestructible energy is uncontrollable by man…Man, however, has free will in his individual relationship to force. He can ally himself with it, attempting to perceive its workings and to determine its pace and direction, or he can stand opposed to it and be destroyed ("Evolutionary Ethical Dualism" 21). These delineations between the self and society that also inform delineations between romanticism and realism fall short of an understanding of the negation of such distinctions that occurs when we acknowledge the plane of human subjectivity in which these delineations are formed. For critics such as Link and Polley to point to the individual's experience of mysticism or romanticism as an alternative to that which is real (realism) is to engage in the same shortsightedness that emphasizes pessimistic philosophy of civilization, the notion that things are ordered by forces beyond the bounds of human influence, and obscures entirely the idea that the world has been constructed by men and for men, unconsciously, in their own images: an awareness cultivated through the entertainment of those psychoanalytical ideas. The understanding is one that the individual is part and particle of a world operating by unconsciously anthropomorphized material forms, that the impulses felt in

moments of romanticism are one and the same as the impulses driving the material constructions around that individual.

Reading Pseudonature in Naturalism

An understanding of the world as unconsciously ordered in the image of man's body offers us more than just a reading of golf courses and a complication of the definitions of American literary naturalism espoused in literary criticism. In entertaining these psychoanalytic principles, the aim of such an intellectual exercise is then not to expand the definition of naturalism, but to expand the meaning of the elements acknowledged in that definition into the realm of understanding offered by an acceptance of the intrinsic relationship between the human body and the body-ordered world. And the caveat must necessarily be added that the masculine body and the feminine body carry separate and sometimes warring associations, both material and philosophical. We have seen through the Freudian lens that the body-ordered world can be read as in fact a masculine-ordered world; that is, that the constructions of civilization reflect the male form first and foremost, perhaps because, as Freud would have it, the men are the traditionally dominant force in ordering that civilization. Of course, we know from such canonical efforts at ecocriticism as Annette Kolodny's *The Lay of the Land* (1975), that the organic body of nature has traditionally been understood as a feminine body in "America's oldest and most cherished fantasy," in which there exists "an experience of the land as essentially feminine— that is, not simply the land as mother, but the land as woman, the total female principle of gratification" (4). For the purposes of this project,

we must first operate on the critical assumption that the masculine body is linked to the machine, industrial, or otherwise constructed world, and the feminine body is, of course, attached to that thing we call Nature: the land itself. That lends itself to the natural conclusion that the space of pseudonature, being a projection of the projection of Nature, is created in the cultural consciousness as a feminine space, reflective of the feminized landscape to which it pays its obscure homage.

Mark Seltzer, in *Bodies and Machines* (1990), asserts the presence of a unique relationship between the masculine body of naturalist characters and the machinery of the modern industrial era, which is understandably juxtaposed to the feminized landscape. He calls this connection the body-machine complex:

> The social questions that these [naturalist] forms of writing, producing, and representing make visible include the effects of the redrawing of the uncertain and shifting line between the natural and the technological in machine culture and also the ways in which such shifts in the traffic between the natural and the technological make for the vicissitudes of agency and of individual and collective and national identity in that culture. It's this double discourse of the natural and the technological that, in short, makes up the American body-machine complex. (Seltzer 4)

Yet this connection is defined by Seltzer's sense of the ills of an ailing society being projected into the character's bodily form as a symbolic relationship whose agency flows in the wrong direction. In this way, he reads the symptom rather than the cause of this connection between the physical human form and the society it builds. The bodies of

naturalism's characters are, of course, reflective of the larger characteristics of society, but perhaps only because society is, in the first place, a reflection of man's form. The manifestation of anxieties of the modern era in the body of man is in fact a reversal of the aforementioned psychoanalytic principle. This project seeks to call attention to this reversal of understanding in the hopes of also reversing, in a sense, our understanding of the seeming fatedness of the civilized world being solidified at the forefront of the modern era as a result of man's actions and impulses.

The body-machine complex effectively links the masculine body and manmade technology, and understandably pits that joint entity against the feminized landscape, a landscape which we habitually depict as that capital-N Nature construct. However, this project seeks to extend the body-machine complex to its natural conclusion, by not just reading the physical landscape as feminine, but by positioning the feminine body of individual naturalist characters in a similar relationship to pseudonature as the masculine body is to constructed environs. If we are to accept that the landscape is feminized, that the built world is built in the image of man, then we must necessarily accept that the spaces built in imitation of the feminized landscape are exceptions to that constructed masculinity, small pockets of aesthetic femininity that in some way contradict their masculine surroundings. This contradiction, however, is further complicated by the fact that it is a constructed contradiction in itself; the feminized pseudonature is still a construction that is part of the male-ordered civilization around it, and thus a product of that organization. The question that remains, then, is to what end is it constructed? This tension harkens back to the Freudian notion that the livelihood of the feminine is in some way siphoned for the greater patriarchal aims of masculine society building. If we can

venture to operate on these assumptions, then the presence of pseudonature within a dominantly masculine society takes on a somewhat insidious tone. The argument to be made is that pseudonature is not just a projection of the sensory restoration of Nature, but a projection of that restoration unconsciously created as a source of feminine energy to be funneled into the completion of the task of civilization. An urban park then takes on the same appropriated role as the golf course, a space in which modern urban citizens may break from the pressures of societal structures for the briefest of interludes in order to be more refreshed and productive once they return to the civilization that lurks behind any tree-laden path.

It is in combining these conceptions, drawing from psychoanalytic theory in direct conversation with ecocritical approaches, that we may begin to forge a new meaning from the pattern of imagined pseudonature within Stephen Crane's *Maggie* (1893), Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* (1900), Frank Norris's *McTeague* (1899), and Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth* (1905). The exploration must extend beyond a reading of historical understandings of waning spaces to designate wilderness, beyond an oversimplified reading of sexually-symbolic physical spaces, beyond a patriarchally-oriented understanding of the technological world as exclusively masculine. To do so is to entertain the idea that the artificial fatedness felt by those experiencing the large cultural forces of the emerging modern era is also the shortsightedness of patriarchal thinking, and that perhaps, rather than a naturalist acceptance of humanity's plot of decline, these imagined representations of actual (that is to say, existent in material reality) pseudonature offer insight into the failings of the commonly held orientations

toward land, culture, and "progress" to preserve feminine spaces, and thus feminine orderings of the world, at this pivotal time in American consciousness.

This lengthy introduction is not for introduction's sake. The pseudonature in these novels appears at a complicated time in both American life and its literature, and to fully understand the particular cultural alchemy which results in its creation in both, this first chapter provides a small window into the various, and frequently overlapping, contexts in which pseudonature will be explored in the following chapters. Whereas the preceding chapter offers an overview of historical and theoretical underpinnings of pseudonature, Chapter II zooms in on the texts themselves. This section offers a close-reading of the spaces which can be classified as pseudoanture in Stephen Crane's *Maggie* (1893), Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* (1900), and Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth* (1905). This chapter expands the definition of pseudonature by way of unpacking a plethora of examples, and also presents a case for spaces which we may not associate with pseudonature at first glance, but which function in much the same way. To categorize these places, I have borrowed a line from Stephen Crane to call them "places of forgetfulness," and this concept is referenced frequently throughout the remainder of the chapters. The analysis in Chapter II relies on principles from affective ecocriticism, as well as the concept of "transcorporeality" as outlined by feminist scholar Stacy Alaimo, in order to explore how these spaces function in both story and reality, with particular regard for the forming association of the female figures in the novels with these spaces. This chapter provides a body of examples of textual support for much of the more theoretically-fraught commentary that follows.

In Chapter III, the spaces of pseudonature outlined in Chapter II are explored by drawing on theoretical contexts ranging from Freudian psychoanalysis to feminist geography. This chapter sets up a reading of built spaces of the urban settings in which pseudonature appears as unconsciously anthropomorphic, with built spaces of "civilized" aesthetic being read as masculine and pseudonature, due to its association with nature and feminine properties, as representative of a feminine ordering of space which is being rapidly coopted in the literary cities of these texts, mirroring the phenomenon happening in reality contemporaneously. This chapter focuses textually on Frank Norris's *McTeague* (1899) and the protagonist's embodiment of the "body-machine complex" as outlined in *Bodies and Machines* (1992) by Mark Seltzer, in which characters in naturalism in particular are read as manifestations of cultural anxieties about the increasingly industrialized society which looms large on the horizon of the twentieth century. This chapter attempts to complicate the reading of McTeague in canonical criticism as emblematic of the dual nature of man, the brute and the civilized self, by reading the "body-machine complex" in light of the unconscious anthropomorphism of built spaces—in a sense reversing the complex, reading cultural structures as reflective of the human form rather than the other way around. In this section, I offer a complication of existing understandings of naturalism by disrupting the dualism between brute/civilized self (itself an iteration of the problematic nature/culture dualism) to more clearly account for the "mystical strains" in American literary naturalism to which Eric Carl Link gestures. The ultimate suggestion of this chapter is that the "mystical strain" is in fact reflective of a universal impulse toward transcendence, or some mode of similar spiritual communion with the natural world, which is instead answered within these texts by

experiences of the anthropomorphic built spaces of modernized society, contributing to the false sense of the inevitability of environmental forces to which naturalism so frequently acquiesces.

Where Chapter III largely explores the masculine structures of the built world and the masculine bodies in which they are reflected, Chapter IV positions the female body within this conversation, examining the American literary tradition of symbolic kinship between the female body and the body of land. This chapter focuses on the primary female figures of these naturalist texts as they complicate this tradition, examining the way in which the female body is commodified in the new urban setting of turn of the century America in myriad ways, and how that commodification is also reflected in the space of pseudonature, which is gendered as feminine in the scheme outlined in the previous chapter. In this chapter, I suggest that, in addition to the “body-machine complex” outlined by Seltzer as a primarily masculine phenomenon of embodied anxieties, the female figures of naturalism reflect a body-commodity complex—in which they are uniquely subject to the changing urban lifestyle largely dictated by a changing urban economy. This analysis engages with Stacy Alaimo’s discussion of the concept of “toxic bodies” in *Material Feminisms* (2008), which offers a theoretical framework in which we can read the physical and psychological effects of the body-commodity complex on these fictional women as products of their environment. The significance of this discussion to pseudonature is in a return to the obvious connection between the female figures of naturalism and the space of pseudonature introduced in Chapter II, extending the body-commodity complex to pseudonature and reflecting on the implications of a commodified sublime within it.

Chapter V offers a conclusion which reflects on the philosophical complications to canonical understandings of American literary naturalism which all of the above present. This final section contemplates the complacency with which naturalism accepts the deterministic forces of environment which it is largely concerned with documenting as fated beyond the power of individual human beings, and ultimately suggests a reassessment of the orientation to both naturalism and naturalist criticism to combat that complacency. This chapter also makes a case for the breadth of pseudonature left to be analyzed in the body of American literature, film, and art since this initial period of its emergence, using a brief analysis of the contemporary film *Leave No Trace* (2018) as both evidence of pseudonature's continued relevance and an example of a corrective to the complacency with which naturalistic depictions of pseudonature treat the destructive patriarchal forces of culture. The conclusion ultimately invites the reader to contemplate ways in which we might envision other worlds, ones that do not necessitate the presence of pseudonature at all, but instead conceive of spaces in which to live more consistently with the femininity which we see fading from the pages of these naturalist novels.

CHAPTER II: EXPLORING THE “PLACES OF FORGETFULNESS” IN *MAGGIE, SISTER CARRIE,* AND *THE HOUSE OF MIRTH*

Overview

Many of the novels which we associate with American literary naturalism are fixated on the novelty of the recently industrialized world, as well as the anxieties that accompany it. Along with this industrial anxiety comes, necessarily, an urban setting, and that urban setting is frequently as bleak, grimy, mechanized, and cold as we might imagine a depiction of turn-of-the-century anxieties of urbanization to be. However, in those same grim cityscapes, scenes of particular import that take place inside small pockets of what the undiscerning eye might call “nature” appear consistently in the naturalist novel. These enclaves are usually, in fact, not “nature” as we conceive it at all — rather they exist in some liminal form between the nature they emulate and the urban industrialization which they seek to negate. These are the spaces which the term “pseudonature” identifies.

My first chapter introduces the scope of what the representation of pseudonatural spaces in literature can mean; this chapter makes the case that the representation of pseudonature occurs repeatedly and meaningfully in major works associated with American literary naturalism during this period. The following entails a close reading of three primary texts that are emblematic of this representation, with an eye for how earlier literary traditions (romanticism, transcendentalism) are the imaginative foundation to which theses spaces gesture backward in the literary tradition. Examining these fictional spaces through an affective ecocritical lens within this tradition illuminates how these

spaces function within the worlds of these texts, as well as offering us a window into understanding how their real-world counterparts are functioning in the world around us.

An affective ecocritical framework is invaluable in tracking a pattern of pseudonature throughout these texts, as the images of nature evoked are explicitly linked to the emotional state of the characters who are encountering the spaces; in other words, the environments which these characters encounter generate a certain "affect"[1] as a response. The primary conceit of affective ecocriticism is that place has the ability to shape our emotional and internal responses in accordance with the external material reality of the physical space (Bladow and Ladino 2). In other words, the internal is affected by the external. If this premise is applied to literature, as it will be here, then it generates an interesting framework by which we might read encounters with pseudonature. In their introduction to *Affective Ecocriticism* (2019), Kyle Bladow and Jennifer Ladino describe how the blending of ecocriticism and affect theory "disrupts both discrete notions of embodied selfhood and static notions of environment, encouraging us to trace the trajectories of transcorporeal encounters that are intricate and dynamic" (8). This notion of tracing transcorporeal encounters will serve as an illuminating touchstone in tracing the affect of encounters with pseudonature in particular, as it is the fluidity of the relationship between the human body and the pseudonatural environment that yields productive analysis on pseudonature's affect

[1] "Affect," here, refers to emotional and bodily responses experienced by characters and/or individuals encountering various stimuli (in this case, environment) as opposed to "effect," which connotes consequences less linked to human experience and emotion. Affect, in the context of affective ecocriticism, can be understood specifically as the emotional responses, and attendant bodily sensations, triggered by external spaces for the purposes of this particular project.

beyond the page, the affect which real-world examples of such built spaces generate in material reality, and in real living bodies.

Stacy Alaimo's contribution to *Material Feminisms* (2008) offers a crucial definition of transcorporeality that can be applied to this affective ecocritical reading. Alaimo advocates a turn toward the material based on un understanding of transcorporeality as "a time-space where human corporeality…is inseparable from 'nature' or 'environment'" (238). This concept of transcorporeality, she argues, "makes it difficult to pose nature as a mere background for the exploits of the human, since nature is always as close as one's own skin" (238). Transcorporeality here refers to the constant relational flux between material bodies, human included, an awareness of which is crucial to Alaimo's reconsideration of the embodied experience of womanhood. Alaimo discusses the relationship between human body and its environment in terms of agency:

> There is obviously a sense in which all embodied beings experience corporeal agencies, be they positive, negative, or neutral. Acknowledging that one's body has its own forces, which are interlinked and continually intra-acting with wider material as well as social, economic, psychological, and cultural forces, can not only be useful but may also be ethical. (Alaimo 250)

In order to understand how the human body's agency interacts with nonhuman agency in this trasncorporeal relationship, Alaimo references Carolyn Merchant's writings[2] on "the agency of nature," in which nature is conceived of as historical agent — "an actor which may very well challenge the discursive constructions through which it is understood,"

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[2] Alaimo specifically references Carolyn Merchant's *Ecological Revolutions: Nature, Gender, and Science in New England* (1989).

meaning that it disrupts traditional dualistic understandings of nature/culture as passive/active (245). Alaimo, by way of Merchant, suggests that while humans obviously have the necessary agency to "'alter their surroundings,'" nature, too, "'responds through ecological changes'" to that human stimuli (245). The goal of Merchant's acknowledgement of nonhuman agency is not to project sentience onto nonhuman matter, but instead to promote a partnership ethic between nature and human which operates on an awareness of the potential affect and effect of that nonhuman agency on humans, and vice versa. Alaimo points out that perhaps the easiest way to understand the concept of transcorporeality and the agency of nonhuman matter in interaction with the human form is through the act of eating, in which natural determining factors like soil composition, rainfall, etc. determine the precise makeup of the food which is then ingested by humans, becoming a part of their physical bodies (254). The field of affective ecocriticism brings these two forms of agency into the discussion of how one's material surroundings have a certain degree of agency in interactions with human beings, suggesting they are not simply passive matter but instead generate an affect experienced by the human agents navigating them.

Grounding the exploration of built environment in these texts in affective ecocriticism allows us to analyze the material environment's affect on the body, as well as how human bodies have shaped that very environment. In the case of pseudonature, this approach offers a theoretical foothold for the phenomenon seen within the novels — that paradoxical emotional response of freedom from society's pressures that characters feel while interacting with a space constructed as part of the very material fabric of that society. In its nineteenth century context, the particular affect tracked here might best be

understood in terms of the aforementioned Olmstedian "sense of enlarged freedom" — emphasis on the sense — that individuals experience within spaces of pseudonature. The particular encounters with pseudonature in the primary texts to follow evoke romantic and transcendental associations with Nature as an expression of the affect associated with these spaces. In this way, these encounters engage with that tradition of conceiving of the wilderness as a restorative antidote to the toxicity of urban living. In analyzing these encounters in the texts more closely, a clear pattern emerges in the use of pseudonature in American literary naturalism, a pattern which clues us into how pseudonature's real world counterparts affect our own experience of material reality.

The three primary texts in question are Stephen Crane's *Maggie, a Girl of the Streets* (1893), Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* (1900), and Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth* (1905). Central to the discussion of pseudonature in these novels are the female protagonists themselves: Maggie, Carrie, and Lily, respectively. Each of these texts depicts a young woman struggling against the immense burden of newly urbanized living at the turn of the century, each demonstrates the trickiness of navigating romantic partners for young women within that newly erratic cityscape, and each in their own way discloses a connection between spaces of pseudonature in the novel and the protagonist in question. For Maggie, her experience of pseudonature exists primarily in her imagination. She retreats from the difficulty of her material circumstances in the New York tenement district into a psychological reprieve full of natural imagery in addition to a mysterious suitor, arguably one preferable to her actual love interest of Pete. For Carrie, her initial romantic encounters with one of her two misguided love interests, the figure of Hurstwood, take place almost exclusively within the bounds of city parks in turn-of-the-

century Chicago. For Wharton's Lily Bart, the most obvious and yet perhaps most complicated pseudonature-related figure, her interior life is understood via so many encounters with the tortured Lawrence Selden, her would-be romantic partner. These encounters take place in a variety of urban pseudonatural spaces in which her tumultuous emotions, not fit for high society, are given brief furlough in which to bubble up into consciousness. Tracking the relationships between these characters and their surroundings gives way to understanding the effect of these transcorporeal encounters with pseudonature both inside and beyond these texts of naturalism.

"Places of Forgetfulness" in Stephen Crane's *Maggie*

Stephen Crane's 1893 *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* might be the most subtle representation of pseudonatural elements of the three primary text examples to follow, but its subtlety is perhaps more compelling in the suggestion that this phenomenon is born of a deeper, more universal psychocultural experience than merely the aesthetic choices of a few authors of the period. In fact, we might say that *Maggie* represents the unconscious associations that inform our reading of pseudonature rather than presenting many examples of pseudonature itself. However, much of the criticism of *Maggie* focuses instead on the scandal of prostitution as opposed to the circumstances which place Maggie in a position to engage in it. In a 2006 "Reintroduction" to Naturalism, Donald Pizer glibly describes the novella as "short work about a New York prostitute" (191). The conventional reading of Maggie is, as Jordan L. Von Cannon writes in an article exploring Maggie's prostitution, that "Maggie attempts to perform middle-class status but fails" (44). In that "Reintroduction," Pizer emphasizes Crane's desire to craft a literary

portrayal of life as authentic above all else, revealing the hellishness of unsavory modern conditions to his readership (194). It seems that this awareness of Crane's dedication to authenticity and his journalistic background may have blinded criticism to the more archetypal and psychologically fraught interpretations of that hellishness which Crane portrays. Though many might describe the contents of *Maggie* in similarly reductionist terms, the haunting story presents a much more complicated understanding of a life in the slums of an 1890s New York burdened with the weight of massive population influx, under-regulated industrialization, and on the brink of an 1893 financial panic that would extend through most of the decade. As Maggie experiences family traumas and the unjust social ramifications of a misguided love interest, Pete, her descent *is* one into prostitution, but it is one catalyzed by poverty and social circumstance. Looking beyond the obvious scandal, the urban backdrop for this sexual political drama draws a harsh outline of what Crane perceived in the changing urban climate of the late nineteenth century, one in which restorative images of natural beauty were few and far between, gaining significance in their marked absence. Conceiving of the emergence of pseudonatural representations in naturalism on a timeline, it stands to reason that Crane's novella holds the seeds of pseudonature, whereas the later iterations of pseudonature have been given time to blossom. *Maggie* seethes with unconscious associations with nature and the manmade respectively, and offers a window into the implications of more obvious examples of pseudonature in literature through Maggie's experience of imagined nature and "places of forgetfulness" as compensatory encounters against the backdrop of the miserable reality of her circumstances.

The aforementioned affect of freedom within spaces of pseudonature is the primary affect to which attention must be paid in examining the larger significance of pseudonature, but interestingly in *Maggie*, most of the few interactions with the natural take place not in the built realm, but in the imagination of the characters. Maggie is styled in natural imagery with Crane's famous description of how she "blossomed in a mud puddle," a reference both to her physical beauty (feminized in floral imagery) and to its dissonance with her material circumstances in the slums into which she was born (Crane 24). This description serves as a nod to the naturalist thematic considerations of the effects of forces beyond the individual will on one's fate in the world. It is this interplay between the slum environment, the tenement district dubbed Rum Alley, and the natural imagery of the text that most piques the ecocritical interest. Their seeming mutual exclusivity in the novella provides a window into Crane's intentions for the very few mentions of nature that do appear in the text. Maggie's story, like so many in naturalism, is indeed one of a plot of decline, in which environmental, societal, economic, and other factors determine Maggie's inevitable downfall, her efforts be damned. Freedom, it seems, doesn't much factor into the equation. But there are certain psychological reprieves from the glumness of her slum circumstances — and those are decidedly cloaked in natural imagery, whether or not that imagery is real (natural, that is), pseudonatural, or purely imagined.

A crucial difference between other textual examples of pseudonature and the images of nature found in *Maggie* is that the most frequent evocations of nature and its restorative power are imagined by the characters within the text. Where Wharton's Lily Bart and Dreiser's Carrie Meeber can be seen touring a number of parks, gardens, and

other pseudonatural spaces with their respective romantic interests, one of the most telling mentions of nature with relation to Maggie is one that takes place in her own mind, in which she inhabits an imagined space of lush natural aesthetic with an unnamed lover. In first encountering Pete, the young man who seduces Maggie and ultimately abandons her for another, Maggie's thoughts immediately retreat to images of nature: "Maggie perceived that here was the beau ideal of a man. Her dim thoughts were often searching for far away lands where, as God says, the little hills sing together in the morning. Under the trees of her dream-gardens there had always walked a lover" (26). Simultaneously, Crane evokes the relatable girlhood experience of daydreamed romance and the feeling of distance from Maggie's earthly surroundings in acknowledging her secret desire for an environment utterly unlike her own. Her source of escape is an imagining of the types of natural landscape upon which romantic and transcendental thought project a sustaining and restorative spiritual presence, but unlike some of the other figures to be analyzed in the context of pseudonature, Maggie has access to such locales only within her own mind.

In one of surprisingly few ecocritical readings of this text, Robert E. Myers describes this phenomenon as "moments of nature worship," emblematic of Maggie's "escapist longings" (198). Though Myers focuses primarily on Maggie's fixation with "nature worship," it is worth noting that her brother Jimmie's own version of a moment of nature worship offers additional insight into the dynamic of Maggie's experience. Jimmie famously tells Maggie that she will have to "edder go teh hell or go teh work!"—not only an admonition against engaging with the attention Maggie receives from the boys of Rum Alley, but also a telling revelation of Jimmie's rather interesting conception

of the relation between work and spirit in life (Crane 24). Crane offers brief interludes into Jimmie's interior life in the text, and a poignant one comes in a scene in which Jimmie waits with other hard-up city dwellers, enduring a sermon of the fire-and-brimstone persuasion on the promise of a hot meal from the church. Jimmie's musings on the scene before him pit the practical need of himself and the other men at direct odds with the preacher's sermon on the state of their souls. The narration conceives of unspoken messages traveling between preacher and congregants: "'You are damned,' said the preacher. And the reader of sounds might go forth from the ragged people: 'Where's our soup?'" (20). From Jimmie's perspective, the spiritual concerns of the preacher have no bearing on the immediate needs of the poor and disenfranchised — hunger, poverty, sickness and despair — and are therefore utterly detached from the lived experience of these people. Jimmie does, however, reveal his own impulse toward something greater and more paradisiacal in the lines to follow: "Momentarily, Jimmie was sullen with thoughts of a hopeless altitude where grew fruit" (20). This is Jimmie's moment of nature worship, an imagining of a higher plane upon which he might exist, along with fertile nature, surrounded by a supply of food that does not depend upon his own degradation. His escape fantasy is one in which spirit might meet his immediate practical needs for survival. Here Crane points to the utter incompatibility of these concerns — situated on opposite ends of Maslow's hierarchy — which underscores the distance between reality and the "moments of nature worship" which both Jimmie and Maggie entertain. The concerns about morality and spirituality that the preacher puts forth are utter abstractions to Jimmie, having no bearing whatsoever on the immediate needs of the people receiving them — just as distanced from reality as Maggie's imagined natural landscape and lover.

It is no coincidence that the appeal of Maggie's imagined landscape relies in part on a "lover" as a companion. In the figure of Pete, Maggie believes she has found the suitor of her dreams, quite literally, and someone who can elevate her from her misery. While Pete's pursuit of Maggie perhaps strikes the reader as transparently inauthentic, Maggie herself is either unaware of or unwilling to acknowledge the realities of her romantic encounter. A pattern is established wherein Maggie is rescued from abusive familial conflicts by Pete, situating him firmly in her mind as the key to escaping her surroundings and not, as we come to realize, a young man taking advantage of an inexperienced woman. Part of Pete's seduction tactics relies on his perpetuating the sense that he has access to the finer experiences of life, exposing Maggie to all types of recreation in the city that she has previously not had the means to enjoy. Pete takes Maggie to Central Park to ogle animals in cages and perpetuate the charade that his shiny shoes and polished appearance, as compared to the working men of Rum Alley, promise some degree of upward social mobility: "Pete, raking his brains for amusement, discovered the Central Park Menagerie and the Museum of Arts" (35). This occasion marks one of several in the novella in which Pete takes Maggie to outings into what Crane describes as "the places of forgetfulness" later in the text; the line refers specifically to theaters, but we can count beer halls, saloons, parks and other recreational spaces that Pete visits with Maggie among them (70).

These "places of forgetfulness" work in Pete's favor as he employs his seduction tactics; they are presented to the reader as places of merriment, often involving alcohol, in which Maggie is invited to imagine unlimited access to the joys of life through her immediate enjoyment of the fun proffered by the place in question. The forgetfulness is

directed toward the reality of her own material circumstances, and these places begin to play host to her secret ambitions and desires to live a life of comfort that Pete's appearance and companionship indicate might be a possibility to her. In leaving one play performance with Pete, Maggie reflects on her own experience of a place of forgetfulness:

> Maggie always departed with raised spirits from the showing places of the melodrama. She rejoiced at the way in which the poor and virtuous eventually surmounted the wealthy and wicked. The theater made her think. She wondered if the culture and refinement she had seen imitated, perhaps grotesquely, by the heroine on the stage, could be acquired by a girl who lived in a tenement house and worked in a shirt factory. (37)

Here Maggie describes the feeling of being exposed to a sustaining fiction that a girl of her small means might, too, overcome socioeconomic barriers to achieve happiness and stability. Pete becomes the key, in Maggie's imaginings, to this higher plane of happy existence, by the very virtue that he facilitates her access into these "places of forgetfulness." Like the naturalist female protagonists to follow in this analysis, Maggie's hope for an alternate future hinges on her attachment to an unstable man. Following the final familial conflict with Maggie's mother that results in Maggie leaving the family home to be with Pete, she sits in the beer hall, contemplating this very alternative, one which will never be: "She contemplates Pete's man-subduing eyes and noted that wealth and prosperity was indicated by his clothes. She imagined a future, rose-tinted, because of its distance from all that she previously had experienced" (53). These places of forgetfulness generate an affect of hope and optimism, changing Maggie's outlook on her

own life through her encounters with these spaces and the distractions that they offer, however fleeting that optimism might be. It is the act of forgetting that Maggie romanticizes here, and despite her previous experiences with Pete in these "places of forgetfulness," she seems unaware, or in denial, that the world which pushed her into this position waits just on the other side of the beer hall doors.

Maggie and Pete's foray into Central Park serves as a useful link between the "places of forgetfulness" and the spaces of pseudonature that will present themselves in other naturalist texts. The purpose of entering into these spaces is largely for Pete's benefit — to entertain and delight Maggie just enough to reify their sexual entanglement by capitalizing on Maggie's desire to improve her station through a romantic attachment. (The reader, of course, is aware long before Maggie's downfall that this will likely not be the case; we are not so naive as Maggie to believe that shiny shoes are indicative of the goodness of man.) The position of Central Park in the text's category of "places of forgetfulness" allows us also to ascribe the qualities of those places to pseudonature itself. Pseudonature then can be read as a similar outlet for the entertainment of alternatives to the drudgery of one's material circumstances, a drudgery which threatens to tip urban life into the realm of impossible misery for the likes of Maggie. Pseudonature as it appears in the texts to follow can be read as concretizations of the preexisting imagined ideas about nature as restorative escape, ideas which reflect the romantic attitude toward wilderness and nature explored in the previous chapter. This relationship is illustrated in Maggie and Jimmie's fantasies and mirrored in the affect of those "places of forgetfulness," which bear much of the same psychological import as spaces of pseudonature.

Maggie's demise begins, interestingly, with a contemplation of those "places of forgetfulness." A yet unidentified Maggie — here described as "a girl of the painted cohorts" — stands in "mingled light and gloom of an adjacent park" watching the theaters empty crowds of energized patrons onto the rainy street (70). Notably here, those inside the park linger in "attitudes of chronic dejection," a stark contrast to the people Maggie observes filtering out of the theaters (70). In this moment, Maggie's descent into prostitution, and therefore into a social category which is shunned by the urban community, has cemented her as a spectator rather than a participant in the places of forgetfulness which she used to frequent. What once offered a mental escape from the reality of her material circumstances has been rendered utterly inaccessible to her. That access, it turns out, was dependent upon Pete, and without him, Maggie has been barred entirely from the act of even imagining a future not dictated by poverty, let alone actually living one. The distance between Maggie's former circumstances and her current ones is much shorter than the distance between the life she had been imagining for herself and the one she now finds herself living, and it is this reconciliation with reality more than anything that feeds the attitude of "chronic dejection" depicted here. Maggie has been banished from the realm of forgetfulness, and must now reckon with the reality before her.

Before Maggie herself dies, her imagination, where she once envisioned herself in lush natural surroundings with a handsome lover, does. And in the scene that follows, Crane peppers Maggie's final moments with warring imagery of nature and city. Maggie drifts away from the places of forgetfulness, including the park, whose soothing imaginative balm she is now denied. She moves instead toward the "gloomy districts near

the river, where the tall black factories shut in the street and only occasional broad beams of light fell across the pavements from saloons" (72). While moving toward the natural — the river itself — Maggie's journey is described in grim language, with city constructions casting out all light from the surrounding darkness. A pervasive eeriness — compounded by the creepy descriptions of building features as eyes and lips — overwhelms as Maggie moves toward the river's "deathly black hue" and her demise as the hands of the "huge fat man in torn and greasy garments," whose description reads like a nightmarish Santa Claus (72). The precise circumstances of Maggie's death are implied here, not stated, but we know that she has met her downfall near this blackened river which has been swallowed up in its sinister city surroundings, at the hands of a man, not entirely unlike Pete, who has his heart set on having his way with Maggie, consequences be damned. The scene leaves us with this as reminder of how distant, now, all that Maggie had once imagined for herself is: "The varied sounds of life, made joyous by distance and seeming unapproachableness came faintly and died away to silence" (72). The place where nature and city blend, pseudonature, is a place of hope for many who experience the affect of freedom it generates — a place of forgetfulness. But here it is the starting point of Maggie's final journey, where she meets her treacherous and ambiguous end, listening to the "unapproachableness" of joy and life from the city which has relegated her to this very margin. Maggie's relationship with Pete has also failed to provide Maggie with stable footing in the society of which she so desperately longs to be a part. The crucial difference between Maggie and those happy theatre-goers is not fate, not morals, neither character flaw nor lack of want — but money. This is also the difference between the following naturalist heroines and Maggie, the single factor which allows them to avoid

Maggie's fate, despite engaging in very similar romance-based efforts to acquire financial and social stability. Maggie's end reveals to us the ineffectual nature of the imaginings which pseudonature allows, rendered futile by the reality of Maggie's plight, and played out against this backdrop of natural imagery being obscured by the built world. And without money and the social status which it insures, no place of forgetfulness has affective powers strong enough to generate a fantasy in which Maggie escapes her circumstances.

The Sensational (No, Really) Pseudonature of *Sister Carrie*

Unlike Maggie, Theodore Dreiser's Caroline Meeber, the titular Sister Carrie, experiences both the imagined freedom of pseudonature and some semblance of the embodied, actual freedom that financial stability allows through a tumultuous experience of city life that begins with slightly more advantages than Maggie's, an outsider though Carrie may be. Interestingly, Carrie's character experiences a mere brush with a naturalist plot of decline before emerging on the other side unscathed — financially, that is. Carrie enters into the city of Chicago from a rural upbringing, unaware of many of the social and financial perils which await her within. Ill-prepared for city life, she slips effortlessly into a similarly toxic and destructive romantic relationship as Maggie, this one with a slimy suitor by the name of Charles Drouet, who threatens to leave Carrie in similarly dire social circumstances as Pete does with Maggie. The plot of decline that threatens to overwhelm Carrie's urban experience, however, is cut short by yet another relationship, this one with George Hurstwood, in which she is initially able to shift her fortunes in the opposite direction. Ultimately, Carrie's status as successful actress leaves the reader

feeling ambivalent about her freedom, as it is primarily financial and material, and not necessarily reflective of the spiritual sustenance which most associate with the word.

That financial freedom is a product of the imagined freedoms that Carrie, not unlike Maggie, experiences in recreational spaces throughout urban Chicago during her time there. Throughout the novel, the affect of freedom cultivated inside spaces of pseudonature is experienced by both Carrie and Hurstwood. And with Carrie's acting career, not to mention several early outings with Drouet during their relationship, she finds herself frequenting those very same "places of forgetfulness" outlined by Crane in *Maggie*. *Sister Carrie*'s representation of both spaces of pseudonature and "places of forgetfulness" serves as a sort of bridge between *Maggie* and *The House of Mirth,* as Carrie experiences the affective power of both types of spaces, and the scope of the affective power of space in *Sister Carrie* is established from the first scene of the novel.

Carrie rides a train headed for Chicago and leaves behind "the familiar green environs of the village" as she contemplates "what Chicago might be" (Dreiser 1). As Carrie contemplates her future, the first of Dreiser's many narrative interjections gives the reader a hint at the dramas to come:

> The city has its cunning wiles, no less than the infinitely smaller and more human tempter. There are large forces which allure with all the soulfulness of expression possible in the most cultured human. The gleam of a thousand lights is often as effective as the persuasive light in a wooing and fascinating eye. Half the undoing of the unsophisticated and natural mind is accomplished by forces wholly superhuman. A blare of sound, a roar of life, a vast array of human hives, appeal to the astonished senses in equivocal terms. (1-2)

The “astonished senses” of those encountering city life, circa the 1889 setting of the novel’s opening, set the precedent of space affecting the sensory experience of those entering into it. This passage also sets up an important dynamic that weaves throughout the text, that of Carrie being dwarfed and swallowed into the larger forces of the city that lay beyond the scale of the individual human, those deterministic forces with which naturalism is particularly interested. Carrie’s entrance to Chicago marks a distinct movement from the pastoral imagery drifting past her train window toward those larger than life forces which seem inevitable on her journey, and as the onslaught of these forces draws ever nearer, that pastoral landscape outside of Carrie’s window changes, disrupted by the tell-tale signs of a more highly cultivated civilization: “They were nearing Chicago. Signs were everywhere numerous. Trains flashed by them. Across wide stretches of flat, open prairie they could see lines of telegraph poles stalking across the fields toward the great city. Far away were indications of suburban towns, some big smoke-stacks towering high in the air” (6). Here the landscape is marred by the totems of progress, telegraph lines and train tracks disrupting “the familiar green environs,” and as the sense of place that Carrie observes shifts, so too does her mood. From a state of contemplative calm, these images jolt Carrie into a state of emotional agitation, made endurable only by the presence of her new acquaintance Charles Drouet, but evoking a heightened sensory response in her nonetheless. As the brakeman announces the imminence of urban environments — “‘Chicago! Chicago!’” — Carrie is affected emotionally and physically by the inevitable arrival at city center: “Her heart was troubled by a kind of terror. The fact that she was alone, away from home, rushing into a great sea of life and endeavor, began to tell. She could not help but feel a little choked for

breath—a little sick as her heart beat so fast. She half closed her eyes and tried to think it was nothing, that Columbia City was only a little way off" (7). Should someone relay these symptoms to a therapist, panic attack might be the obvious diagnosis. Carrie's emotional and physiological response changes dramatically as she absorbs the immediacy with which the urban world is confronting her, with that familiar village now far in the distance, and Drouet (another dubious shiny-shoed man, not unlike Pete) directly in the line of sight as a comforting presence amidst the unfamiliar backdrop.

This opening scene serves as exemplar of Edith Wharton's idea, which she presents in *The Writing of Fiction* (1925), that the first scene of the novel presents the "germ of the whole" work in its setting up of thematic threads right out of the gate (39). It also represents a textbook instance of what Leo Marx, in *The Machine in the Garden*, refers to as a "Sleepy Hollow episode" (15). The "Sleepy Hollow episode" refers to the archetype of Marx's reading of the "machine" intruding upon the proverbial "garden" which he traces to Nathaniel Hawthorne's journals from the year 1844, in which the author, "using natural facts metaphorically to convey something about a human situation," is intruded upon in his idyllic, pensive garden state by the sound of a locomotive's whistle in the distance (12-3). This interruption, Marx argues, forces the observer to "acknowledge the existence of a reality alien to the pastoral dream," a material reality beyond the refuge of the garden, and these episodes, Marx continues, are manifested in various iterations in countless examples of literary texts out of the American literary body (15). Here the changing images and sounds of the brakeman trigger such an episode in Carrie, as the machine propels her into a sudden state of sensory overload. The scene functions as a reversal of the Olmstedian affect of freedom that is found in spaces of

pseudonature or "places of forgetfulness"; as Carrie moves toward the built world and away from a pastoral landscape, her senses are confronted with terror, panic, and uncertainty, in other words, the very sensations from which the pseudonatural affect of freedom is an escape. This is the first of several occasions in which the sense of place dictates the emotional response of the characters in *Sister Carrie*, though it is notable in its particularity to Carrie herself. In fact, much of the emotional experience of pseudonature in the novel to follow is felt primarily through the character of George Hurstwood, Carrie's eventual suitor, and the utter lack of emotional restoration felt by Carrie in spaces shrouded in natural imagery is of equal import as this opening scene.

Where Crane's *Maggie* offers us imagined spaces of natural reprieve from city life, Dreiser's novel offers us concrete spaces of pseudonature through which to analyze this emerging dynamic. Carrie begins her time in Chicago working and struggling to make ends meet, before she enters into a somewhat dubious romantic attachment with Drouet, who approaches his relationship with Carrie, much like Pete from *Maggie*, with a much different sense of obligation than Carrie perceives. Much of their relationship is founded on Drouet saving Carrie from dire financial challenges — once giving her "two soft, green handsome ten-dollar bills" (47) in what ultimately serves as a sort of down payment on their sexual relationship — before they eventually move in together, passing as a married couple to the neighbors observing them. Carrie's quarters with Drouet feature an interesting relation to pseudonature as well, with the adjacent park serving as focal point: "Drouet had taken three rooms, furnished, in Ogden Place, facing Union Park, on the West Side. That was a little, green-carpeted breathing spot, than which to-day, there is nothing more beautiful in Chicago. It afforded a vista pleasant to

contemplate" (69). The "green-carpeted breathing spot" signifies the same reprieve that Carrie feels from the ceaseless pressures of toil and money management as she struggles to make a life for herself in Chicago living with her sister and brother-in-law, two practical-minded and thrifty individuals with a lack of imagination about what life might have to offer beyond Carrie's "prefigured" urban destiny as a shopgirl (11). In the confines of Drouet's rooms, Carrie can breathe a sigh of relief, enjoy the material fancies that Drouet provides for her, and contemplate the pleasantness of urban living and all that it might eventually come to offer her. For Carrie, Drouet is a savior from a life of dullness, toil, and misery, leading her to perceive their relationship much like Maggie initially perceives her relationship with Pete. And though Drouet's advances ultimately do much less damage to Carrie than Pete's do to Maggie, it is important to note that this arrangement provides Drouet with his own restorative pocket of revitalization from the chaos of city life — even though his resides firmly within those rooms which Carrie occupies, not without. In a way, Drouet constructs this space much like an urban park is constructed, as a mechanism by which one might forget their societal responsibilities, though it is comprised of the very same system whose effects it is designed to negate.

As Carrie's situation with Drouet grows dull, a new romantic attachment presents itself as a possibility, and does so largely through exposure to pseudonature and "places of forgetfulness." Drouet introduces Carrie to his acquaintance, George Hurstwood, who ultimately eclipses Drouet's allure for Carrie through his superior financial and social standing. Hurstwood, interestingly, is the manager of a saloon in Chicago — a location designated as one of the "places of forgetfulness" in *Maggie*. His home life is comprised of a wife and family with which he seems rather disinterested, and Carrie offers him a

welcome lifeline out of the perceived dullness of the situation. Hurstwood manages to woo Carrie through a series of outings in Chicago without subjecting their relationship to the supervision of Drouet or the revelation of his ongoing marriage. Many of these outings involve engaging with "places of forgetfulness," again serving to fuel the imagining of a more grand and distant future for the woman granted access to them, but even more notable is the relationship between pseudonature, namely a variety of public parks in Chicago, and Hurstwood's actions toward Carrie within those spaces.

Hurstwood as a character is a case study in both the system in which pseudonature operates and the effects, and affect, it can have on the individual. In keeping with the affective power enacted by material place in the novel, Hurstwood's presence in urban parks frequently results in emotional upheaval of the romantic variety. Hurstwood is already situated as closely related to "places of forgetfulness" via his position as saloon manager, and even his residence is reflective of pseudonatural markers. His home is rendered desirable by its inclusion of and proximity to pseudonatural spaces, further cementing his association with such spaces in the text. The residence is described as "near Lincoln Park," and "graced in front by a small grassy plot, twenty five feet wide and ten feet deep. There was also a small rear yard, walled in by the fences of the neighbors and holding a stable where he kept his horse and trap" (64). The lawn is noted here not only as a signifier of the desirability of the place as a residence but also as a signifier of wealth and status afforded by Hurstwood's occupation — an implication outright stated in later chapters when Carrie observes that "richer people required more space" (243). Hurstwood, more than any other character, is associated with these spaces and their implications, and in a brief scene featuring his own daughter, Jessica, a connection

between these spaces and romantic impulse is forged. Jessica tells her mother breathlessly that her current suitor "wants me to stroll over in to the park with him" (66). This small moment serves as a clue into the forming association between pseudonature and the emotional vulnerability inherent in the romantic interactions which are frequently seen unfolding within those spaces.

Carrie and Hurstwood do their fair share of strolling in parks, which becomes somewhat of a euphemism for the emotionally fraught romantic encounters entailed within. As their unspoken attraction begins to emerge into consciousness, Hurstwood invites Carrie for a walk in the park, only to spontaneously choose to take her in horse and carriage (itself pseudonatural simulation of actual horseback riding) down the new Boulevard, described in terms of seclusion from their urban surroundings:

> [The Boulevard] connected Douglas Park with Washington or South Park, and was nothing more than a neatly *made* road, running due south for some five miles over an open, grassy prairie, and then due east over the same kind of prairie for the same distance. There was not a house to be encountered anywhere along the larger part of the route, and any conversation would be pleasantly free of interruption. (94)

In the space between these parks, Hurstwood extricates himself from the space of responsibility, work, and family in order to reveal his true feelings to Carrie, those, he believes, of love. Dreiser describes Hurstwood here as "something of a romanticist after his kind," "capable of strong feelings —often poetic ones" (95). In the escapism of this pseudonatural space, Hurstwood tells Carrie, "'You know…That I love you?" (95). In lieu of verbal affirmation, Carrie returns a kiss — one that would be almost impossible in the

environment of their daily routines — and Hurstwood triumphantly declares: "'Now,' he said joyously, his fine eyes ablaze, 'You're my own girl, aren't you?'" (97). The space of pseudonature affords Hurstwood and Carrie a temporary reprieve from society's social constructions. This reprieve is necessary to reveal the intimate nature of these extramarital feelings which would disrupt the societal structure beyond, despite the harbinger of Hurstwood's possessive impulse slightly dampening the affect of freedom within this particular moment.

Carrie has, it seems, simply shifted in loyalty—from Drouet to Hurstwood—between the various men attempting to siphon her youth, beauty, and vitality in order to revitalize their own unsatisfactory existences. Hurstwood's internal interpretation of this declaration is not of an alternate future for himself or Carrie, but simply an elevation of his own pleasure. He is revealed to think as much: "He would enjoy this new gift over and above his ordinary allowance of pleasure. He would be happy with her and his own affairs would go on as they had, undisturbed" (98). The revelation is not a promise to Carrie or a decision about how to change the life that caused him to seek out such a distraction in the first place. It is a conscious attempt to assuage the emptiness he feels while the status quo remains "undisturbed." This is a near-perfect example of both the affect of pseudonature and the inherent problems with it. The pseudonatural space that affords the *affect* of freedom does not afford any significant changes in the direction of *actual* freedom at all. In an essay exploring the connection between the parks movement, *Sister Carrie*, and *The House of* Mirth, J. Susannah Shmurak writes, "Hurstwood has visions of freedom in constructed spaces of nature that mislead him into believing that he can escape the social world concealed by such spaces" (136). The emphasis for Shmurak

is on this affect of freedom as an illusion of escape, with society inevitably waiting in the wings for Hurstwood's return. In this scene, the Boulevard may lead them away from the city, and its responsibilities and drudgery, but, unfortunately for Hurstwood and Carrie, that road goes two ways.

The connection between Hurstwood and pseudonature's sensory affect is made all the more obvious in the pair's next outing into one of Chicago's parks. Hurstwood invites Carrie to rendezvous in a "pretty little park," Jefferson Park, and waits for Carrie on "a rustic bench beneath the green leaves of a lilac bush" (108). It's here, contemplating the imminent arrival of Carrie and her accompanying vitality, where Hurstwood experiences a romantic shift in sensory experience based on the pseudonature around him:

> Hurstwood had come out of his own home that morning feeling much of the same old annoyance. At his store he had idled, there being no need to write. He had come away to this place with the lightness of heart which characterizes those who put weariness behind. Now, in the shade of this cool, green bush, he looked about him with the fancy of the lover. He heard the carts go lumbering by upon the neighboring streets, but they were far off, and only buzzed upon his ear. The hum of the surrounding city was faint, the clang of an occasional bell was as music. He looked and dreamed a new dream of pleasure which concerned his present fixed condition not at all. (109)

This scene is reminiscent, once more, of Marx's description of the Sleepy Hollow episode dynamic, in which the sensory experience of nature is at the forefront of its restorative affect. The affect is that of distancing oneself from the chaos of city life through immersion in natural visions, sounds, and sensations. Hurstwood's demeanor, decision-

making, and values shift when he is within this realm. This phenomenon is reinforced moments later when Carrie puts marriage on the table and the reality of the society beyond this pseudonatural reprieve reenters Hurstwood's cosnciousness: "The suggestion of marriage struck Hurstwood forcibly…Bigamy lightened the horizon of his shadowy thoughts for a moment" (110). The impact of the social reality which waits for Hurstwood beyond this temporary reprieve is experienced here almost as shock to the senses, reinforcing by way of its disruption the idea that the pseudonatural space functions as escape from that reality.

Marriage for Carrie and Hurstwood is indeed something to give pause over, and not just because of the bigamy. Hurstwood makes promises to both marry Carrie and move away from Drouet and Chicago in the conclusion of the Jefferson Park episode, and while he makes good on both of those promises, it is through coercion and ultimately leads to more misery than he was originally attempting to escape in the first place. After stealing a large sum from his saloon, Hurstwood coerces Carrie onto a train, and the pair set out for New York, and a new life together. Once they arrive, however, Hurstwood's luck runs out — his theft is found out, his financial stability drastically reduced, and his job prospects are increasingly bleak. Try as he may to transplant his saloon experience to the New York environment, Hurstwood's removal from Chicago is ultimately the beginning of a slow descent into pennilessness, not to mention separation from Carrie, the desire for which begins to take root in Carrie's mind as it becomes increasingly clear that Hurstwood's new life with her in New York is beginning to feel remarkably like the one he left behind in Chicago. Hurstwood, while still experiencing moderate success in New York in the saloon business, begins to implement the same pattern of detachment

from his domestic responsibilities which led him to Carrie in the first place: "He convinced himself that his home life was very precious to him, but allowed that he could occasionally stay away from dinner" (221). Suddenly, Hurstwood's presence at home with Carrie becomes scarcer and scarcer, and Carrie begins to understand that her status has shifted from distraction to obligation for her new husband: "This was the life cut out for her, was it?…She was merely a servant to him now, nothing more" (258). Carrie begins to understand, as Hurstwood's fall from grace begins in earnest, that her life is now as stagnant as Hurstwood's first marriage became, and where once Carrie was the rejuvenating exception to Hurstwood's daily routine, she has now become emblematic of the routine itself — not unlike pseudonature's inability to truly disrupt the larger cultural systems in which it is constructed. Hurstwood's association with pseudonatural spaces frequently lends itself to a restorative affect, courtship with Carrie included, but his conviction that commitment to Carrie, and relocation to a city even more fully integrated into modernity, will perpetuate that restorative affect does not come to fruition.

Hurstwood's predicament underscores the inherent futility of constructing pseudonature within larger cultural systems. Just as Hurstwood cannot introduce the source of his rejuvenation into the system of marriage without compromising its benefits, introducing "nature" into the structure of a modern city does little to negate the harm it inflicts on the individuals living within it. In moving to New York, Hurstwood boxes himself into a corner, revealing even to himself the illusion behind the idea that something better, greener grass on the other side, awaits beyond his daily routine. With Carrie now solidified as Hurstwood's wife, she no longer provides the rejuvenation that drew him to her in the first place, only a sense of obligation from which he longs to

escape, but now cannot. In terms of the symbolic spatial terms of pseudonature, Hurstwood's pseudonaturally-associated source of rejuvenation has revealed itself as part and particle of the system which constricts him, lending a prescient weight to one of his first comments to Carrie upon arrival in their new city — "'There are no lawns in New York. All these are houses.'" (213). Hurstwood's comment foreshadows his own loss of privilege here, as the lack of "lawns" in New York stand in for a lack of rejuvenation now that he has incorporated Carrie into the societal structure of marriage, shattering the illusion of escape which she once provided.

With the "lawn" firmly situated as pseudonatural marker of power and privilege, Hurstwood's sudden transition into lawnlessness foreshadows the plot of decline upon which he is about to embark, that "chronicle of despair" to which Charles Walcutt gestures as a core critical tenet of naturalism, one in which the individual is helpless in the face of external and social conditions (21). As Pizer's "Reintroduction" notes, this dynamic of the plot of decline within naturalism is an acquiescence to the belief that "the fate of any specific individual was determined by conditions beyond his or her control," customarily implying the hopelessness of the individual against toxic material and social conditions (190). But while Hurstwood's chronicle of despair begins in New York, Carrie, on the other hand, ascends in social stature and financial stability in equal and opposite reaction to Hurstwood's decline.

Carrie's disgust at Hurstwood's acceptance of idle unemployment and tired marital stereotypes pushes her in search of her own source of rejuvenation, that "place of forgetfulness" found inside the theater. Carrie, having achieved marginal success in Chicago as an actress under Drouet's tutelage, is eager to transfer her skills to the New

York performance scene, and she finds her first success in a position on the chorus line, much to her delight. The description Dreiser gives of Carrie's new position is reminiscent of Maggie's imaginings during her visits to playhouses with Pete:

> On the morrow Carrie reported promptly and was given a place in the line. She saw a large, empty, shadowy play-house, still redolent of the perfumes and blazonry of the night, and notable for its rich, oriental appearance. The wonder of it awed and delighted her. Blessed be its wondrous reality. How hard she would try to be worth of it. It was above the common mass, above idleness, above want, above insignificance. People came to it in finery and carriages to see. It was ever a center of light and mirth. And here she was of it. Oh, if she could only remain, how happy would be her days! (280)

Carrie finds herself now at the helm at one of those "places of forgetfulness," not unlike Hurstwood's former position as manager of the saloon in Chicago. In fact, the two have experienced a role reversal during the period of their marriage in New York, in terms of traditional marital gender roles, that is. Hurstwood's initial lure of the promise of upward social mobility for Carrie has dissipated in New York, alongside their marriage, and Carrie has become the breadwinner of the family, leaving Hurstwood in as vulnerable a position as his own first wife, both of whom are ultimately left behind. Carrie's position as chorus girl gives way to more theatrical successes, and as she moves into center stage of these productions of the "places of forgetfulness," her domestic problems and financial woes fall away. Immersed totally into the realm of distraction offered within, Carrie has solidified her position as distraction from the drudgery of city life for any audience member, not just Hurstwood. Perhaps it is Carrie's lack of romanticism, or emotional

attachment, and her total adoption of the material values of city society that allow her to dispense with the need for rejuvenation entirely, not by altering the system which requires it for survival but by dissolving herself fully into the mechanisms by which culture perpetuates this dynamic. Where Hurstwood's relationship to pseudonature is one of transcorporeality, the external environs affecting his internal state, Carrie has now been cemented within the boundaries of pseudonature which others must transgress in pursuit of the restoration it promises.

Pseudonature and Romance in *The House of Mirth*

In the opening line of Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth*, Lawrence Selden is positioned firmly in the throes of a material urban landscape of New York City when he encounters an enlivening and unexpected vision: "Selden paused in surprise. In the afternoon rush of the Grand Central Station his eyes had been refreshed by the sight of Miss Lily Bart" (Wharton 3). His position in the train station places him in modernized industrial surroundings, steeped in the urban culture coming to dominate turn of the century New York City, and being offered a regenerative moment of reprieve from the onslaught of society in the vision of a small, mysticized pocket of femininity among the ironclad shuffle: the vision of Lily. Wharton's aforementioned "germ of the whole" orientation to novel-writing offers significance to this admittedly nitpicky reading of the novel's first paragraph. Though the more obvious threads woven here are those between Lily and Selden, careful evaluation of the interplay of these forces in the pages that follow cultivate a certain retroactive awareness of the natural versus the constructed in these first lines. Throughout *The House of Mirth*, Lily and Selden find themselves in

various spaces of pseudonature in the novel's New York setting, whether the grounds at Bellomont or a quiet city-center conservatory, and within these pseudonatural settings, the two often find themselves engaged in spiritual, passionate, or otherwise intimately human interactions which the constructed world does not seem to allow, engaging in that emerging pattern of the romantic sensory shift caused by pseudonature in naturalist texts.

In these opening scenes, a number of important symbolic threads are generated: that Lily herself is a source of spiritual rejuvenation against the backdrop of modern society, that the modern society in question is cold and unattractive, and that Lily, no matter how organic the raw materials of her beauty and character, is a construction of her surroundings. The remainder of the opening passage develops these threads as it continues to set up a transgression of the boundaries of natural versus constructed that can be productively tracked throughout the remainder of the novel and the subsequent interactions between Lily and Selden, who experience the transcorporeal relationship between self and space in each such scene. Selden is said to be "returning to his work from a hurried dip into the country," and this detail sets up a subtle opposition from the outset between the productivity of urban settings and the regenerative power of that which exists beyond it (3). Lily is positioned from the outset as an embodiment of reprieve from the mechanical, urban setting that dominates the scene; in the case of the novel's opening, that scene takes the shape of the train station platform, an arena dictated by strict schedules, crowds of city-dwellers, and the ecocritically-loaded image of the railroad. Lily and the train station scenery are at odds, with Selden designating her as a standout due to her vibrance: "Selden had never seen her more radiant. Her vivid head, relieved against the dull tints of the crowd, made her more conspicuous than in a ball-

room" (3). The dullness to which Selden gestures is seemingly a dearth of the liveliness and beauty that sets Lily apart from her surroundings as an anomaly, perhaps the same dearth of vitality that drives Hurstwood's attraction to Carrie. It is this distinction that offers rejuvenating strength to the individual encountering it, and the distinction is clearly made against those characteristics which Wharton goes on to assign to New York in general. Lily exclaims a few lines later, "What a hideous place New York is!" (5). The urban surroundings offer no such comfort to Lily or Selden, and are instead associated with a certain bleakness and urgency which drains rather than restores.

After encountering each other at the train station, Lily requests a reprieve from the stimuli of their public position in the mechanized urban center, asking of Selden, "Isn't there a quieter place?" (4). In an article on such threads of natural tension in the novel, Marilyn McEntyre borrows this line for the title of her piece, which tracks many of these transgressions between urban constructed spaces and more natural enclaves of parks, gardens, and country grounds. McEntyre notes in particular the initial act of transgressing the delineation of urban and natural in the movement from Grand Central Station, the "crowded hub of a crowded city," to Selden's more charming flat (83). This initial movement, she argues, sets the precedent for the pair's frequent forays into natural spaces as refuge from the modernized setting of New York City. As the two walk in the direction of the "quieter place," Lily observes, "'Some one has had the humanity to plant a few trees over there. Let us go into the shade'" (Wharton 5). Lily goes on to note that the homes on this street are "fresh and inviting with their awnings and flower-boxes," reminiscent of the appeal of Hurstwood's Chicago home and its pseudonatural trimmings (6). This marker of humanity is in fact Selden's street, which McEntyre describes as "an

oasis in the midst of what we learn in this novel to regard as a spiritual wasteland of brownstone and concrete" (83). The images evoked here are reminiscent not only of romantic projections onto natural imagery, but also of the distinction that *Sister Carrie* makes between, say, Hurstwood's Chicago residence and its charming front yard, and the bleaker New York residences which cause Carrie to muse that "richer people require more space" (Dreiser 243).

Much of McEntyre's discussion relies on an opposition not explicitly of urbanity versus rurality, but of the natural versus the artificial, and it is here where Lily's constructed qualities may intrude upon the critical unpacking of these thematic threads. Though Lily's beauty and livelihood are sources of emotional refreshment for Selden, his initial observations also evaluate a certain constructed air of Lily's persona. Selden muses, "He had a confused sense that she must have cost a great deal to make, that a great many dull and ugly people must, in some mysterious way, have been sacrificed to produce her. He was aware that the qualities distinguishing her from the herd of her sex were chiefly external: as though the fine glaze of beauty had been applied to vulgar clay" (5). Here Selden evaluates the resources being put into use in the construction of Lily's arresting beauty as though one might evaluate the resources being funneled into a particularly aesthetically pleasing and well-crafted manmade construction. McEntyre gestures toward the *tableaux vivant* scene as another manifestation of emphasizing Lily's constructed quality (93). Wharton's description of Lily in these opening scenes, as Selden continues to muse on her external material appearance, is insistent upon situating Lily's stimulating beauty as a product. Selden observes, "She was so evidently the victim of the civilization which had produced her, that the links of her bracelet seemed like manacles

chaining her to her fate" (7). Here Selden references her beauty, but in so doing, evokes the sort of pessimistic determinism of naturalism which Wharton leads her readership to associate with Lily's fate. It is not only a construction based upon the naturalness of feminine beauty created by the society around her, but also, and perhaps as a direct result of the construction, one doomed to be entirely dictated by those forces doing the construction. If the reader maintains any doubts about the emphasis on constructed aesthetic in the opening passages, Wharton allows Lily to air this blatant frustration a few pages deeper into the novel: "Why could one never do a natural thing without having to screen it behind a structure of artifice?" (16). These observations regarding the artificiality of Lily's beauty can be applied seamlessly onto an analysis of the same sort of artificial beauty cultivated in pseudonature, as the two entities have similarly refreshing affects.

This elaborate and drawn out reading of the first handful of pages, though somewhat tedious, illuminates the direct link between these aspects of Lily's character, as cultivated throughout the remainder of the novel, and the representation of the pseudonature which refreshes and restores amid the dullness of New York City: the parks and other pseudonatural spaces which play host to Lily and Selden's romantic encounters throughout. In terms of navigating this connection between individual spiritual fulfillment and the surroundings of that individual (whether natural or constructed), the opening scene prepares the reader, however subtly, for a consistent negotiation between the spiritual refreshment of natural beauty and the otherwise chaotic, ugly, and sometimes despair-inducing constructed backdrop of modernizing New York.

In a much larger-scale iteration of the initial transgression between urban and natural that McEntyre notes, Lily's initial excursion to Bellomont, a country estate removed from city center, and the interactions that follow there offer a continuation of these threads from the novel's first pages. In forging a link between Lily's emotional status and the surroundings, her reflections over the grounds of Bellomont are crucial. Wharton writes:

> The day was the accomplice of her mood: it was a day for impulse and truancy. The light air seemed full of powdered gold; below the dewy bloom of the lawns the woodlands blushed and smouldered, and the hills across the river swam in molten blue. Every drop of blood in Lily's veins invited her to happiness. The sound of wheels roused her from these musings, and leaning behind her shutters she saw the omnibus take up its freight. (60)

This passage not only situates Lily as experiencing the transcorporeal relationship between space and self, but also serves as yet another installment in an ever-growing list of Marx's "Sleepy Hollow" episodes. Here the restorative affect of the natural vista is directly interrupted by "the sound of wheels," the trappings of modernized society taking on a symbolic weight in the aftermath of such pensive repose. Marx's argument for the presence of this paradigm in American literature relies upon the assumption that an individual experiences the truest self, life, and sensory experience when surrounded by the natural; it assumes that the machine is the outlier, the disruption from the norm. In this case, Lily is indeed most closely associated with truth, honesty, and sincere experience when immersed in a natural vista, and the wheels that intrude upon her contemplation are the anomaly to what she considers the life most reflective of her

internal experience. The phenomenon of the machine in the garden, of the "Sleepy Hollow episode," sets up a romantic orientation to natural landscapes that assumes the self is both fueled by and reflected in nature, and yet, this is perhaps the only instance in which the role of the machine is the interruption and not the all-encompassing standard.

We are led, once more, to the opening passage, and to McEntyre's descriptions of the transgression of urban and natural settings found in Selden and Lily's first interactions. If Lily experiences a machine intruding upon her Bellomont garden, then the sight of her on the train station platform at the novel's opening is the intrusion of the garden upon the machine for Selden. Lily takes on the romantic ideal of nature for Selden in this opening passage; he is refreshed and restored spiritually by the unexpected sight of her amid the chaos of modernized New York City in this hub of all that is American industrialism, the train station. However, the norm here is that very chaos, and Lily, in all her restorative Edenic beauty, is the interruption. The assumptions then, within the city limits of the New York we come to know through *The House of Mirth*, are a reversal of the assumptions that dictate Lily's "Sleepy Hollow" episode at Bellomont. This urban landscape is the standard of living, the norm which surrounds and engulfs the daily individual experiences, and what is surprising is not a train whistle in the distance or the sound of wheels turning unexpectedly onto a country lane, but the precise opposite: a brief and fleeting reprieve from the urban sensory onslaught in the form of a temporary exposure to natural beauty. Selden's normal is the masculine, urban structure of the city center, and the dissonant entity is the lushness of Lily's feminine beauty. Where once the machine shockingly intruded upon the garden, it is now undoubtedly the garden which is a surprising intrusion into the machine.

Beyond Lily's kinship with the natural surroundings of Bellomont, the scene that takes place between Lily and Selden at Bellomont marks the first fully-fledged incident of the pair seeking refuge from modernized society within a hidden natural space, albeit a more open one than the urban gardens and parks that follow. Lily remarks that the natural vista is once more resonating with her interior experiences: "The landscape outspread below her seemed an enlargement of her present mood, and she found something of herself in its calmness, its breadth, its long free reaches" (66). The expansive quality matches the expanses of the human heart, depths which she and Selden abruptly commence plumbing, entertaining the possibilities that their mutual affection, now revealed, might open up. Seated on the ledge of rock to which Selden directs them, the pair engage in the first emotionally honest conversation we witness between them in the novel, but it is not without its complications and social ghosts. No matter their entertainment of possible futures, both understand that financial and social forces prevent them from engaging in a public romantic union. Lily muses, "Though her attitude was as calm as his, [Lily] was throbbing inwardly with a rush of thoughts. There were in her at the moment two beings, one drawing deep breaths of freedom and exhilaration, the other grasping for air in a little black prison-house of fears" (67). Here Lily expresses a certain duality between the self which thrives at this expansive natural freedom and the self which shrinks at its openness within the confines of a limiting manmade construction. It is an effective expression of the dichotomy at work in each of these scenes of tension between the natural and the manmade, and not only that, it also effectively draws on a tenet of naturalism established by canonical scholars like Donald Pizer and expounded upon by more contemporary updates of naturalism such as that by Eric Carl Link, who

explores the tensions between scientific innovations and romantic traditions of imagining the inner self in naturalist texts that frequently results in a representation of the duality of man, the tension between the animal self and the civilized entity fit for society (Link 10-11). It is a tension that plays out in many of these scenes, as pseudonature allows an expression of the animal self—reliant on emotion, freedom of expression, and base instinct—as safely contained behind the facade of the constructed environment, perhaps not unlike the construction of a civilized outer self which conceals the animal within.

The duality of experience as dictated by urban versus natural settings is seen playing out in the remainder of these crucial pseudonatural scenes. Following Lily's display as part of the *tableaux vivant* performance, Lily and Selden find themselves once more seeking reprieve from societal pressures and watchful eyes by removing themselves from the urban societal setting into a pseudonatural environment. Selden and Lily enter into a contemplative state within the hidden garden space, explicitly moving away from the society and its rituals within the larger structure:

> Selden had given her his arm without speaking. She took it in silence, and they moved away, not toward the supper-room, but against the tide which was setting thither. The faces about her flowed by like the streaming images of sleep: she hardly noticed where Selden was leading her, till they passed through a glass doorway at the end of the long suite of rooms and stood suddenly in the fragrant hush of a garden. Gravel grated beneath their feet, and about them was the transparent dimness of a midsummer night. Hanging lights made emerald caverns in the depths of foliage, and whitened the spray of a fountain falling among lilies. The magic place was deserted: there was no sound but the splash of the water on the lily-pads,

> and a distant drift of music that might have been blown across a sleeping lake. Selden and Lily stood still, accepting the unreality of the scene as a part of their own dream-like sensations. It would not have surprised them to feel a summer breeze on their faces, or to see the lights among the boughs reduplicated in the arch of a starry sky. (Wharton 144-5)

The interaction that follows is one of sincerity and emotional expression that the two are denied in social settings, the type of environment which mostly dictates their daily experiences. Here, Lily and Selden experience true freedom of expression. Selden tells Lily, with an air of futility, "'The only way I can help you is by loving you," which effectively illustrates both the release of emotional instincts that they experience in pseudonature and the ultimate dominance of the larger social and cultural structure beyond it, which denies them any lasting action in favor of their own happiness (145). Lily follows this confession by joining in Selden's futility, "'Ah, love me, love me,—but don't tell me so!" (145). The scene marks an important clarification regarding the emotional freedom that nature allows the pair; while Bellomont is a place where Lily imagines futures, inside a manufactured, sanitized facsimile of wilderness, the freedom of expression extends only as far as the interaction that takes place within its hidden space, with no significant change to the outside world possible. It is instead, of course, that affect of freedom generated by the pseudonatural space that Lily and Selden experience here. Perhaps, as a figure more a product of the societal systems than Maggie and Carrie, Lily is more aware of the futility of this illusion.

After the abrupt departure of Lily from New York in light of what seems the final straw in her relationship with Selden, a similar phenomenon occurs in Monte Carlo,

where Lily travels with friends to remove herself from her reality even farther than pseudonature allows. When Bertha Dorset, her traveling companion, banishes Lily from the yacht in a fit of scandal-induced cruelty, Selden accompanies Lily out of the arena of her social shame and into the safety of the pseudonatural space, a quiet garden in this case, removed from the social setting. The two move from a concentrated, binding societal encounter steeped in social hierarchy and the sort of high class frivolity with which much of Lily's New York existence is occupied. The two remove themselves, once more, from the urban structure to experience the freedom, however fleeting, to express themselves candidly within a pseudonatural space:

> Outside, the sky was gusty and overcast, and as Lily and Selden moved toward the deserted gardens below the restaurant, spurts of warm rain blew fitfully against their faces. The fiction of the cab had been tacitly abandoned; they walked on in silence, her hand on his arm, till the deeper shade of the gardens received them, and pausing beside a bench, he said: "Sit down a moment." She dropped to the seat without answering, but the electric lamp at the bend of the path shed a gleam on the struggling misery of her face. (228)

The scene that follows is one marked by honesty about both Lily's innocence and her social damnation, one based on the genuine mutual affection that the pair have for each other, but it is the description of the transgression between urban and natural, one that mirrors the earlier scene's description of removal, that hammers home this idea of the duality experienced by these characters in the respective settings. This passage marks an abandonment of "fiction" in tandem with the abandonment of the societal setting, marking the freedom of expression and trueness of self allowed by contact with the pseudonatural

in this novel. And yet, it also offers an interesting opposition of Lily and Selden's character with the inclusion of what we might call a machine in the garden in the machine moment. The "electric lamp" that illuminates Lily's face, not Selden's, quite literally sheds light on Lily's misery via mechanical intrusion upon the garden setting, a setting which is still a reversal of the machine in the garden phenomenon by necessarily being an anomaly of natural beauty among a civilized larger setting. It serves as a reminder, in this last pseudonatural scene of the novel, that no matter the affect of freedom generated by pseudonature, the constructions of society—physical and ideological—wait in the wings to burst their pseudonatural bubble.

With these crucial scenes in mind, a return to the initial natural exposure of the Bellomont episode allows this reading to take on a cultural and ideological weight rather than simply elucidate the characters' behavior. The conversation that follows the above mentioned between Lily and Selden at Bellomont marks a crucial component in the characterization of Selden, and an intriguing possibility for interpretation in the scheme of this reading. Selden shares with Lily the concept of his "republic of spirit," an internal place of existence free from the strictures of external matters. He claims his idea of success is personal freedom, "From everything—from money, from poverty, from ease and anxiety, from all the material accidents. To keep a kind of republic of the spirit—that's what I call success" (71). Tracking pseudonature as a respite from the societal, manmade structure beyond it has a certain applicability to Selden's own orientation to his "republic of the spirit." It is, in effect, a similarly hidden natural space within the constructed facade of his societal persona in which he experiences freedom of expression,

contact with the animal self and his desires, and a lack of accountability to the strictures dictated by a modern American urban setting.

The inclusion of Selden's "republic of the spirit" in this reading is one that offers productive complications to a strict ecocritical and spatial reading of the urban park in *The House of Mirth,* in that it parallels the space of pseudonature as an arena for identity renegotiation on both an individual and cultural level. John Evelev, looking beyond Wharton to literature dealing with American parks, forges a connection not only between the urban park and what he refers to as sentimentality, but also between the landscape negotiation required of constructing the urban garden and an increasingly modernist anxiety of identity, particularly masculine identity (199). A number of scholars suggest that the urban park creates some sort of democratic hotspot in which new ideals or rebellion against old ones may occur within the larger structure. In *City of Nature*, for instance, Bernard Rosenthal writes, "The geographical space offered room for establishing or reestablishing social, economic, political, or religious order suitable to individual desire" (22). The new creation of pseudonatural urban spaces was an opening for conversations about how to construct the environment in which Americans were living, a microcosm of the dominant question of the American landscape as the nation became a fully industrialized society. However, the question of constructing an urban park is a question that ultimately comes too late to the conversation to effect any large scale change; instead it is an imitation of the democratic forging of new ideals, just as it is an imitation of nature itself. At the end of the conversation, whatever personal or public resolutions have been made within or about the space, the space is still defined by its subservience to a larger urban scale beyond its concealing walls. To return to the concept

of the "the republic of the spirit," then, is perhaps to highlight the problem with this spatial negotiation and the negotiation of ideals within it. Selden's republic is emblematic of the inward turning that would go on to take hold of the modernist era, one occupied with questions of psychology and all things internal, one that would frequently push to sever art from practical reality with the advent of modernism. This is where Evelev's observation takes on an astute, yet sinister, set of implications. Selden is indeed cultivating a sacred space within the larger societal structure in which to forge his individualistic identity, but that space is internal, reflective of a coming societal shift toward attempting to cure the personal evils within rather than societal evils without, a shift which, however intriguing, categorically cannot extend beyond its boundaries.

This limitation does not stop Selden from pursuing its regeneration, however, for his own personal internal fulfillment, the same type of regeneration that Lily receives from natural contact. From those telling first lines, Selden's object of spiritual refreshment is Lily herself and the unexpectedness of his encounter with her vitality amid a bleak urban backdrop. And his pursuit of her, in pursuit of the restoration of his inner republic, is ultimately responsible for her downfall, both societal and physical. McEntyre suggests that the ultimate goal of this story, in reading the parks and other natural enclaves within it, is to reinforce the imperative toward some romantic ideal of the restorative powers of nature by illustrating Selden and Lily's failure to do so in navigating modern society (McEntyre 99). This argument precludes the reality that the nature with which they are in contact is inorganic, constructed, and necessitates a reentry into society because of both its philosophical assumptions and the spatial reality it occupies.

After the scene of social disgrace that culminates in the Monte Carlo garden episode, there are no more reprieves from the modern world for Lily. No natural enclaves are encountered for the remainder of Wharton's tale, and their absence is felt in the despair-inducing plot of decline that unfolds in the final chapters of *The House of Mirth*. Her ability to restore herself, to regenerate, from contact with nature is totally eclipsed by the social forces which have pigeonholed her into her bleak boardinghouse existence. Her encounters with Selden, the prospect of happiness being consistently quelled at the hands of practical reality, have effectively siphoned the vitality from her existence. In the final scene, when Selden rushes to Lily's side only to find her mysteriously dead, he observes from the street a natural anomaly in the scheme of the bleak urban surroundings which have now come to dictate Lily's existence: "He noticed too that there was a pot of pansies on one of the window sills, and at once concluded that the window must be hers: it was inevitable that he should connect her with the one touch of beauty in the dingy scene" (342). Lily's beauty, much like this feeble interjection of natural beauty into its dull surroundings, has been rendered quite as perfunctory as the pansy. The natural entity's restorative powers are limited by the comparative vastness of the constructed world around it, a constant reminder of the constructed quality of pseudonatural spaces; the pansy is potted, the urban garden is bordered by urban structure, and Lily is categorically constrained by the civilization which both cultivated and destroyed her.

Tracing the Pseudonatural Pattern

These three fictional women emerge as figures closely associated with the spaces of pseudonature in this analysis, and the floral imagery associated with each serves as a

productive method of distinguishing the nuances of their relationships to those spaces. For Maggie, there's the famous "blossomed in a mud puddle" description from Crane (24). That which is implied is that Maggie is a beautiful anomaly, a thing of delicate and appealing femininity miraculously, perhaps due to random chance, sprouting from unlikely circumstances. Maggie, then, might be classified as a wildflower. Dreiser likens Carrie to a transplanted flower, the imported "daisy"—a term of affection she receives from both Drouet and the occasional passerby—from the Columbia City countryside, whose ability to flourish post-migration is, as Dreiser points out, rather precarious, uncertain due to the precariousness of transplanting in the first place: "Transplantation is not always successful in the matter of flowers or maidens" (41). Lily Bart, whose name alone situates her into this emerging category of urban flora, functions as the greenhouse flower cultivated in an artificial habitat, a product of manmade environs and therefore utterly barred from truly immersing herself into a more natural setting, which Wharton reinforces with the constant descriptions of Lily as a product of society and an emblem of artifice. Of course these women are flowers. The flower conjures a certain genital imagery which aligns quite seamlessly with the feminine association being forged between these women and the restorative pseudonatural space as each novel tracks romantic and sexual exchanges within those spaces. Beyond the obvious genital association, the flower, as divorced from its plant or natural surroundings, is also perceived as ornamental, decorative — something pretty to liven up an otherwise drab surrounding. And it is this relationship which pseudonature has to the city around it, as something easy on the eyes to distract from the less alluring surroundings. Each figure's particular breed of flower relates to her dynamic with her surroundings. Maggie as

wildflower is a thing of beauty unexpectedly blooming from the drudgery of the slums, Carrie is a daisy transplanted from country to city and thriving based on her ability to acclimate, and Lily is born and bred of the society around her as a thing of beauty to be snatched up by some similarly-classed man to liven up, or simply make palatable, his urban lifestyle. Their fates are dictated by these respective relationships to their material surroundings, their interactions with physical boundaries tied up in wealth and social class, and with the men belonging to the demographic which dictates those boundaries.

One in a very limited pool of ecocritical readings of these texts, Robert E. Myers' 2015 article on the cityscape that Crane represents in *Maggie*, concludes with this: "An ecocritical reading of *Maggie* suggests the problematic nature of downplaying the material roots of the psychological. Environmental justice demands that we acknowledge the role of the material reality of the city in the production of the psychology of those living in it" (199). This is a logic by which all three of these aforementioned relationships can be illuminated. Myers' reading of *Maggie* positions Crane's saga of the slums at the center of a few different social movements coming to a head in the 1890s, all of which orbited around the increasingly problematic status of the living conditions of the urban lower class. In the final decade of the nineteenth century, New York City's population increased by 126.8 percent; obvious overcrowding ensued, and the poorest of the poor were shunted off to the types of tenement districts which Crane depicts in *Maggie* (190). This problem of environmental justice, as Myers puts it, represented in *Maggie* is a problem of what to do about the toll being taken on American cities and society by the problems running rampant through the urban populace, and particularly obvious in the slums in question.

Different groups of urban reformers took different tactics toward addressing the issue; Myers categorizes them as positive environmentalists and negative environmentalists (191). The negative environmentalists sought to address the slum problem by eradicating the evils associated with the tenement districts — prostitution and alcohol, namely — while the positive environmentalists sought to restructure urban environments through city planning, parks and other public spaces, etc. in an attempt to "inculcate virtue among the poor by improving their environment" (191). A connection emerges, then, between the ideas of the positive environmentalism of the 1890s and the Berlinian concept of positive freedom — a freedom to, as opposed to a (negative) freedom from — which serves as a sort of retroactive understanding of the ideological base for the works of Olmsted, whose most imposing creation, that of Central Park, rears its head many times in these texts. The impetus for both the positive brands of environmentalism and freedom is that curation is the mechanism by which American society might be improved, and by improved, Olmsted (and perhaps some of those positive environmentalists) meant homogenized into an acceptably American middle class. As Myers puts it, Olmsted designed Central Park to help "civilize and Americanize the lower classes of New York" (196). Myers attributes a shift from individual perspectives to group perspectives stemming from positive environmentalism, reflected in the solidification of the field of ecology likewise in the 1890s. This shift, he writes, "emphasized the inter-relatedness of [the city's] elements" —both human and non (191). This positive environmentalism assumes that the built structures of a city can have some degree of agency over the experiences of the people living within its constructs, establishing that transcorporeal relationship that affective ecocriticism espouses between

the human body and the nonhuman bodies it encounters. However real the transcorporeal relationship between pseudonatural space and individual, in reading these novels we see that the civilizing impulse intended for the park does little to address the social ills facing these three women, who experience pseudonature from entirely different perspectives as a result, primarily, of their differing socioeconomic classes.

The underpinnings of positive freedom and positive environmentalism are such that they seem in contradiction with the myth of American rugged individualism, as they promote a spirit of democratic fairness without the customary frontier mentality of endless and changing opportunity that we so often associate with the archetypal American. If we unpack that contradiction beyond its semantic, associative, instinctive repulsion (we are nothing if not anti-anti-freedom, as Americans), then the argument becomes somewhat ridiculous — should we preserve the ideals of the rugged American individualist over the health and wellbeing of a million American city dwellers? Are the perils of city-planning such that we might obliterate the need for one to pull oneself up by the bootstraps and head out West for a solution to the problem of survival? But at the same time, positive notions of environmentalism in the wrong hands — and no doubt, the worthiness of Olmsted's hands are up for debate — create a power imbalance in imagining ways to live, an imperative toward homogeneity of the "American" variety as envisioned almost exclusively by those upholding patriarchal values which obscure the validity of experiences beyond their own. The questions of what constitutes environmental justice necessarily begs the question of who should be placed in charge of the environment, and what does the built environment reveal about its designers?

Feminist geographer Leslie Kern, in her book *Feminist City* (2020), acknowledges some of these very risks, suggesting that "urban environments are structured to support patriarchal family forms, gender-segregated labour markets, and traditional gender roles" (9). She goes on to quote fellow geographer, Jane Darke, in even starker terms: "'Our cities are patriarchy written in stone, brick, glass and concrete.'" (qtd. in Kern 13). The parallels in the dynamics between pseudonature and urban structure and youthful, feminine sexual conquest and the comparatively more stable men pursuing them offers reinforcement for such a claim. In considering the kinship between pseudonature and the female protagonists of these novels, we should also consider the complicated relationship between pseudonature and the destructive masculine forces at work in the city, not to mention the American frontier mentality which it co-opts. The following chapter will pick up with these questions in a discussion of what exactly the patriarchal values upheld by these structures are, how the structures — pseudonature included— uphold them, and the psychological impulses which fuel them. In his short critical work *The City as Metaphor* (1966), David R. Weimer suggests that "Crane perceived the city instead as an extension of the psyche," (9) which is a notion that can be productively applied to each of the cityscapes in these three texts, and others of the movement. What follows is a discussion of questions that must be answered, both to understand these textual relationships and how we might reframe urban structure in the spirit of environmental justice in the corresponding reality which we inhabit. And the first of these might be whose psyche, exactly, is behind the city—and all of its pseudonature—in the first place.

CHAPTER III: BODIES, MACHINES, COMPLEXES: PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL MANIFESTATIONS OF A "CLUSTER OF ANXIETIES"

Bodies: Reading the Built World as Unconsciously Anthropomorphic

In *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930), Sigmund Freud positions the maintenance of a successful civilization as a necessary repression of instincts: "Civilization begins when the primary objective—namely, integral satisfaction of needs—is effectively renounced" (11). It is a bold claim, and one that invites a number of follow-up questions about the implications of a civilization which requires a total renouncement of the needs of individual humans. The civilization to which Freud is referring extends far beyond this 1930 publication in the annals of history, but the era of newly minted modernity from which he writes is, as many an alienated modernist would go on to immortalize in literature, a cultural moment that many found particularly oppressive to one's internal wellbeing. At first glance, the idea of modernity, the latest iteration of that thing we call progress, and diminishing of need seem to be mutually exclusive. In the march of linear history, according to the story of humanity that we tell ourselves, how is the present moment—whenever one finds it—not the best, freest existence for individual man to date?

From a psychological perspective, modernity took its toll on those experiencing it—particularly those dwelling in urban environments, which bore the brunt of the growing pains from the nineteenth century into the twentieth. And it is the psychologically fraught modern existence which invites criticism into how culture shifted into such a state. Looking backward into the preceding movement of American literary

naturalism, the seeds of this modernity, and its attendant alienation, are seen sprouting throughout texts from authors like the ones studied here. Those seeds of modernity are effectively understood through an examination of the physical spaces represented in American literary naturalism, whose real-world counterparts, the built urban cityscape, are frequently evoked as the source for much of that incoming alienation. This chapter takes a close look at both the built spaces and the human bodily forms with which they are linked in these texts to unpack some of this psychological significance, with gestures to the built spaces in Stephen Crane's *Maggie* (1893) as particularly reflective of this significance and to Frank Norris's *McTeague* (1899) as a rich ground for mining the connection between human and built forms. The following will engage primarily in a reading of Frank Norris's *McTeague* (1899) as both emblematic of Mark Seltzer's concept of the "body-machine complex" and indicative of a larger psychoanalytical significance of the imagery which links bodies not only to machines but also to built structures (pseudonature included) within urban settings.

For the purpose of this examination of the spaces of turn-of-the-century urban environs, David R. Weimer's assertion that the city should be read as an extension of the psyche proves all the more interesting considering the changing psychological relation between man and city (9). With this claim, Weimer more specifically references Stephen Crane's work, and its concern with "the *connectedness* of his characters with experience outside themselves," suggesting that "the objective world is knitted to the subjective, is in a way its expression" (63). In this schema, the city in literature is an expression of subjectivity—an external manifestation of the internal. On a symbolic level, this synthesis invites us to consider the ways in which the spaces of a text reflect and affect—

in transcorporeal capacities—the individuals navigating them in literature. From the perspective of embodied experience of reality, this link invites us to question to what extent we can read real-world spaces as influenced by and interconnected with this same subjectivity of human man.

In *The Trauma of Birth* (1952), Otto Rank, a psychoanalytical descendent of Freud, posits such a bold claim, and takes it one step further—suggesting that beyond the subjectivity of psychological experience reflected in the cultural constructions around us, our physical forms are also reflected in the built world. Rank writes, “Starting from the most primitive discoveries of culture such as fire and implements up to the most complicated technical machinery, it can be shown that these are not only made by man, but are also formed according to the image of man, whose anthropomorphic world view thus gains support” (85). For Rank, the human form is built into the world around us, our constructions are extensions of our physical forms, and we experience the revelation of such a presence in a way that reinforces our sense of the man-centricity of the world, an experience of the human-like forms in the world around us as mystical rather than an unconscious extension of our own experience into all that we do. A quick example of the types of spatial representation to which we can apply this Rankian reading appears in the final stages of *Maggie,* as she wanders the streets following Pete’s rejection: “After a time she left rattling avenues and passed between rows of houses with sternness and stolidity stamped upon their features. She hung her head for she felt their eyes grimly upon her” (69). Here the built forms of the cityscape are given human qualities in both feature (the “eyes” of the houses) and emotion (the sternness, stolidity, and grimness which Maggie projects upon those anthropomorphized forms). Rank’s psychoanalytical

claims are frequently taken with a grain of salt in the academic realm, but this notion is one that proves incredibly fruitful when applied to the texts of American literary naturalism and the spaces represented within them. If we conceive of the spaces in these texts as reflections of the human experience, both physical and psychological, then a whole new set of implications emerges in reading the naturalist cityscape, including questions about the perceived inevitability of its forces that the philosophy of naturalism necessarily assumes. In this way, an application of the Rankian notion of the built world as reflection of human forms (physical and mental) complicates a traditional critical understanding of naturalism that is reliant on discrete categories of nature vs. culture, interjecting human agency within the realm of the society which is customarily read in naturalism as operating beyond the scale of the individual.

Of unique interest to the discussion of pseudonature, given the emphasis on its connection to romantic and sexual attachments, is how cultural structures might be read in reproductive bodily terms, given the above assumptions about the literary city. In recalling the golf course metaphor of how constructed spaces reflect dynamics of sexual conquest in society, a Freudian analysis lends a new significance to the reading of such dynamics. Freud suggests that the structure of society, in the sense of community rather than actual constructions, relies on "genital love" — a relation between man and woman which results in marriage, children, and a family unit which might be incorporated seamlessly into the societal structures that dictate cultural experience (50). The "work of civilization," he believes, is driven primarily by man, not woman, and in order to continue that work, "what he employs for cultural aims he to a great extent withdraws from women and sexual life" (50-1). It is a siphoning of vitality from women for the greater

maintenance of societal structures which Freud diagnoses here, a patriarchal imperative to the very foundation of civilization. In *Maggie, Sister Carrie,* and *The House of Mirth*, a great deal of such siphoning does occur, as a parade of urban men pursues Maggie, Carrie, and Lily with little regard for how their relation to these woman as rejuvenating forces in the face of urban life affects the women themselves. Also established is the relation between this dynamic—that of the gendered siphoning—and the spaces of pseudonature in which the bulk of the siphoning occurs. It is, of course, an unread reality that these women in the novels are engaging in sexual relationships with their suitors, and their position as a source of rejuvenation for the men is not unlike a certain alleviation of tensions associated with sexual acts. Given that built structures reflect both psychological and physical human experience, then—just as the golf course's 18 holes are penetrated by the phallic golf clubs and balls wielded by the upper-crust men playing on it—we might read spaces of pseudonature as vaginal spaces within the patriarchal structure, small pockets of space for romantic rejuvenation which alleviate the stress of modern living beyond its boundaries.

Herbert Marcuse, in *Eros and Civilization* (1955), echoes Freud's earlier assertion that civilization relies on the repression of instincts, suggesting that "the basic instincts of man would be incompatible with all lasting association and preservation [of civilization]" (11). In essence, the claim is that society must be the civilizing impulse which perpetuates its own successful maintenance. For Freud, this maintenance is tied up in the preservation of a patriarchal organization of genital love which places women as the generative fuel for a man-driven society. Reading pseudonature as reflective of this dynamic in its association with romantic encounters which leave women compromised on

the societal stage offers a complex set of implications for how this psychoanalysis relates to questions of environment and environmental justice. If the built world reflects both psychological and bodily forms of man, and the built world includes spaces of pseudonature associated with the siphoning of women's vitality, then a logical conclusion must be drawn that at least part of the ethos of the built world is in fact a toxic masculinity which promotes environments that privilege both men's bodily forms and psychological wellbeing over the comparatively diminutive and perfunctory feminine presence of pseudonature.

Leslie Kern, in *Feminist City* (2020), describes the privileging of male experience in built cityscapes in both ideological and physical forms. Kern, a feminist geographer, writes:

> Women still experience the city through a set of barriers—physical, social, economic, and symbolic—that shape their daily lives in ways that are deeply (although not only) gendered. Many of these barriers are invisible to men, because their own set of experiences means they rarely encounter them. This means that the primary decision-makers in cities, who are still mostly men, are making choices about everything from urban economic policy to housing design, school placement to bus seating, policing to snow removal. (5)

If this is true in the North America of 2020, imagine the disparity between urban planners' decision-making circa 1900 and the residents affected by them. Here Kern expresses this distance in very practical terms. Those responsible for the decision-making which goes into planning cityscapes are usually, historically speaking, the same group of straight, white, financially advantaged, cisgender men who experience privilege in most

other realms. The decisions about city spaces, then, are largely made without the input of women, the queer community, people of color, or individuals with disabilities who are subsequently subjected to living within them. The physical structures privilege the embodied experience of a certain type of individual navigating them, whether the decision-makers are conscious or unconscious of that as a guiding force, and thus create a cityscape which does indeed feel alienating to many. It probably should; it was designed with someone else in mind.

This sense of alienation, though, is perhaps one of the milder side effects of an inequitable built world. Kern goes on to note that "once built, our cities continue to shape and influence social relations, power, inequality, and so on" (14). It may sound silly to suggest that the comparative size of a park in, say, Kern's twenty-first century Toronto, to the rest of its cityscape is a reflection of the patriarchy's privileging of male-dominated spaces over female-dominated spaces and perpetuates such a dynamic. But, to illustrate, Kern's book dedicates a lengthy chapter to the exploration of how mothers are forced to navigate urban structures that do not accommodate the physical needs of women with children. A park with a playground in Toronto might be most closely associated with urban parents entertaining cooped up children, and the space it is allotted is minuscule compared to, say, a downtown skyscraper. An example from the texts at hand would be Maggie's experience on the same streets upon which buildings stare "grimly" at her above, in which she discovers that depending upon the pace of her walk, the street can become a dangerous and predatory environment for her: "Soon the girl discovered that if she walked with such apparent aimlessness, some men looked at her with calculating eyes" (69). While Maggie must adapt to a built environment that threatens her safety, the

men doing the calculating do not require the same consideration in navigating these spaces, as they are the ones doing the preying. Urban space's privileging of one type of experience over the other does not just make it difficult to get a stroller onto a subway, though it does. It reflects a culture in which the experience for anyone other than the designers and those like them is one of constant inconvenience, a reminder that anyone existing beyond that demographic is existing in a reality that does not privilege their experience in the same way. Both physically and unconsciously, these built structures reinforce the ideologies which inform their design. Kern's acknowledgement that the physical space of cities has the power to shape our social interactions, on both an individual and societal scale, is really an acknowledgement of this phenomenon—in which built spaces reflect the ideals of those in power and make life more difficult physically, and more alienating psychologically, to anyone beyond that demographic, women most certainly included.

Kern gives a detailed, contextualized example of this very shaping and influencing in the existence of suburbs, a space that we take for granted, but which evolved from a concerted effort in midcentury postwar North America to tie individuals to mortgage payments in the hopes of producing more conservative (and anti-communist) values (31). Suburbs, Kern argues, were also a convenient way to solidify gender roles in postwar culture, relegating the domestic realm outside of the city altogether. Kern writes, "Post-war propaganda was explicit about the need for women to relinquish their wartime factory jobs to returning men and the suburban home was the perfect 'fix' for re-establishing normative gender roles" (32). This phenomenon is a concretization of that concept of separate spheres for men and women; instead of limiting feminine presence

within the city, Kern suggests that this cultural push was one intending to remove female influence from the space of the city entirely. It is one made all the more interesting when we apply the aforementioned dynamic of women/feminized spaces serving as restorative encounters for men who must endure the perils of city living. In this case, it is not the quick foray into pseudonature with a female companion that restores the senses and gives an outlet for overflows of emotion, but the nightly sojourn to the realm of the domestic—the traditionally feminine realm—to quite literally rest and refuel (sleep and eat) in preparation for returning to work, the masculine realm, when the next day comes. (Perhaps the suburbs are simply a larger container for the affect of pseudonature than the urban park.) Consciously or unconsciously, this example of the postwar suburbs illuminates crucial components of built space and the psychological impulses reflected within it. These are spaces steeped in associations with traditional gender roles, created during a time when those gender roles served the best interest of a postwar economy, and that actively inhibit transgression between the spheres—placing literal distance between women and the masculine space of the city as a placeholder for the cultural distance which the system values.

If we needed any more evidence for the masculinity of the urban realm associated with commerce and professional life, Kern also offers compelling critique of the built urban realm as reflective of the male physical form, not just its psychology. Kern explores what she calls the "the phallic fantasy of the skyscraper" as emblematic of the masculine forces at work in the structures of the city, and the society they contain (15). Kern details a history of feminist geographers critiquing the "procreative fantasies embodied by the development of ever-taller urban structures" (14). These masculine

skyscrapers, Kern writes, echo “the usual male monuments to military might,” forming a “monument to male corporate economic power” (14). Kern suggests that the skyscraper falls into a lineage of phallic monuments, and that all the evidence we need for such a connection lay in the language of architects describing the structures in “the language of base, shaft, and tip,” and rendering “upward-thrusting buildings ejaculating light into the night sky via spotlights” (15). These are the masculine structures in the realm from which women are kept at a distance, and they indicate perhaps an unconscious association with both the space of the city and the forces in control there with a masculine spirit of power and conquest not so terribly different from the one that emerges in the golf course.

It is easy to scoff at readings of skyscrapers as phalluses and pseudonature as comforting wombs within the structure of the urban environment, but describing built structures in bodily terms is not the end goal of this analysis—it’s actually a side effect of the argument to be made. While Norman O. Brown’s assertion that psychoanalysis is “the rediscovery that everything is symbolic…a penis in every convex object and a vagina in every concave one,” no one is suggesting that teams of architects sit down at their conference tables in one of those phallic buildings and say to themselves, “Let’s build something that looks like a penis.” In fact, those architects are likely unconscious of the fact that their creations are phallic. The symbolism to which Brown here refers is not simply structure as body part, but the symbolism of that dynamic and its unconscious underpinnings as a whole. The necessary questions in analyzing that dynamic are these: what values, what unconscious drives, fuel the creators of such spaces resulting in such a bodily association, and how do they shape life lived within them? (The subsequent question, which must be addressed later, is what would they look like, feel like, if

someone else designed them in the likeness of something other than a giant penis.) And while the reproductive imagery of masculine and feminine urban spaces is particularly relevant to the discussion of pseudonature, it is not the only way in which built spaces reflect bodily forms.

In Crane's *Maggie,* for instance, human attributes of both reproductive and nonproductive types can be found in the built spaces described within it. The city structures that enclose Maggie, Jimmie, Pete, and other residents of the slums are often described by Crane in bodily terms, spaces associated with the pseudonatural reading of the text conducted in the previous chapter. These descriptions often accompany either the descriptions of "places of forgetfulness" or moments in which characters are subjected to a sense of the scale of the city around them. One instance of anthropomorphic description in *Maggie* comes in the form of a saloon, one of those "places of forgetfulness" from one's material reality. The narration describes how "the open mouth of a saloon called seductively to passengers to enter and annihilate sorrow or create rage" (46). This passage contributes to our understanding of "places of forgetfulness" as spaces associated with the feeling of deep emotions that do not translate as easily into other realms of the urban structure, as these places invite individuals to feel an overflow of emotions within the safety of its confinement. It also resonates with the understanding of pseudonature in romantic and sexual terms, in the implications of the seductive mouth inviting one inside this realm. The lure of the place of forgetfulness, presented here in terms of desire and temptation felt by the urban city dweller, and the activities which take place within—annihilation of sorrows and creation of rage—offer a sinister suggestion of a parallel dynamic between the men using spaces of pseudonature to conduct romantic and sexual

encounters, perhaps with similar emotional impacts as a result. The use of an anthropomorphic descriptor here suggests both the kinship between human forms and physical structures, and the psychological associations between the forms described and the efforts of seduction taking place within them.

The text also offers up subtler forms of the relation between the two. In an early description of Rum Alley, Crane describes the “dark region,” including how “a dozen gruesome doorways gave up loads of babies to the street and the gutter” (11). These babies “played or fought with other infants or sat stupidly in the way of vehicles” (11). Crane’s description here subtly implies the human features that he would go on to outright ascribe to city structures. We have already seen his likening doorways to an open mouth in the aforementioned saloon description, and here they seem to be giving birth, in a sense, to these “loads of babies” into the gutter below—a union of structural and human imagery indicating, perhaps, that these children are products of the slum environment. The building, Crane writes, “quivered and creaked from the weight of humanity stamping about in its bowels” (11). The structure is tied here to the humanity living within and around it, and it takes on the weight—both literally and symbolically—of the collective existence of these individuals in a way that suggests the unbearable pressure of living in such an environment.

At the end of the novella, when Maggie moves toward the gloomy river district and toward her own untimely demise, the city takes on the form of watchful faces: “She went into the blackness of the final block. The shutters of the tall buildings were closed like grim lips. The structures seemed to have eyes that looked over them, beyond them, at other things” (72). These imposing urban structures are described in anthropomorphic

forms, and given an almost sentient sense of watchfulness over Maggie and the surroundings. The narration suggests that Maggie's presence is not felt by the buildings, which look "beyond" her, though Maggie experiences their watchfulness as a foreboding presence. Shortly after, Maggie reaches her ambiguous end in the riverside space of New York City that is neither nature nor city, and one has to wonder if the awareness projected onto those facially formed buildings is an acknowledgement that the concerns of the urban structure lay elsewhere than in the fate of Maggie, an impoverished girl of the slums.

The sense of foreboding that Maggie feels in experiencing the anthropomorphism of the urban structure around her and the coincidence of her being pursued by the "huge fat man in greasy garments" (72) seems nothing of the sort—not a coincidence but an overlapping of masculine threats represented by both man and structure. Maggie's brush with this man ends in her death, though we are not told precisely the circumstances. Both the man and the built world threaten Maggie here, both entities impose upon her with foreboding facial expressions—"His small, bleared eyes, sparkling from amidst great rolls of red fat, swept eagerly over the girl's upturned face" (72). But while the man himself has his destructive sights set directly on Maggie, it is the seeming indifference of the built world, the structure of Maggie's environment, that poses the true threat here. We might liken it to the naturalist understanding of the universe as indifferent to the fate of individual man, here experienced in the manmade world as well. If so, it takes on interesting proportions in this moment, with Maggie experiencing the sentience of the built world almost as an indifferent god—some watchful presence larger than individual man whose gaze excludes her very existence.

This example in *Maggie* lends itself to a conversation about the perceived mysticism of naturalism which has not been satisfyingly grappled with in criticism since the period, and with which Eric Carl Link's critical work, *The Vast and Terrible Drama* (2004), concerns itself. Maggie does seem to experience a sense of mysticism here―some suggestion of a higher force beyond and above her―and does so, crucially, at the hand of an anthropomorphic *structure* taking, for the moment, the place of the traditional anthropomorphic God of the Christian tradition. This presence watches over the world, but not Maggie herself, and brings the complex anthropomorphic web (and its psychological implications) woven so far into the fold of naturalism and the difficulties in defining it. A canonical definition of naturalism frequently referenced is George Becker's, positioning naturalism as an "explicit philosophical position taken by some realists, showing man caught in a net from which there can be no escape and degenerating under those circumstances; that is, it is *pessimistic materialistic determinism*" (35, emphasis added). This is a definition which illuminates many of the characteristics shared in naturalist texts, primarily an emphasis on realist prose and assessing the circumstances of life and the nature of man from an empirical perspective. This deterministic perspective is also the seed of understanding the naturalist plot of decline which we have now seen unfold in a number of naturalist novels, that feeling of inevitable march toward misery that naturalist characters experience at the hands of larger-than-life forces in these texts. Link's attempt at redefining these conventional definitions suggests that the sense of a shared philosophy between the writers of naturalist texts described does not necessarily exist. Becker's definition, he states, assumes a shared aesthetic of realism and philosophy of deterministic pessimism, which

does not account for what Link calls “mystic strains” in the texts of naturalism (12). These “mystic strains” that Link identifies are instances of transcendence, moralism, spiritual or supernatural forces which consistently present themselves in works of naturalism, and which categorically do not fit into the reductive definition offered by Becker (12-3). Link also notes that these “mystic strains” are expressed in romantic conventions by the authors—which lends a connection between these moments of philosophical deviation from pessimism and the natural imagery of pseudonature (13). While Link's aim to disrupt discrete notions of naturalism as pessimistic philosophically does complicate the definition of naturalism, it also presents a problematic false dichotomy between that which is aesthetically “real,” as naturalism presents, and these “mystical strains,” or romantic/transcendental moments in the literature. The dichotomous relationship between what is “real” and the mystical experiences of the characters still privileges the systemic forces of society as the “real” whereas the experience of the individual within that system is, in this understanding, unreal. This false dichotomy might also be understood as one between society (real) and selfhood, with its emotional and spiritual complexities, which precludes the fact that societies are, by necessity, made up of a collection of individual selves. And thus those larger-than-life forces dictating naturalist outcomes are in fact not larger than life at all, but a vast collection of it.

This is the primary complaint that this project has with naturalism—an acceptance of that which is a production of man (the economy, for example) as fate, God, or some such other universal force. And the exemplary scene from *Maggie,* above, highlights the structural iteration of that dynamic, perceiving human forms built into the structures

emblematic of society and experiencing them as an all-powerful presence over human life. Here is where the complicated union of these complicated trains of thought convene, and where this discussion turns to textual examples of anthropomorphic material forms in the likes of Frank Norris's *McTeague* (1899), as evidence for the unconscious ordering of the built world in the image of man (identified by Rank) and the experience of recognizing those human forms as one such "mystical strain" in naturalism. To identify the built world as a larger-than-life force is as shortsighted as naturalism's traditionally-accepted philosophy of pessimism; it accepts inevitability not just in a man's fate, but in the society which surrounds it, a society which is created by those very men. Amy Kaplan, in *The Social Construction of American Realism* (1988), describes this representational literary relationship to the manmade forces of society as a "complicity with its structures of power" (1). It is this shortsightedness which obscures a more radical critique of those ordered systems and the people responsible for them, those individuals whose power shapes the spaces, and thus the experiences, of fellow individuals in that society. The following analysis examines both the pattern of anthropomorphic forms in the built world in naturalism, particularly in *McTeague* as exemplar, and the false conclusions about larger-than-life forces which the recognition of those forms generates in both author and critic of the naturalist persuasion. Through that analysis, there emerges a complication of a number of naturalist tropes—not just the plot of decline, but also the concept of the duality of man popularized in naturalism criticism by Donald Pizer—that aid in a more in-depth understanding of pseudonature as it relates to the reflection both of human forms in the built world and of the unconscious psychological impulses which inform its creation.

Machines: The "Body-Machine Complex" and its Psychological Implications

In *Bodies and Machines* (1992), Mark Seltzer describes the relationship between the human body and machinery in American literature — the "body-machine complex" — as a manifestation of "a cluster of anxieties" of the late nineteenth century, perhaps the most pervasive of which is the anxiety of a changing economy, in the characters within canonical naturalist texts (4, 25). Seltzer intends to identify a pattern of shared characteristics between characters and the larger paranoia felt in American culture of the turn of the century about changing economic dynamics, new womanhood, and industrialized modernity, felt particularly strongly in city life. His suggestion is that characters in these naturalist texts serve as repositories for these cultural anxieties, linking bodily forms to the uncertain fate of a changing societal landscape. This thesis unwittingly evokes much of the above conversation regarding bodily forms and psychological impulses as reflected in the built world, but perhaps does so in reverse, viewing the body as a reflection of the built world instead of the other way around.

This point of Seltzer's is a crucial one to unpack, and the following section does so in the context of Frank Norris's *McTeague* with these psychological ramifications in mind. The story of McTeague is an odd one, to say the least, in which the titular figure, an unlicensed dentist in late nineteenth century San Francisco meets, marries, and then murders his wife, Trina, in a steady descent toward brutishness that parallels the naturalist trope of the plot of decline. The novel feeds into canonical criticism of naturalism regarding the duality of man—that internal war between the instinctive brute and the civilized self—and does so through repeated conflations of McTeague's physical form with the images of machinery, a reversal, in a sense, of that Rankian notion of the

built world reflecting man's physical form. At the core of *McTeague* is a pervasive anxiety about money, felt deeply in its primary characters and in the symbolism of the novel, which serves to illuminate even more of the complexities of the relation between urban built space during this period and the individuals navigating it.

The central figure of *McTeague* is a man of seemingly baser instincts. The titular dentist is frequently depicted as a brute, a man of simple mind and simple impulses clumsily navigating society to the best of his abilities, yielding less than impressive results. McTeague exemplifies a quintessentially naturalist plot of decline, in which determining factors beyond the character's control ultimately result in a loss of status, family, and self. But the driving forces behind that plot of decline reveal something slightly more complex about the protagonist. Upon a close reading of the text, the dentist takes on a slightly more problematic role than simply that of a passive agent mindless to his own downfall. McTeague's decline is catalyzed by baser instincts —overwhelming lust, violent acts of animal rage, the dogged pursuit of gold — and yet a mechanization of his physical form is equally prevalent in the text. In descriptions of McTeague, a tension emerges between the animal impulse that rears its ugly head again and again where women, food, and violence are concerned and a pointedly mechanical description of his physical form as it devours each in turn. In examining this dual characterization of McTeague, an assertive commentary on the state of turn of the century industry, society, and consumerism emerges within the text of Norris's controversial novel, one which lends itself to a critique of new types of spaces in the emerging modernity of the urban cityscape.

The critical tendency in discussions of McTeague as central figure is to emphasize the animality of his character, and to do so is not without evidence in the text.[1] A key feature of naturalism, particularly that of the Frank Norris variety, is the presence of a tension between the dual halves of the self, envisioned in *McTeague* as the brute and the civilized self, respectively. The brute in McTeague is evident from the first scenes of the novel, and most notably in the scene of McTeague and Trina's first interaction as dentist and patient. Trina enters the dental parlors of McTeague's practice and unknowingly endures the first of many bodily violations at the hands of the rising brute within her soon-to-be husband. As Trina lies in the dentist's surgical chair, unconscious and therefore incapable of consent, a beast emerges in the thus far unassumingly docile, though massive, McTeague: "Suddenly the animal in the man stirred and woke; the evil instincts that in him were so close to the surface leaped to life, shouting and clamoring" (Norris 27). Trina's vulnerability is capitalized upon in this instant, but not before a seemingly arduous internal battle between this rising beast and McTeague's civilized self. Norris writes:

> Within him, a certain second self, another better McTeague rose with the brute; both were strong, with the huge, crude strength of the man himself. The two were

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[1] This critical tendency is in part a result of the extensive scholarship on *McTeague* and Frank Norris's other writings by Donald Pizer. This project draws specifically from Pizer's readings in *The Novels of Frank Norris* (1966), but also from "Evolutionary Ethical Dualism" (1961), which speaks directly to this animality that McTeague embodies as part of the dualistic conception of brute/civilized self upon which this reading builds. McTeague's brutishness frequently serves as critical evidence for reading him as an example of a problematic streak in naturalist novels, that of treating heredity as one factor in the "determinism" to which George Becker gestures as its core definition—meaning that, within the novel, McTeague's genetic makeup is one of the conditions which doom him to live out the "plot of decline" which those with more adaptable hereditary inclinations would overcome.

> at grapples. There in that cheap and shabby Dental Parlors a dreaded struggle began. It was the old battle, old as the world, wide as the world—the sudden panther leap of the animal, lips drawn, fangs aflash, hideous, monstrous, not to be resisted, and the simultaneous arousing of the other man, the better self that cries, "Down, down," without knowing why. (28)

The battle fought is ultimately won by the monstrous force that appears in McTeague, triggered at the sight of the feminine body ripe for violation before him: "Suddenly he leaned over and kissed her grossly, full on the mouth" (28). The emergence of the beast within is the first departure from the character's insistent routine that the reader witnesses, and thus becomes somewhat of an identifier for the dentist as the novel progresses, with the narration reminding the reader that no matter whether McTeague represses his inner brute in this moment, "for all that, the brute was there" (29).

This tension between the brute and the civilized self is perhaps another installment in the aforementioned collection of false dichotomies by which naturalism aims to define itself— the "real" vs. the romantic, society vs. the self that experiences the romantic. This particular iteration is the civilized self v. the brute, which both distances the behavior of someone deemed "brutish" from what we consider human behavior and creates a false sense of separation between the two halves of such a dichotomy. The brute and the civilized self, by the very nature of the war between the two being internal, are encapsulated within one and the same human entity—the self contains both. We might conceive of these as ego, the public/conscious self, and id, the private/unconscious self comprised of those baser instincts which Freud suggests require repression in order to perpetuate civilized society. In describing these concepts, Freud writes, "It is easy to see

that the ego is that part of the id which has been modified by the direct influences of the external world…The ego represents what may be called reason and common sense, in contrast to the id, which contains the passions" (*Complete Works* 25). If so, a close reading of moments of brutishness in *McTeague* offers psychoanalytical insight into the dynamics of both how and where these instances take place—usually within spaces of pseudonature or "places of forgetfulness" with McTeague described in mechanized terms. Examining the duality of man in this text with regard to the above reveals a connection between the imagery of the built world and these moments of brutishness that complicate any clear delineation between the boundaries of pseudonature and the rest of the built world.

The above incident in the dental parlors is often cited in scholarship of *McTeague* as evidence of the spirit of "ethical dualism," the term that Donald Pizer employs to describe Norris's philosophical understanding of this duality of man, that seems to be represented here ("Evolutionary Ethical Dualism" 552). Norris's conception of the internal battle between self and brute is emphasized in the old battle McTeague fights within himself here. Norris, in Pizer's estimation, dramatizes "the fall of men who succumb to bestiality, as natural laws destroy those men who have not kept pace with evolutionary progress" — Norris's own personal brand of evolutionary progress, that is, in which the soul of man must be united with the inevitable march of nature toward a greater, though sometimes horrific in the moment, good (*Novels of Frank Norris* 21). Pizer elaborates:

> To Norris, nature's indestructible energy is uncontrollable by man, whether that force be expressed in the struggle for existence, in the life cycle of birth, death,

> and rebirth, or in the law of supply and demand. Man, however, has free will in his individual relationship to force. He can ally himself with it, attempting to perceive its workings and to determine its pace and direction, or he can stand opposed to it and be destroyed. (21)

Pizer positions the great natural force in question as, indeed, unstoppable — in the spirit of the naturalist and determinist attitudes with which Norris is frequently aligned. But Pizer's appraisal of this phenomenon presents some problematic assumptions to its reader. Namely, Pizer seems to conflate here the ideas of evolution and societal progress as one and the same, suggesting that "nature's indestructible energy" might include "the law of supply and demand," placing the notion of an indifferent, omnipotent natural universe and manmade economic forces in the same category of inevitability. Pizer's observations rely upon an understanding of the base self as something to be quashed, evolved past, into total obsolescence in favor of the civilized self—relying on an understanding of a separate mental self and animal body of the Cartesian variety. This false sense of total separateness also obscures potential critiques of the civilizing power beneath which the brute half is meant to prostrate itself. If we might consider this dynamic in the most reductive of psychoanalytical terms, the superego—that unseen governing force which Freud positions as the measure of what the ego should and should not do (*Complete Works* 35)—to the ego and id in question seems to be derived not from morals or spirituality, but from the forces of human progress—civilization.

Should we read this dynamic into the text of *McTeague*, then the dual characterization of McTeague as sometimes animal and sometimes mechanical, and sometimes both, must also be read as a fluctuation between the emergence of

unconscious desires of the id and a more civilized ego as governed by society functioning in a superego capacity. Philip A. Cavalier, in his article "Mining and Rape in Frank Norris's *McTeague*," explores the relation between these two descriptive tendencies Norris employs towards McTeague. Cavalier points to the aforementioned event in the dental parlors, and its accompanying brutishness, as the beginning of a lengthy list of bodily violations that Trina undergoes at the hands of McTeague. He writes: "McTeague's kiss differs from rape only in degree: it still represents a violation of Trina's body" (134). However, the critic makes this assertion in a way that contradicts many aspects of the traditional critical reading of McTeague as an animalistic brute. Cavalier acknowledges the repeated descriptions of McTeague as possessing mechanical attributes, and links these descriptions to the portrayal of mining in the novel, which the reader is told McTeague participated in as a younger man and to which the novel ultimately returns. He writes: "McTeague attacks Trina's body in different ways starting early in the novel. The way he treats her resembles the way the miners, with their machines, treat the mountains at the Big Dipper mine" (129). Indeed, McTeague is likened to a machine with increasing frequency as the novel progresses, but not in such clear terms as Cavalier's article suggests. Rather than falling neatly into the categorization of animalistic brute or mechanical entity, it seems that McTeague straddles the boundary between the two, encompassing both animalistic and mechanical qualities in the scheme of Norris's novel. The union of these two characteristics of McTeague during moments of emotional upheaval associated with pseudonature, or like phenomena in "places of forgetfulness," offers interesting complications to the aforementioned dualism, which one might instinctively perceive as represented between the two. These

episodes are repeatedly associated with violence, violation of the female body, destruction, or consumption. A close look at these instances, both in terms of pseudonatural affect and coincidence of animal/mechanical characteristics, suggests that McTeague's responses disrupt this dualistic understanding of the brute and the civilized self by displaying baser instincts through images associated with the built world, or civilization itself.

The repeated dynamic within the text between these two qualities is an interesting overlap between mechanical descriptions and moments that we might otherwise associate with an overflow of emotion. However, instead of that emotion being love or desire as it is with Selden and Hurstwood, McTeague's emotional cup frequently runneth over with rage. The text establishes a pattern of McTeague being described in machine-like terms when he experiences overflowing emotions, and interestingly, many of these moments take place inside spaces of pseudonature or "places of forgetfulness." The overflow of aggression that he experiences is certainly associated more with the emerging brute than the civilized self, and this dynamic reinforces the idea that spaces of pseudonature are spaces in which one experiences feelings not fit for the societal spaces beyond it, but the terminology that is ascribed to him is not that of a beast, but a machine destroying its surroundings. It is this conflation of the spontaneous overflow of emotion in pseudonature—in this case, that emotion being masculine aggression—and imagery of the built world that lends itself to such a fascinating psychoanalytical reading with the "body-machine complex" in mind. This interjection of mechanical attributes, associated with manmade constructions, into the space of pseudonature disrupts an understanding of pseudonature as separate from the society around it, and reinforces the idea that

pseudonature, by way of its very physical boundaries, is an illusion of escape embedded within the system itself. Additionally, this phenomenon suggests that our manmade constructions are not so separate from the individual human as they may seem and feel, since McTeague's destructive rages are understood in the visual language of the built world, transforming his physical form into a reflection of the new urban landscape from which pseudonature seemingly deviates. A careful look at several examples from the text suggests both a connection between built space and the human form, and between psychological states of human beings as inextricably linked to the constructions of the society around them.

Like Maggie and Pete, Carrie and Hurstwood, Lily and Selden, the romance of *McTeague* finds it origins in visits to spaces of pseudonature and places of forgetfulness which offer respite from the modernizing ills of a growing San Francisco. McTeague first meets his soon-to-be wife in his dentist's chair, but their first romantic encounter (with Trina conscious, that is) takes place in Shuetzen Park, on a family picnic with Trina's parents and siblings. When McTeague joins the party, Trina comments on the appeal of the affair with enthusiasm: "'Don't you think your picnics are fine fun, Doctor McTeague?' she continued. 'You take your lunch; you leave the dirty city all day; you race about in the open air, and when lunchtime comes, oh, aren't you hungry? And the woods and the grass smell so fine!'" (57). Trina specifically notes that the picnic in the park allows one to the escape "the dirty city," and enjoy the "open air," "the woods and the grass." Her perception of the park is as a space of reprieve from what has come before in the setting of this novel—the chaos and grime of a city growing beyond its nineteenth century boundaries. This particular park scene also features a satiation of desires for

McTeague, though of the culinary, not sexual, variety. The picnic lunch is described in a catalog of vivid images of feast-worthy items, and culminates in a sated McTeague lounging, enjoying his gluttony, while the women do the work of cleaning up the aftermath of this consumption: "After lunch came tobacco. Stuffed to the eyes, McTeague drowsed over his pipe, prone on his back in the sun, while Trina, Mrs. Sieppe, and Selina washed the dishes" (63). This is a small moment in comparison with earlier manifestations of parks as rejuvenating fulfillment of desires, but it is noteworthy in its kinship to other dynamics of desire in previous examples of pseudonature. It also, crucially, sets up an association between McTeague and scenes of consumption in these spaces in particular, in which his unique conflation of animal and mechanical characteristics are on full display. And equally crucially, this scene within pseudonature, in which McTeague is invited to entertain a romance with Trina, triggers a response of violation shortly thereafter which resonates with earlier discussions of pseudonature as venues for siphoning the vitality of women. When the family picnic disperses, Trina's father, Mr. Sieppe, insists that McTeague stay the night in their family home to avoid a late return to San Francisco proper. McTeague agrees and spends the night in Trina's room, fantasizing about his new love interest as object, and ultimately engages in what Cavalier calls "the rape of the closet," in which McTeague experiences "'supreme' contentment" by thrusting his face into Trina's closet full of clothes (Cavalier 136). Norris describes "the rape of the closet" as follows:

> Ah, that exquisite feminine odor! It was not only her hair now, it was Trina herself—her mouth, her hands, her neck; the indescribably sweet, fleshly aroma that was a part of her, pure and clean and redolent of youth and freshness. All at

> once, seized with an unreasoned impulse, McTeague opened his huge arms and gathered the little garments close to him, plunging his faced among them, savoring their delicious odor with long breaths of luxury and supreme content. (Norris 66)

As Norris himself writes, "The picnic at Shuetzen Park decided matters" (66). This scene and its immediate aftermath establish a complex web of associations with spaces of pseudonature, including consumptive impulses, destructive impulses, and the same association of romantic and sexual conquest from earlier examples against the restorative backdrop of "open air," "woods," and "grass" which offer reprieve from the "dirty city."

The initial Shuetzen Park episode is one of several instances of pseudonature in the text which align with the established patterns. Preceding the first picnic, for example, McTeague and his friend, Marcus Schouler, walk the Presidio, a large natural area on the coastline reserved for outdoor recreation that still serves as a landmark in San Francisco today. They pause for beers and billiards at Cliff House, an establishment akin to other "places of forgetfulness," in which McTeague confesses his feelings for Trina to Marcus, an uncharacteristic overflow of emotion for the character. Following his confession, Norris writes: "Never had McTeague been so excited; never had he made so long a speech. His arms moved in fierce, uncertain gestures, his face flushed, his enormous jaws shut together with a sharp click at every pause. It was like some colossal brute trapped in a delicate, invisible mesh, raging, exasperated, powerless to extricate himself" (47). The pseudonatural arena is once again a space for one's emotional instincts to bubble up to the surface, a confession booth for the innermost desires. Notably, McTeague's overflow of emotion here, though not one of anger, is described in the language of machines. A

"sharp click" of the jaws, an "invisible mesh" caging the brute within, point to both a union of animal and mechanical imagery and a manifestation of the psychological understanding of that dynamic. Here McTeague's unconscious animal impulses emerge into the open, but they are depicted as encased within a feeble veneer of civilized self as represented by the images of the built world.

In McTeague's other brushes with "places of forgetfulness," what unfolds is much more aligned with consumption and destruction than the above expression of emotions. In a scene at Frenna's, the local watering hole for McTeague and Marcus and one such place of forgetfulness, McTeague is provoked into a rage. He is described first by the narrator as a "raging elephant," only for the animalistic qualities to be immediately contradicted by the commentary of a nonplussed onlooker: "'Might as well try to stop a locomotive...the man's made of iron'" (116). Here McTeague is likened to an unstoppable force in both animal and mechanical terms, notably one that evokes that tried and true trope representing progress—the railroad. McTeague taking on characteristics of a "locomotive" functions both to convey the level of his rage and to illustrate the phenomenon of experiencing that which is created by individual men, the railroad system for instance, as an unstoppable larger-than-life force. In this instance, that dynamic is reduced to perceiving a single human being's overflow of masculine rage as an unstoppable locomotive, in perfect microcosm of this larger dynamic.

These mechanical descriptions of McTeague occur, increasingly frequently, beyond the boundaries of pseudonature and the "places of forgetfulness" in the novel. In early descriptions of his massive, mallet like hands performing dental work, McTeague is depicted quite literally as a stand-in for the very machines to which he is descriptively

linked: "They were hard as wooden mallets, strong as vises, the hands of the old-time car boy. Often he dispensed with forceps and extracted a refractory tooth with his thumb and finger" (7). Here McTeague's bodily form is associated with manmade machinery in the act of altering the very makeup of another's human form, and quite literally replacing a machine with his body—his own hand for the forceps. Here the body-machine complex, that association between manmade technologies and the human form, is associated with destruction and body-altering force. In one particularly memorable instance, the two descriptive tendencies blatantly intersect in Norris's treatment of McTeague as straddling the barrier between animal and mechanical. As the social and economic situation of the McTeagues becomes more perilous with the loss of McTeague's dentist's license, he suddenly becomes enraged: "Then McTeague heaved himself up to his full six feet two, his face purpling, his enormous malletlike fists raised over his head. His massive jaw protruded more than ever, while his teeth clicked and grated together; then he growled" (208-9). The tension becomes more and more pointed as McTeague's decline from social and professional grace intensifies, with instances like this one, in which the dentist is somehow both beast and machine, emerging with increasing regularity. Here McTeague's animal rage rises up within and overflows, but that superfluous animalism manifests itself in the spontaneous mechanization of McTeague's physical body; amid growls, McTeague's appendages take on the descriptions of mechanical moving parts fueled by the animal impulse rising within him. These conflicting descriptive strategies do not reveal an inconsistency in the development of McTeague's characterization, but rather a marked tension between the two aspects of the central figure.

A scene particularly emblematic of consumptive associations within "places of forgetfulness" occurs with McTeague's description at his own wedding feast, in which Norris offers a description that links McTeague's physical form to the imagery of the mining machinery in the novel which devours the land around it. Around the dinner table, so many gears in the machine systematically consume the contents of the table: "All around the table one saw the same incessant movement of jaws and heard the same uninterrupted sound of chewing...McTeague ate for the sake of eating, without choice; everything within reach of his hands found its way into his enormous mouth" (133). Described at his wedding feast, it is difficult to discern between man and garbage disposal: "McTeague's cheeks were distended, his eyes wide; his huge, salient jaw moved with a machinelike regularity; at intervals he drew a series of short breaths through his nose" (134). The descriptions found in these instances could easily and accurately describe either the mining machinery in the text or McTeague's own mechanized consumption, and as the reader encounters such a characterization, it becomes clear that Norris's descriptions of McTeague as machine is no coincidence, and that his explicit intent is to link the form of McTeague's body to the form taken by the machinery destroying the nature around it at the Big Dipper Mine.

The point of all this close textual reading of McTeague's enraged, mechanized body is not just to make a clear case for his anger issues. Instead, these examples demonstrate a pattern in the text that contributes to our understanding of the built spaces of the late nineteenth century city experiencing the aforementioned "cluster of anxieties." Seltzer's initial description of the "body-machine complex" describes a warring of ideologies in the American consciousness between a love of nature and a love of

technology (4). He suggests that what the "body-machine complex" really does is make visible to the reader of naturalist novels the "effects of the redrawing of the uncertain and shifting line between the natural and the technological in machine culture" (4). The "body-machine complex" works as a representation of the anxieties felt in individuals living in a newly industrialized society where the agency of an individual no longer felt like the measure of existence. This dynamic harkens back to the earlier discussion of false dichotomies in identifying what naturalism is and is not. The "body-machine complex" relies on a few such discrete separations between categories which are inherently blended—between the self and the society, between nature and the manmade. While Seltzer might read the dual characteristics—animal and mechanical—of McTeague as evidence of fluctuation between the agency of the self and the agency of society, the fact that these two halves of McTeague do indeed make a whole blur the lines between the two. For McTeague, the animal impulses toward rage, sex, and consumption are inextricably connected to the built world, manifesting themselves in imagery of technology— machines and mallets, tools of progress. The suggestion then, might actually be, not a fluctuation between two poles but an emerging awareness of the inextricable link between the two. The animal impulses of masculine aggression, destruction, consumption, and female violation that McTeague feels are surges of unconscious desire that overflow in the realm of pseudonature, or those "places of forgetfulness" in which Crane suggests one may "annihilate sorrow or create rage" (46). Pseudonature becomes a reprieve not just from the stresses of the city beyond, then, but of the requisite repression of impulses in polite society upon which, Freud suggests, the maintenance of civilization relies.

The larger significance of McTeague's surging emotions in pseudonature, represented by images of human progress and manmade structures, is perhaps what it points to beyond those boundaries of pseudonature. If, as Freud asserts, the civilization marked by those structures requires repression and the siphoning of feminine vitality to perpetuate itself, then the intrusion upon pseudonature in *McTeague* by those mechanical images suggests an intrusion upon the restorative nature within by the machines of progress. Simultaneously, the pairing of masculine aggression and the physical forms of manmade structure yield an understanding of a sort of reverse-engineering of Otto Rank's assertion that the structures of the world are built in an extension of man's image; if we see those mechanical forms so readily in McTeague, they must somehow be associated with the physical form and behaviors of a human being. In other words, describing McTeague as having mallets for hands illuminates both the power of McTeague's features and the appendage-like qualities of a mallet in both form and usage. The "body-machine complex" then takes on a whole new weight, as an anxiety not just about the influence of cultural shifts on the human form but about the complicated interwoven nature of humanity and the things it has created, yielding a heightened awareness that the fate of man is inextricably linked to the fate of the civilization it constructs. And this awareness disrupts, in many ways, the restorative and rejuvenating experience that pseudonature is meant to promote—that sense of one's individuality, free from societal forces. McTeague's mechanical descriptions in these moments of pseudonatural experience suggest that the forces of society beyond are not so easily separable from what takes place within.

The "return of the repressed"[2] refers to the Freudian concept of repressed impulses reemerging in other forms into our consciousness or behavior, suggesting that, like matter, the unconscious impulses of the id can be neither created nor destroyed—only redirected. Freud's suggestion that the perpetuation of civilization relies on the repression of man's instincts does not, after all, negate a possible side effect or two. This idea of repression of baser instincts, relegating those impulses of the id to a marginal position in order to maintain the status quo, fits neatly into the spatial relationship of pseudonature and the city beyond it. Pseudonature becomes a small pocket of reprieve from the repression of one's impulses and emotions required to participate in civilization, a venue for the unleashing of the harnessed brute, albeit briefly. Its spatial ratio to the rest of the cityscape is reflective of repressed unconscious desires contained and controlled in favor of the civilized self. The assumption of the "return of the repressed" is that what has been repressed—in this case, emotions and instincts—cannot be truly removed, but must always reemerge into the consciousness in some form or fashion. In other words, no matter what pains are taken to control those instincts, they still remain part of the whole, in some capacity.

McTeague's repressed self, that animal brute, does feel the freedom to emerge in spaces of pseudonature, but increasingly McTeague's rages spill over into the civilized realm as well—reaching fever pitch with his murder of Trina in her kindergarten classroom. That which should be repressed in order to maintain a civilized self, or at most allowed some breathing room in pseudonature, emerges into the realm of civilization, a

[2] Freud also describes this phenomenon in terms of "repression that has failed" (*Complete Works* 183).

built structure tied to institutions of a civilized society full of civilized selves. Through the lens of deterministic understandings of naturalism, McTeague's inability to maintain his civilized self is seen as a failing of his circumstances, his environment and socioeconomic status—forces which naturalist characters experience as fate despite being manmade constructions of both physical and abstract varieties. But through the lens of psychoanalysis, this dynamic demonstrates the reemerging of repressed urges into the realm of consciousness represented by built urban space, the true nature of man having been warped beyond all measure by those same manmade forces—problematic marriages, financial struggle, rejection from professional institutions—into something unfit for civilized society. Spatially, this dynamic represents a bleeding over of the repressed urges of man into the realm of the civilized, and this creates a relationship between the built world and the repressed urges of the unconscious that reveals the illusion of total repression as an imperfect, and perhaps actively harmful, orientation which privileges the perpetuation of the system over the individual desires of man, just as Freud suggests. What emerges is a reaction to this marginalization of the feelings of individual freedom to the smallest possible portion of that which we deem as the "real" world.

In *Dreaming by the Book* (2003), Lydia Marinelli and Andreas Mayer track the history of the psychoanalytic movement and its major concepts, and among them is this Rankian concept of understanding the world through the symbolism of the body. Marinelli and Mayer discuss the blending of Rank's understanding of the body's relationship to psychology with the work of Sandor Ferenczi, a contemporary of Freud's, suggesting that the symbolism of the body is how subjects understand both the physical

realities of the external world and the unconscious realities of their own minds, and the minds of others:

> The only things that can be called symbolic are aspects of the external world that can be related to one's own body. The body, then, not only structures the beginnings of infantile thought; it also materializes unconscious notions in the life of the adult. In these phenomena of materialization, the body becomes a matrix of the unconscious, one that does not seek representations of unconscious thoughts in invisible thought processes but explains them as a matter of what is visibly organic. (118)

This passage posits several key points that underscore the fusion between bodily and built forms in *McTeague*, the first being the assertion that we, as children, understand the world as a reflection of our physical form—that is, we understand the external in the language of our own bodies, the reference point for our own existence. The illustrative example given from Ferenczi himself is of a toddler seeing a river for the first time and declaring, "'So much spit!'"—interpreting the physical external through his own understandable bodily forms (113). What follows this initial understanding is a ready-made symbolic language of the body by which we understand all that is external—built cityscape included—but here Marinelli and Mayer, crucially, suggest that we understand not only the physical realm through the symbolism of our bodies, but that bodily forms also become a "matrix of the unconscious," that language of symbolism by which we understand psychological forces in the world as well as physical ones.

McTeague's conflation of bodily form and the imagery of built structures creates a kinship between the two that reflects these psychoanalytical principles of the body's

relation to the external. If we understand the external first through relations to our own body, it is inevitable that once grown and given the power to alter the environment, to build, we should order the external in the image of those bodily reflections by which we were first introduced to making sense of the world. The ease with which McTeague is viewed in mechanical terms reveals that the bodily forms linked to such imagery are recognizable in the machines themselves—a mallet, in the imagery of *McTeague*, is an arm with a hand, and an arm and a hand, when waved in fury, becomes a mallet. There is an understanding of the built world as reflection of the body inherent in the mechanized descriptions of McTeague, and in the context of the above concept of the body as "matrix of the unconscious," we must also grapple with the suggestion that this body language is reflective of unconscious psychological significance as well as its physical counterparts. As previously suggested, the link between McTeague as a mechanical entity and the images of technological modernity by which he is described confronts the reader with the knowledge that the fate of civilization, which we so often define in terms of technological progress, and the fate of the individual man within it are inextricably linked, one an inevitable part of the whole. (Here a crucial distinction must be made between the truth of this connection and the problematic assumption that the ways things *are* is dictated by supreme forces of the universe and not decisions of individual men, which can be undecided or decided differently.) The question then becomes, what psychological significance can be translated from the body language of McTeague? And it seems the answer is an understanding of the masculine aggression embodied in these episodes as inextricably linked to the physical, external forms of human civilization.

Reading Link's "mystic strain" theory onto these episodes reveals a deference to mechanical force as altogether more powerful than the individual man. It is this interpretation of the mechanical imagery of McTeague's outbursts which so intimidates onlookers, creating out of McTeague one such larger-than-life force not unlike the forces of determinism with which naturalism concerns itself. By this, I mean that McTeague's spontaneous mechanization is experienced as an immediate, inevitable, and unconquerable danger to those around him. In the previously mentioned episode in Frenna's, for example, McTeague explodes into a rage, and an onlooker comments, "'Might as well try to stop a locomotive...the man's made of iron'" (116). The inevitable force of McTeague is linked to the image of him as a mechanical entity, and the fellow patrons of Frenna's experience McTeague's rage as totally unavoidable, a force to which they are utterly powerless. Like Maggie in her final scene of Crane's novella, in which the city buildings take on anthropomorphic features and seem to watch over her from on high, the characters of McTeague experience the union of human features and built structures as a power greater than any individual human being, a force like a god built into the very structure of society, and it is this that is experienced as a fate beyond the realm of the "real"—this powerlessness and awe in the face of a world built in one's own image is what is felt as a "mystical strain." But to interpret this anthropomorphism as mystical obscures the reality that what Maggie sees in the buildings, what McTeague's companions see reflected in his form, are not the doings of an omnipotent force, but the practical consequences of a society comprised of individuals who learn what the world is through an understanding of their own body. To treat this phenomena as mystical, in naturalism or beyond, is to engage in a conservative orientation of accepting manmade

systems as fate rather than the result of collections of individual choices. To do so is to preclude a feeling of duty to rearrange those manmade systems in the spirit of justice, environmental or otherwise, in a dangerously complacent fashion.

The expression of McTeague's masculine aggression in mechanical forms in Norris's novel begs the question, in light of understanding the body as a "matrix of the unconscious," of whether we might understand the opposite of that relationship as equally revealing—that built structures may be read through this lens as manifestations of masculine aggression. And if so, then we must return to the spatial reading of pseudonature and the surrounding cityscape in reproductive bodily terms to examine this arrangement in the spirit of environmental justice. (It is not, I fear, going to be up to snuff. Leslie Kern's suggestion of the phallic nature of skyscrapers suddenly becomes all the more sinister.) McTeague's experience of pseudonature complicates any simple understanding of pseudonatural spaces as arenas in which one's repressed impulses might emerge. For McTeague, his impulses are also felt in those same mechanical terms, which suggests a blurring of lines between the ego felt within the cityscape and the id felt within pseudonature. If the images of civilization's technological progress are the language of masculine aggression, and those images emerge into consciousness in spaces of pseudonature, then what occurs in McTeague is a twofold violation of the spaces—a spatial one, in that the structures of civilization enter into that which is meant to be an escape from them, and a psychologically representative one, in that the forces of masculine aggression penetrate a space which is meant to be a pocket of natural femininity as reprieve from those forces. Reading pseudonature psychoanalytically then is not a simple question of where city dwellers may go to take a breather from societally

imposed repression, but a question of what the physical limitations of pseudonature reveal about the spiritual limitations of the city structure itself.

Complexes: Pseudonature, Psychoanalysis, and the Diorama of the Sublime

A psychoanalytical reading positions Link's "mystical strain" in a newly complex light, mainly in that mysticism is experienced at the hands of manmade structures experienced as larger than life. It is no coincidence that these brushes with the mystical occur in or near spaces associated with pseudonature—the realm of the cityscape which has been established as a space dedicated to feelings of connection with all that we project onto Nature, including feelings of restoration and rejuvenation, a oneness with the self. It is within this space that city dwellers are invited to reflect on more spiritual planes. But in some of the most obvious instances of the "mystic strain" in these novels, it is ultimately not nature, or Nature, which yields a sense of power and awe, but the sense of helplessness in the face of that which man has constructed.

The "sense of enlarged freedom," my borrowed phrase from Frederick Law Olmsted, that pseudonature is intended to cultivate in the individuals interacting with it, can be understood as an offshoot of a more universal feeling after which human beings are wont to strive. The sense of enlarged freedom, as understood here, is the feeling that pseudonature provides of freedom from the restraints of societal living. Practically speaking, this experience might look like taking a break from working in a factory to sit in the sunshine on a park bench and look at the surrounding greenery; psychologically speaking, this change of scenery is experienced as a reprieve from the repression of one's unconscious desires that must necessarily take place when immersed in society. The

freedom is from both the chaos of city living and the feelings that it produces, and the relationship between space and affect is a small microcosm of something that we can understand by several different names—namely Freud's "oceanic feeling" and the concept of transcendence as popularized by Ralph Waldo Emerson.

At the core of the matter, all of the iterations above—the "sense of enlarged freedom," the "oceanic feeling," and the moment of transcendence—can be understood as a desire for meaning beyond the experience of the individual. Freud describes the phenomenon of conceiving of powers beyond the self as "a sensation of 'eternity,' a feeling of something limitless, unbounded—as it were, 'oceanic'" (*Civilization* 11). Freud's "oceanic feeling" is associated with a "'oneness with the universe'" which is the psychological grounding, he argues, for the creation of religion; in this way, religion is one means of understanding that "oceanic feeling" which presents itself naturally to individuals who becomes aware of their comparatively small place in a vast universe (20). The feeling is not at all unlike the sensation of transcendence that Emerson so famously describes in his essay *Nature* (1836):

> In the woods, we return to reason and faith. There I feel that nothing can befall me in life,—no disgrace, no calamity,…which nature cannot repair. Standing on the bare ground,—my head bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into infinite space,—all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eye-ball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God. (10)

Here Emerson offers the primary image of transcendentalism—that of the transparent eye-ball, signifier of dissolving one's individual identity into the great "Universal Being"

(whatever that may be) to achieve a heightened understanding of the totality of experience and meaning. For Emerson and the transcendentalists, capital-N Nature offers a canvas upon which to project the answers to the questions generated by Freud's "oceanic feeling." To address a sensation of eternity swallowing one's individual existence, transcendentalism suggests that contact with Nature is the mechanism by which we might understand that feeling, by which we may come in contact with a divine omnipotent force which shapes existence. This is the understanding of Nature in American literature into which naturalism enters, and it is this association—of Nature as a source of spiritual understanding and contact—that is projected into spaces of pseudonature, and which pseudonature is intended to mimic.

This understanding of nature as "Nature" and not as the great breadth of earthly material of which we, humans, are also a part is a fundamental issue in understanding how pseudonature functions and the problems that its creation perpetuates. In *Capitalism in the Web of Life* (2015), Jason W. Moore explores such conceptions of Nature, identifying "Nature" as an intellectual concept which is fundamentally a product of "the manifold project of capital, empire, and science" (2). The project of civilization, he argues, creates "'Nature' with a capital 'N'—external, controllable, reducible" (2). Moore instead draws a line between Nature as product of the capitalist system and nature: "The 'web of life' is nature as a whole: *nature* with an emphatically lowercase *n.* This is nature as us, as inside us, as around us. It is nature as a flow of flows. Put simply, humans make environments and environments make humans—and human organizations" (2-3). By collapsing the false dichotomy of Nature/Society, Moore offers crucial points in understanding pseudonature as fundamentally a product of the latter. Moore situates

human beings *and* their creations firmly in the same category of "the web of life," and situates the concept of Nature as we know it in art as a fiction by which the societal systems, capitalism in particular, manage to increase their foothold over all of the above. Moore writes, "The dualism of Nature/Society—with a capital 'N' and a capital 'S'—is complicit in the violence of modernity at its core" (4). For Moore, the categories in question are *both* a product of civilization, and those categories are created, perhaps, in Society's best interest. While the content of both of these categories constitutes nature, of the "web of life" variety, the categories themselves are simply convenient fictions by which larger human systems can perpetuate a relationship of exploitation to all that is deemed nonhuman. This false dichotomy provides a convenient delineation between the natural matter of Earth and the interests of human history, which is mostly comprised of a long tradition of siphoning the vitality of earthly matter (in the form of natural resources and labor) in the name of Progress, with, to borrow Moore's phrase, an "emphatically" capital-P. This dualism, Moore writes, "encouraged a way of thinking about history that privileges what humanity *does* to nature," as opposed to understanding humans as a part of the "web of life" which encompasses both categories (5). The othering of Nature which takes place within this dualistic conception allows a privileging of human interests as separate and elevated from those of Nature. Moore's argument against such dualism is that Nature as we know it, as the transcendentalists knew it, is nothing more than a tool by which larger systems (organizations of component parts of the "web of life") may justify exploitation of space, resources, and the human beings navigating them, and it is this point which lends such sinister implications to pseudonature's role in the Society half of that dualism.

If transcendentalism and romanticism may be understood as one of many products of this dualism, then the implications for pseudonature, as an offshoot of that romantic and transcendental thought, are as a mere tool of the culture which builds it. In *Ecology Without Nature* (2007), Timothy Morton writes that "the 'thing' we call nature becomes, in the Romantic period and afterward, a way of healing what modern society has damaged" (22). Post-transcendental evocations of Nature in American literature can be read through this lens—as impulses toward that which is other than Society, that which might restore what modernization and industrialization seem to have stripped from individuals living through it. However, Moore's assessment offers even further complication, suggesting that pseudonature, as part of the tradition of Nature, is a product of civilization meant to capitalize on exactly that in hopes of furthering the success of the systems in place. This context in which pseudonature functions highlights the fleeting, futile nature of the affective quality of the spaces—whether we call it a "sense of enlarged freedom" or transcendence or some other answer to the call of the "oceanic feeling"—that diminishes any semblance of authenticity that pseudonature may possibly possess.

Pseudonature evokes transcendental associations of Nature in order to remedy the weariness of soul that industrialized modernity creates for the characters explored in these works of naturalism, and it seems that, in this understanding of the dynamics of nature and the Nature/Society dichotomy, the remedy is also part of the problem. (Perhaps this is the spiritual equivalent of Big Pharma creating some new disease and then selling a cure.) The manipulation inherent in the presence of pseudonature goes beyond a simple understanding that it is a part of Nature and therefore a product of

Society, as Moore would have it, but that its presence within built urban spaces is meant as a sort of compensatory vitamin in the wake of steadily bad spiritual diet—a pacifier for the wailing masses of the cityscape. Pseudonature as a built space is meant to answer the call of the "oceanic feeling," a sincere feeling, with something that is part and particle, to borrow Emerson's phrase, of the very thing it is meant to cure. Perhaps this is why the moments of transcendence in the above novels do not really occur in pseudonature as a result of their attempted approximation of Nature. We have seen, time and again, examples from these texts that indicate the limitations of the spiritual or emotional upheaval that takes place within the walls of pseudonature, the inevitable infringement of society upon whatever affect of freedom experienced inside those spaces. It's true that pseudonature offers a reprieve from repression that feels remarkably mystical or transcendental to those entering into that realm, but a closer look at these incidents, and at the specifics of the moment of transcendence, which the "oceanic feeling" calls for, reveals a certain set of limitations on the feelings the spaces produce.

Looking at the experience of transcendence as severed from Nature can help contextualize Link's "mystic strain" in these texts. Transcendence, if severed from Nature, refers to the act described by Emerson's transparent eyeball—the dissolving of oneself into a larger force or entity. For Emerson, this process begins with him "standing on the bare ground" and experiencing the Nature which he feels is the manifestation of the power to which he wishes to transcend. In "An Evaluation of the Role of Mystical Experiences in Transpersonal Ecopsychology" (2020), Freya Harrild and David Luke define the concept of "transpersonal ecopsychology" in terms that may serve to illuminate this process as separate from Nature:

> Transpersonal ecopsychology can be regarded as the exploration of transcendent states within a natural context to heal the alienation between the external natural world and the intrinsic self. Mystical experiences are suggested to be embedded in this transcendent element, as they are situations in which individuals feel as if they have risen above the conscious self and/or reality, commonly inducing a unitive state in which they experience something larger than themselves. (45)

This concept of transpersonal ecopsychology helps provide a framework by which we might better understand the "mystic strain." In Harrild and Luke's definition, this field explores the process of reconciling the relationship between self and nature (the core of ecopsychology) through exploring the relationship of mystical and transcendent experience to that sense of healing, or unity, between the two. The transcendent feeling that they link to this connection between human and nonhuman forms relies on understanding transcendental/mystical experience as "a unitive state in which they experience something larger than themselves" (45). This understanding is crucial to exploring those limitations on transcendence imposed by pseudonature. If we conceive of the "nature" to which Harrild and Luke refer as akin to Moore's "web of life" instead of Emerson and Thoreau's "Nature," then we can apply this principle to a much wider array of experiences than simple contact with that which we traditionally understand as nature, pseudonature included.

In *Ecosublime* (2006), Lee Rozelle posits the concept of "ecosublimity" as an environmentally rooted understanding of the "oceanic feeling" which incorporates a more contemporary understanding of environment as it stands in current ecocritical theory; that is to say, Rozelle's "ecosublimity" is grounded in an understanding of the understanding

of nature along the line's of Moore's "web of life" as opposed to the capital-N variety. The sublime as a concept is the ancestor to Emerson and Thoreau's transcendence, a concept in romantic thought that connotes mystical encounters with Nature as a larger-than-life force. Rozelle suggests a definition for "ecosublimity" which hinges on an interaction with *place*, encompassing the traditional conception of Nature as well as the built world: "Ecosublimity can thus be thought of as the awe and terror that occurs when literary figures experience the infinite complexity and contingency of place" (1). Rozelle notes that while the sublime as a concept is traditionally understood as centered around encounters with awe-inspiring nature, the phenomenon of the sublime in fact occurs within the interaction of the human psyche and the nature in question (4). Rozelle's "ecosublimity" describes a phenomenon, then, in which not just Nature can spark feelings of the sublime—a sensation not unlike Freud's "oceanic feeling" or the act of transcendence—but all that the "web of life" encompasses, on both sides of the Nature/Society dualism that Moore critiques. As Rozelle puts it, this new understanding of the sublime relies only on "witness[ing] the ecological not-me" (6). Crucially, Rozelle's understanding of ecosublimity acknowledges the negative affect that the sublime is capable of producing by creating a sensation of being dwarfed against large and uncontrollable forces; for instance, we now experience ecosublimity not only in the face of natural beauty but also "feel awe and terror in the face of global breakdown" (4). The ecosublimity of the naturalist novel is felt in witnessing not the beauty of Nature, or the mimicry of that beauty within pseudonature, but the awe-inspiring, uncontrollable, intimidating forces of the manmade world which dictates the characters' existence.

Two texts in particular illustrate the presence of bodily forms in built structures and the imagery of built structures in bodily forms. At the close of Crane's novella, Maggie experiences the cityscape as an almost sentient anthropomorphic form, watching over her from on high but seemingly unconcerned with her imminent fate: "She went into the blackness of the final block. The shutters of the tall buildings were closed like grim lips. The structures seemed to have eyes that looked over them, beyond them, at other things" (Crane 72). Here Maggie experiences the human forms built into the city structure as a fearful, almost godlike power over all that happens in the cityscape below—it is indeed a dwarfing experience, an acknowledgment of something larger than the individual bearing witness to it. The moment that Maggie experiences here seems to constitute a brush with ecosublimity, a feeling of the scaling down of the individual in the face of the "ecological not-me" which inspires feelings of awe and terror. In this case, the sense of place that creates this affect is neither mountain range nor ocean, but city block. Another example, also mentioned earlier in this chapter, is of the spontaneous mechanization of McTeague's physical form in Frenna's, and the subsequent acceptance of onlookers that, like a "locomotive," it would be a futile endeavor to stop McTeague in his tracks (Norris 116). Again, the connection between bodily forms and built structures inspires a feeling of inevitable force which dwarfs the agency of the individual witnessing this. The dynamic is one of ecosublimity, experiencing awe and terror at the recognition of something far beyond the scale the individual human. It's possible that, as these two examples suggest, that what lies at the heart of the "mystic strain" in naturalist texts is not Nature, but an awareness of the integration of all components of the "web of life" as the core of the larger-than-life forces which naturalism observes as immutable.

The thing that actually produces that sense of transcendence, of ecosublimity, is the encounter with human forms in built structures, or built structures in human forms —an experience of the unconscious ordering of the world in human images that creates a sense of smallness amid that vast collection of life called civilization.

Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* offers a slightly different window into this dynamic of ecosublimity in Carrie's frequent sensations of being dwarfed by the "ecological not-me" in the text. Carrie's own seeming disinterest in the spaces of Nature (or pseudonature) in the novel take on a new significance in her frequent experiences of ecosublimity at the face of built structures. Particularly at the beginning of the novel, when Carrie is just entering into Chicago life, and Chicago structures, she begins to feel brushes with ecosublimity in "a sense of helplessness amid so much evidence of power and force which she did not understand" (12). This sense of helplessness greets Carrie as she begins searching the mysterious city for positions of employment, in order to find an economic foothold in the strange new territory which would allow her to become a part of it. She is greeted by the city not with open arms, but with life on such a scale that is alienating to her. She follows this "sense of helplessness" with a series of incredulous questions: "These vast buildings, what were they? These strange energies and huge interests, for what purposes were they there?" (12). The feeling is one of smallness in the face of something which dwarfs the scale of the individual. Even as early as the train ride into Chicago proper, after Drouet describes many of the sites she can visit within, she feels a sense of the overwhelming scale and power of the city structures: "There was a little ache in her fancy of all he described. Her insignificance in the presence of so much magnificence faintly affected her" (5). The intimidation Carrie feels at the hands of the

built cityscape is ultimately figured in human emotions, with her describing how "the entire metropolitan centre possessed a high and mighty air calculated to overawe and abash the common applicant," lending human judgment to the structures which threaten to overwhelm her (12). Carrie's repeated experience with feelings of ecosublimity at the hands of the city suggests a transcendence that is generated entirely by the scale of the built structures, a scale far beyond the measure of the individual, rather than as a result of any contact with Nature.

In *A World Elsewhere* (1966), Richard Poirier discusses Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* in terms of just such a transcendence—not into a Universal Being steeped in Nature, but into a vast force of society, of humanity. Though Poirier acknowledges that part of the transcendental and romantic tradition is that "individuals are characterized less by their relation to one another than by their relation to the conglomerations of power that fill space and that determine the apportionments of time," he suggests that Dreiser depicts his characters as experiencing transcendence into the collective forces of civilization (237). In the same way in which Emerson and Thoreau suggested an individual transcends by dissolving their individual identity into the great Universal Being in Nature, Poirier points out that the great and powerful entity into which Dreiser's characters' identities are dissolved is the society itself—the dissolution of the self into civilization (248). Carrie's movement from Caroline Meeber of Columbia City to Carrie Madenda, an actress of New York's finest "places of forgetfulness," might also be read as a total absorption and dissolution of the self into the larger cultural systems in place. Carrie, both physically and psychologically, has become part and particle of the system which threatens at many turns to overwhelm her, a system made up of those larger-than-life forces which the

naturalist presents as fated and inevitable, despite being utterly manmade creations. At the end of the novel, Carrie experiences something akin to Freud's "oceanic feeling," but in this instance, the feeling is left unanswered: "Oh, Carrie, Carrie! Oh, blind strivings of the human heart!…In your rocking-chair, by your window dreaming, shall you long alone. In your rocking-chair, by your window, shall you dream such happiness as you may never feel" (Dreiser 369). Carrie's "strivings of the human heart" are unanswered, totally severed from that which might answer it, because what Carrie has transcended into is not Nature, not the Universal Being, not God—but culture.

Perhaps this is why the moments of recognition of bodily forms in built structures are so unsettling to those witnessing them in these texts, that they strike such negative iterations of ecosublimity—because for the briefest of moments, the facade of Nature/Society as a governing principle of human life has been revealed as an utter fiction. McTeague's experiences of pseudonature perhaps illustrate the gravitas of this lifting of the veil, as he himself embodies the built forms linked to masculine aggression which dictate the cityscape of the late nineteenth century. The pseudonature of these texts is an intentional construction of that very fiction, a projection of all the sublimity which the tradition of Nature has come to be associated with in the hopes that it will assuage the soul of the urban city dweller enough to obscure the total immersion of self into the system by which one is exploited. The purpose of pseudonature might be understood as a diorama of the sublime—a microcosmic facsimile of the dynamics of spiritual overflow, of a lack of repression, that is meant to give the *impression* of how something really looks and feels, but is categorically inauthentic. McTeague's mechanization within these spaces shatters the illusion with the chaotic force of a bull in a china shop, and interjects a

dose of truth into the carefully cultivated psychological experience that pseudonature is meant to provide. And that interjection is experienced as true power, as ecosublimity, not made of beauty, but out of the fear borne of the recognition of one's own image in the very thing that oppresses you. What ultimately produces the feeling of ecosublimity, the transcendence of oneself into a much larger force, is not Nature, but the understanding of one's place in the "web of life," the recognition of human intentions and agencies behind the fiction of fatedness that we tell ourselves about Society, and of which we see ourselves, now with awe and terror, as part and particle.

CHAPTER IV: TO WORK OR TO HELL: CONSUMER CULTURE AND THE FEMALE FORM IN AMERICAN LITERARY NATURALISM

Overview

While the anxieties inherent in the "body-machine complex" were outlined in the previous chapter largely in relation to masculine forms, this focus should not obscure the fact that the female form in naturalism is equally connected to those anxieties, though perhaps in more insidious ways. In forging that connection to the female form, and in understanding the spaces of the literary cityscape of this period as psychologically fraught and unconsciously gendered, the next step in this analysis is to engage in a reading of the female bodies represented in these naturalist novels as reflective of anxieties of a cultural, spatial, and psychological kind and as they relate to the physical spaces of pseudonature within the texts at hand. At the forefront of these anxieties is a concern regarding emerging consumer culture in a world increasingly industrialized and commodified under encroaching modernity. The women of these naturalist novels are no exception to this anxiety, and tracking the plot of decline (or incline, in some cases) indicates an undercurrent of financial anxiety at the core of the trajectory of these characters.

Mark Seltzer's "body-machine complex" identifies a side effect of this undercurrent in demonstrating how the male forms in naturalist texts take on qualities of machines, but this concept can also be applied to female characters in naturalism, just in a slightly different iteration. In *The House of Mirth*, *Sister Carrie, Maggie,* and *McTeague*, women's bodies are seen in various degrees of peril and destruction. Three out of four of

the central female characters meet an untimely death in the pages of these novels, and each tragedy is in some way linked to their monetary status, be it pitiable or desirable. Dreiser's Carrie, the exception to this rule, ascends into a realm of financial and social status which allows her to avoid such a downfall, though Hurstwood experiences an ultimately similar fate to the aforementioned fictional women. In Chapter II, I explored how these women are inextricably linked to the pseudonature of these novels through the parallels of rejuvenating experience that occur in both the space of pseudonature and as a result of interaction with these characters. To apply an understanding of the "body-machine complex" to the bodies of these women is also to undertake an analysis of the space of pseudonature as a repository of the same cultural anxieties about consumerism and urban life that plague the central women in these stories. This chapter will explore such associations in reading the bodies of Maggie, Carrie, Lily, and Trina as reflections of the economic anxieties inherent in the "body-machine complex" and as symbolic representations of the consequences of the changing culture out of which those anxieties spring.

Part of Seltzer's understanding of the "body-machine complex" relies on the conception of the bodies of literary characters as symbolic of possessions, and this premise is crucial to the analysis of the female form in naturalism. In a period of new orientations to wealth and consumerism, Seltzer suggests that the natural body is not only linked to these shifts in consumerism but also representative of the self as market object, serving as a symbol for that which the individual possesses disconnected from the mind or soul. This notion treats the identity as a separate entity from the human body, and so the anxiety felt via the "body-machine complex" becomes an anxiety about the

individual's possessions or financial footing in a changing economy, the body being a stand-in for the individual's accrued capital (56). There's a great deal of evidence in these novels for just such a claim, and an exemplary illustration of this relationship comes in the form of *Sister Carrie's* Hurstwood as he nears the end of his life.

Hurstwood's trajectory is, unsurprisingly, a plot of decline. He moves from a position of relative stability in Chicago, wherein he courts Carrie through many a pseudonatural space while maintaining a family life and impressive home, with pseudonatural lawn attached, of course, as signifier of his wealth. Upon departing Chicago with Carrie and entering into New York City life, however, Hurstwood's luck begins to change. His work prospects begin to steadily dwindle after he experiences only moderate success in the city, and it seems that Hurstwood's physical form mimics this financial descent. Nearing the final stages of Hurstwood's demise, Dreiser's narration interjects one of its attempts at objective analysis of human nature: "A man's fortune or material progress is very much the same as his bodily growth. Either he is growing stronger, healthier, wiser, as the youth approaching manhood, or he is growing weaker, older, less incisive mentally, as the man approaching old age" (Dreiser 239). Much like Seltzer, Dreiser sets up here a directly correlative relationship between man's physical form and his wealth, conceiving of the acquisition of wealth as the acquisition of physical power as well as social and economic power. On the other side of this coin, the loss of financial stability is akin to a bodily atrophy. Hurstwood's financial dilemma plays out along just such lines. After an embarrassing encounter with a former Chicago acquaintance and a day spent mulling over his lack of job prospects, Hurstwood returns home, only to fall suddenly ill: "That night he felt a cold coming on and took

quinine…He was a helpless creature in sickness" (258). Hurstwood's response to another failed day of job-hunting manifests not in a mood, but in a physical ailment, a deterioration of bodily health. This episode is mirrored in Hurstwood's reflections about his newly acquired gambling habit shortly after this illness: "For his escapades he was soon poorer in mind and body, to say nothing of his purse, which had lost thirty by the process" (269-70). Here Hurstwood gains an awareness of his own deterioration, it seems, just as he is "nearing his last hundred dollars" (270). Hurstwood's physical health deteriorates in tandem with his declining financial stability, and ultimately his death by suicide is prompted by the poverty which here is just beginning to threaten him. For Hurstwood, the "body-machine complex" forges a link between his finances and his physical form that offers a model by which we might read similar phenomena in Maggie and Lily, but *McTeague's* Trina offers a slightly more complicated take, and one that brings in important threads that contextualize the readings of Maggie and Lily through the lens of the Hurstwood varietal of the "body-machine complex."

To return to *McTeague*, the primary female character, Trina, offers up one of naturalism's wackier figures. Trina, McTeague's wife, is a young woman poised to live out a rather ordinary existence with her new husband until a stroke of random chance drops a sizable lottery prize into her, and crucially not her husband's, lap. This stroke of unexpected fortune is the event which sets Trina and McTeague on a very different path, one in which Trina becomes obsessed with her wealth and McTeague becomes jealous and destructive due to his inability to control that wealth. (McTeague will come to toss the insult of "miser" at Trina with frequency and gusto in the remainder of the novel.) This is not to say that McTeague does not dominate Trina in other ways, namely

physically, as the previous chapter discussed in terms of the emergence of the brute in McTeague. Those moments of physical dominance over Trina are frequently marked with the same confluence of animal and mechanical characteristics in McTeague during moments of emotional overflow. In fact, the sheer force with which McTeague frequently overpowers Trina's physical form with his own massive one is akin to the force of a machine systematically meeting an obstacle. For example, on one of many similar occasions, McTeague overpowers Trina with physical strength in order to make sexual advances on her: "Suddenly he took her in his enormous arms, crushing down her struggle with his immense strength" (69). While McTeague cannot control Trina's wealth, he can control her physical body, and considering the link between McTeague and the Big Dipper Mine and his repeated destructive acts toward Trina, it is useful to consider that the counterpart to McTeague as mine symbol might be Trina as symbol for the land it destroys.

Reading the land as feminized is not a new concept in ecocritical thought, of course. Annette Kolodny's classic work of ecocriticism, *The Lay of the Land* (1975), outlines just such an association upon which much of this analysis of the female form in naturalism builds. Kolodny describes this association as "America's oldest and most cherished fantasy," one in which exists "a daily reality of harmony between man and nature based on an experience of the land as essentially feminine—that is, not simply the land as mother, but the land as woman, the total female principle of gratification—enclosing the individual in an environment of receptivity, repose, and painless and integral satisfaction" (4). This association of the land as feminine body, Kolodny argues, is "archetypal wherever we find it" and reveals a deeply complicated set of psychological

associations with that archetype. Kolodny suggests that the original move to America—that mythologized "New World"—in particular "was experienced as the daily reality of what has become its single dominating metaphor: the regression from the care of adult life and a return to the primal warmth of womb or breast in a feminine landscape" (6). This psychological dynamic outlined by Kolodny very nearly parallels the psychological affect of spaces of pseudonature, and not at all surprisingly. The dynamic here is of reprieve from that which we consider "adult"—the masculine world of built space and commerce, perhaps—by way of feminine comfort in the form of either mother or lover, and it is precisely this dynamic which is mirrored in encounters with pseudonature for the men in these works of naturalism. Kolodny gets at the heart of the tension between the built world and pseudonatural spaces by acknowledging that the very project of society is at odds with this image of the land as restorative feminine body: "The success of settlement depended on the ability to master the land, transforming virgin territories into something else—a farm, a village, a road, a canal, a railway, a mine, a factory, a city, and finally, an urban nation" (7). This "despoliation," while the "inevitable consequence of human habitation," does not assuage that impulse toward emigration, an impulse which Kolodny describes as "the tantalizing proximity to a happiness that had heretofore been the repressed promise of a better future, a call to act out what was at once a psychological and political revolt against a culture based on toil, domination, and self-denial" (7). Without the "New World" as unpainted canvas upon which to project this fantasy, as society takes its toll on the land itself, the problem then becomes how to pacify the fantasy in daily life. Kolodny suggests that part of the response to this problem comes in the glorifying of Nature in art, a mythologizing of the vast unknowns of the "New

World" into artificial manifestations in order to placate the impulse toward this fantasy: "The instinctual drive embedded in the fantasy, which had first impelled men to emigrate, now impelled them both to continue pursuing the fantasy in daily life, and, when that failed, to codify it as part of the culture's shared dream life, through art" (7). In the absence of the ability to live out the frontier adventure fantasy, individuals within the modern world, Kolodny argues, turn to artificial means of reproducing the affect of that fantasy, a dynamic which is quite obviously reflected in the creation of pseudonature.

By way of example, Kolodny cites the paintings of Thomas Cole, who gained prominence in the early to mid-nineteenth century as part of the Hudson River School painting vast untouched swaths of America's wildest natural vistas, and, interestingly, who Edith Wharton references briefly in *The House of Mirth*. Wharton's reference is to "Cole's Voyage of Life," a series of paintings which track man throughout his life alongside natural imagery deeply imbued with spiritual associations, including an angel or two (32). Wharton's inclusion of the reference is via Lily disparaging the appearance of engravings of these works in houses which might fall into Mrs. Bart's disdainful category of "dingy." While it might seem like a digression, this reference (both Kolodny's and Wharton's) to Cole in particular presents a handful of interesting implications about the dynamic outlined above from *The Lay of the Land*. First is the suggestion that once the feminine body of land has been effectively used up, the artistic turn toward representing that land's promise that Kolodny identifies can be swiftly commodified into middle class decor, in this particular example a reproduction of Nature twice removed (once as a Cole original, once as the referenced reproduction). The second is that which is inherent in the artificial representation commodified. These artifacts,

Kolodny suggests, are created in an effort to pacify that impulse toward the comforting alternative to adulthood which the feminine landscape represents, meaning that it takes on the associations which we would have projected onto the landscape itself if not for that pesky "despoliation" inherent in human progress. In *Apocalyptic Geographies* (2020), Jerome Tharaud speaks to the vast significance of the American landscape painting in the nineteenth century, particularly referencing those of Thomas Cole:

> Landscape paintings were not simply real-estate ads for the appropriation of physical land; they were immersive spaces where viewers learned to cultivate a particular kind of self, defined by distinctive moral perceptions and imperatives, directed toward a concrete set of practices and habits, and oriented toward an overarching vision of a good society. It is within this more capacious moral geography, which includes but exceeds the literal space of the continent, that American landscape painting assumes its most compelling and luminous cultural presence. (Tharaud 33-4)

This description is not unlike descriptions of the impact of pseudonature on the psyche—as a space in which individuals might imagine alternate futures, contemplate the greater good, and turn inward toward their own psychological understanding of themselves. The space of pseudonature might be better read as a work of art, of sorts. In *Landscape and Memory* (1995), Simon Schama writes that "landscapes are culture before they are nature—constructs of the imagination projected onto wood and water and rock" (61). Schama's suggestion serves as an informing framework by which to understand pseudonature as a human product, a work of art preserving the associations of the feminine landscape not unlike Thomas Cole's paintings, which we might analyze as a

representation of all that we desire from the earth but which, by nature of its artifice, cannot be granted by it.

Re-situating pseudonature as a reproduction of that edenic promise of the untouched landscape allows us to consider the cultural ramifications of its very presence within city limits. It is thus necessary to read the actual feminine bodies in these novels alongside the archetypal feminized body of land. To return to the idea of the commodification of the affect produced by this orientation to the feminized landscape, the space of pseudonature can be read as a larger-scale commodity in the vein of the Thomas Cole engravings—a manufactured product by which we might feel closer to the comfort of the virgin land which is obscured by civilization. But we might also consider pseudonature, by way of the futility of its resistance against that civilization, as evidence of the act of consumption—a remnant of that land which it represents in the wake of a growing America's rampant use. All of these overlapping associations generate a new significance in analyzing pseudonature. If the land is read as a feminine body, and pseudonature is a commodified projection of that land, then pseudonature is also a commodified projection of the associated femininity—one in which we can see the cultural anxieties about all of the above (land, women, and consumerism) clearly reflected. The inverse of this, of course, is equally true and must receive attention. The female body, as represented alongside pseudonature, carries associations with those spatial and economic anxieties as well, via the "body-machine complex." (I would offer a slight alteration to Seltzer's term in applying it to the women in naturalist texts in the form of a "body-commodity complex.") The treatment of these bodies as manifestations of economic anxieties, then, takes on a new weight for understanding the anxiety of

fading femininity and of what to do with the remaining American space as it dwindles all the more rapidly due to the changing societal landscape overtaking it.

Consumption of Land and the Female Body in *McTeague*

In situating the pseudonature of naturalism as yet another installment in a long tradition of conflating land with femininity, obvious environmental implications arise in reading the anxieties symbolized via the female body, so closely linked to pseudonature, in these works of naturalist fiction. Much of the anxiety reflected in the female body in these texts deals with the anxiety of a change in consumerism in the late nineteenth century. This emerging consumer culture was an offshoot of an increasingly consolidated American public into city centers, which, as Mary E. Papke writes in “Naturalism and Commodity Culture,” was due to massive immigrant influx during the latter half of the century and a migration of rural residents to urban locations (292). Papke describes how this population influx “centralized the marketing of goods” in the urban sector, creating an increasingly pervasive commodity culture at the heart of America’s modernized cities and resulting in unsettling cultural shifts (292). Papke, notably, even goes so far as to suggest that naturalist texts are, as consumer products, themselves “an inevitable by-product of commodity culture” even as they diagnose its ills (292). In a section of *Life Against Death* (1959) called “The City Sublime,” Norman O. Brown suggests, “In the new space of the city…man succeeds for the first time in constructing a new life which is wholly superfluous, and wholly sacred” (282). Brown positions any economy beyond that associated with agriculture (sustaining life), as “by definition superfluous,” and suggests that the urban economy is just that since it is divorced from agriculture and “its whole

economy is based on the economic surplus" (282). In other words, the economy of the city is an abstraction, not based in the preservation of life but based in a production of things which are superfluous to that preservation, perhaps in the form of these emerging commodities. This understanding places the female body, as extension of the land, in a unique position, as the land is, of course, also associated with agriculture. The superfluity of the newly urbanized economy can be read as a drain on the land, and a drain on the female body representative of it, due to its imposition of extraneous pressure upon the existing resources. The economy is not entirely divorced from the land; rather, the ramping-up of the urban economy puts undue strain upon the material resources meant to sustain only the necessary production (i.e. food to live), consuming more than is available by way of that abstraction of the economy taking place in American cities. In the America of these novels, this changing urban economy, alongside a changing urban landscape and population, becomes a central cultural anxiety in the minds of both naturalist writers and naturalist characters. An analysis of this economic anxiety is a means by which we can understand the manifestations of the "body-machine complex" in the central women of these novels, due to their unique position as both consuming and consumed in their immersion into the modernizing city.

Trina, in *McTeague,* is perhaps the most on-the-nose representation of the anxieties of consumerism reflected in the female form in these texts. Her actual body is even partially consumed by McTeague in an effort to extort her coveted lottery winnings in an episode in which McTeague chews her fingers in an attempt to coerce her into distributing some of her winnings. Trina's position is one of unexpected wealth, and following the Hurstwood model of the "body-machine complex," this position is also one

of increased power. This power is evocative of a much larger anxiety in the cultural consciousness about the emerging figure of the New Woman at the turn of the century. Maria Brandt observes, “Trina overlaps clearly drawn character traits of the New Woman figure—freedom from maternal and sexual codes of domesticity—with an exaggerated version of the New Woman figure’s economic independence” (13). Trina’s fate can therefore be read as a response to the anxiety that this figure of the New Woman presents to society. Brandt suggests that McTeague’s finger-chewing, and ultimately his murder of Trina, presents “the distorted, dangerous fantasy that Norris imagined the discursive re-stabilization of a white, middle-class, masculine order would require” (8). While Trina’s increased body-machine power manifests more interpersonally than Hurstwood’s physical experience with ailing health, it is indeed her physical form which McTeague attacks, ultimately destroying, in order to combat this perceived power imbalance which threatens to overturn traditional gender roles. His attempt is to siphon her resources through bodily consumption and destruction, not unlike a mine operation plumbing the body of land for hidden resources within.

In conceiving of McTeague’s destructive forces as various modes of consumption, Michael D’ Alessandro links the “violence of eating” to “the merciless conquering of earth’s resources” in *McTeague*, highlighting the emphasis frequently placed on feasting, picnicking, or food in general throughout the novel, particularly as an object of desire for McTeague himself (8). Throughout Norris’s novel, the author presents his characters with conflicting desires, in which lust, greed, aggression, and hunger frequently overlap to the point of becoming one driving brute force, and D’Alessandro suggests that this effort on Norris’s part forges a connection between the

consumption of food and Trina's fingers, the mining at Big Dipper, and the idea of violation and destruction of the feminine body (19). In his exploration of waste in the novel, Michael J. Duvall claims that Norris conceives of consumption in the novel by "thinking about it along the lines of digesting and eliminating body" (141). He elaborates, "McTeague begins to figure hunger and eating (consumption) in excess of or in disavowal of the natural body's needs (the culture of consumption) through its obsessively compounded images of the mouth and teeth" (140). The natural consumption pervading the novel, then, can be taken as a stand-in for a desire for industrial consumption, that is, a pervasive greed. This insistence upon consuming in the novel, be it via picnic basket or ring finger, is a reflection of the cultural shift toward the commodity culture which began overpowering older modes of life in the changing cityscape, and the link between McTeague's consumption and the consumption of the Big Dipper Mine firmly positions the land as one of the things at risk of being consumed. Reading this dynamic through the "body-machine complex," McTeague's voracious consumption is a reflection of the cultural imperative toward the advancement of a fully industrialized consumer culture, and Trina's victimhood represents an anxiety about the natural resources inherent in the land being chewed up and spit out (literally) by those efforts toward capital-P Progress.

Throughout *McTeague*, the protagonist's mechanical characterization increasingly links him to the imagery of the Big Dipper Mine which is visited toward the end of the novel, and which performs the latter version of the extraction of resources. However, it is Trina's body which McTeague consumes in an effort to increase his wealth, yielding even further evidence, though it is hardly needed, that situates the female body as closely

linked to the land which the pseudonature of these texts imitates. It is no coincidence that, in many of the instances of conflated animal and mechanical descriptions of McTeague in Norris's novel, the process undergone is that of consumption — literal consumption in the case of McTeague at his wedding feast and industrial consumption in the case of the gold extraction taking place at the Big Dipper Mine. McTeague's body-machine mines Trina for gold much like the mining operation itself mines the feminized landscape. Norris's description of the land undergoing systematic, to borrow Kolodny's term, "despoliation," evokes a symbolic kinship between McTeague and the mine in its "savage" violence:

> She is a vast, unconquered brute of the Pliocene epoch, savage, sullen, and magnificently indifferent to man. But there were men in these mountains, like lice on mammoths' hides, fighting them stubbornly, now with hydraulic monitors, now with drill and dynamite, boring into the vitals of them, or tearing away great yellow gravelly scars in the flanks of them, sucking their blood, extracting gold. (Norris 293)

Philip Cavalier forges a link between this bodily description of the pseudo-death of the mountainside and the effects that McTeague's mining of Trina creates: "Extracting all the gold from a mountain vein would be like draining all the blood from a person's veins: it would lead to death and transform the body into waste" (128). The kinship of the body of woman and the body of land in this regard is also explored in *Bodies and Machines,* as Seltzer writes: "The extraction of gold from the very entrails of the mother-earth is ultimately a species of obstetrics that can dispense with the women-people, and indeed with the body and its dreadful substance, altogether" (35). The dispensing with of the

body that Seltzer references here conjures associations with both the body of land and the female body, and this reading can be interpreted not only as the creation of waste through the process of consumption, but also as the siphoning of the life force from these respective bodies as a result. Because of these long-held associations of land and female body, the violation of Trina's body takes on all this representative meaning and more in the scheme of Norris's bodily and earthly destruction as symbolically linked.

Not unlike the search for wealth via natural resources at the mining site, the animal impulse toward consumptive greed driving both McTeague and the industrial machinery of the mine is ultimately linked to the desire for gold; McTeague's violence, and sexual deviance, is motivated in part by his resentment of Trina as "miser," becoming increasingly destructive, until eventually murdering his wife, in his desire to somehow access the gold that Trina has hidden from him. Cavalier suggests that Trina's body is positioned as a barrier between McTeague and economic gain, reflecting a more general dynamic of the feminized body of land as a barrier between men and their desired wealth, with both mutilated in a quest for hidden resources (127). Cavalier also points to the tradition of feminized landscapes being violated at the hands of greed as context for the description of the land at Big Dipper: "In *McTeague*…the mountain coded as a wild resisting female body, separates men from the gold they seek" (131). Cavalier points to a connection between Trina's body and the body of land as kindred victims of violation in pursuit of gold, and this reading is reinforced when one of the stranger incidents of consumption in the novel is taken into account: the chewing of Trina's fingers. Cavalier touches on this incident in the scheme of his larger discussion of mining and rape, writing, "McTeague both rapes and consumes Trina. He assaults her...sexually and

without her knowledge initially, and later on beats her, chews on her fingers, and ultimately, kills her" (132). A closer look at the implications of this particular finger-chewing incident offers further insight into the symbolic dynamics between McTeague/the mine and Trina/the land, not to mention a fascinating implication for other female bodies in these naturalist texts in terms of commodification of the body.

As Duvall points out, Trina is positioned in the novel as the only producer of a character in the midst of many, many consumers (134). Norris tells us, "She made Noah's ark animals for Uncle Oelbermann's store" (106). Trina's trinket business relies on her bodily ability to produce the product at hand, and most notably, the whittling of these many animals requires the dexterous use of her fingers. McTeague's misplaced greed drives him to violate Trina's body time and again, but the image that lingers is of the gnawing of Trina's hands, his most depraved attempt to extort the gold from his wife's hidden recesses. Norris describes the ghastly scene: "The fact of the matter was that McTeague, when he had been drinking, used to bite them, crunching and grinding them with his immense teeth, always ingenious to remember which were the sorest. Sometimes he extorted money from her by this means, but as often as not he did it for his own satisfaction" (239). The chewing, of course, results in a gruesome amputation, laying more and more of Trina's body to waste, but also—and perhaps most crucially—destroying her ability to produce. When the doctor informs Trina of the gravity of her situation, her first instinct is not to lament the loss of her fingers but the loss of her work. The doctor tells her, "'Why this is blood poisoning, you know,' [the doctor] told her; 'the worst kind. You'll have to have those fingers amputated, beyond a doubt, or lose the entire hand—or even worse.'" (270). Trina's response is swift: "'And my work!'

exclaimed Trina" (270). The lone producer's ability to produce is a casualty of McTeague's voracious consumption in search of hidden gold within, crippling Trina's body in a way that explicitly prohibits the generation of new resources.

Keeping the link between Trina's body and the feminized landscape in mind, the leap from situational to representational is not a drastic one. Trina's loss of productive ability through the destructive consumption of McTeague parallels the type of environmental destruction which we see taking place at the Big Dipper Mine, both destroying the "body" to the point of being unable to continue producing the means required to live. In the case of the body of land, the wasteland created by mining prohibits the regeneration of life-giving natural resources, as the mining operation presents an undue strain on the body of land which it cannot sustain. In the case of Trina, her body has been crippled by similarly destructive and consumptive forces in such a way that inhibits her ability to make money, that thing which affords her participation in the modernizing economy. Permitting McTeague to perform such a gruesome and specific violation of the feminine body can be no accident on the part of Norris, and this decision is crucial to the reader's understanding of the larger commentary within the symbolic microcosm of McTeague and Trina's interactions. If McTeague is the devouring animal impulse shrouded in mechanization, and Trina is the gold-riddled feminine body vulnerable to violation, the destruction of her fingers is revelatory of an impulse toward crippling the New Woman's ability to participate in a commodity culture, while also revealing a conception of the female body as a resource which may be used up in service of dominant, masculine cultural forces.

Reading the figures of Maggie, Carrie, and Lily in light of these implications lends further insight into the relationship between the female body in these naturalist novels as it relates to consumption, environment, and anxieties of the New Woman within the scheme of the "body-machine complex." Each of these women is forced to grapple with a new understanding of herself as an extension of the urban economy in one way or another, whether that is through factory work, sex work, or acting (or some combination of the above) in lieu of stable financial footing via romantic partnership. Each must reckon with her body as the source of her production (like Trina with her animals) and with the understanding of the body as an extension of her material wealth, as pointed out by Seltzer. The following section will explore these connections through the lens of both Seltzer's claims about the body in naturalism and an application of feminist theory that problematizes such a separation of mind and body.

Maggie, Carrie, and Lily as Products of the Environment

Trina is not the only woman in the works of naturalism whose body becomes an emblem of productive ability in an emerging consumer culture. In their own ways, all of these female protagonists find their bodies to be the source of their wealth, the repository of the effects of their poverty, or sometimes both. Through the lens of Seltzer's assertion about the body and its symbolic value, Dreiser's Carrie, Crane's Maggie, and Wharton's Lily are demonstrative figures of what can happen when that value fluctuates due to the cultural shifts of the tumultuous period in which they find themselves. Part of that fluctuating value (both symbolic and actual) is influenced by the degree to which each woman is able to commodify her body for capital gains—the degree to which she might

convert her “natural resources” into wealth, or at least stability relative to poverty. For these women, the body becomes not only a symbol of accrued wealth, but also a means of producing it. Where Hurstwood’s body is a reflection of his financial footing, each of these women ultimately must reckon with their bodies as their source of capital, a means of production, and it is perhaps in this more insidious way that the female body takes on the weight of progress, in revealing itself as a natural resource to be used as fodder for the great project of capitalism much like the land with which it is symbolically linked.

The above incident with Trina’s fingers offers a more obvious manifestation of this phenomenon by which to read the bodies of Maggie, Carrie, and Lily. Trina’s work, her ability to produce wealth, comes in her ability to create small Noah’s Ark themed trinkets by way of dexterity. When McTeague chews up her fingers beyond all repair, he also destroys her ability to produce, which Trina herself is conscious of when she exclaims, “‘My work!’” upon hearing that her fingers will need to be amputated (Norris 270). It is in this way that McTeague destroys the body and lays waste to it, rendering the independence that Trina cultivated through her production no longer possible. For Maggie and Lily, the masculine forces of destruction are a little less direct than finger-chewing, but ultimately no less detrimental. The central conflict for both of these women, albeit in different social classes, is to grapple with an awareness of her body as supply for sexual demand, as the commodity which she might convert into wealth and stability. Both women attempt to do so through romantic partnership, both are unsuccessful, and both must turn to alternate means of bodily production in order to survive.

Maggie is forced, after an unsuccessful bid at upward social mobility (however limited) through a romantic relationship with Pete, to sell her body in order to survive.

When Maggie emerges as a "girl of the painted cohorts," she has been pushed to the margins of New York society, even by Rum Alley standards, through her failed romantic entanglement with Pete, who "did not consider that he had ruined Maggie" (Crane 70, 67). But "ruin" Maggie he did—and she is subsequently turned away by both Pete and her family, leaving her to roam the streets, the precariousness of which becomes immediately clear to her:

> Soon the girl discovered that if she walked with such apparent aimlessness, some men looked at her with calculating eyes. She quickened her step, frightened. As a protection, she adopted a demeanor of intentness as if going somewhere. After time she left rattling avenues and passed between rows of houses with sternness and stolidity stamped upon their features. She hung her head for she felt their eyes grimly upon her. (69)

To appear without destination, without productive purpose, on the streets of New York City opens a door into the dark territory toward which Maggie is headed. (Notably here, the built structure of the city takes on a moral judgment on a human scale as well as its anthropomorphic physical features, harkening to the last chapter's discussion of the imposing and all-powerful masculine threat that the city represents to Maggie.) In this scene, Pete echoes Maggie's brother, Jimmie, who earlier tells Maggie she can choose to either go to work or to hell given the tendency of her beauty to attract the male gaze. Maggie asks Pete, post-rejection, "'But where kin I go?'" and Pete replies: "'Oh, go teh

hell!'" (69).[1] This choice of two is quite telling of the whole of Maggie's path in Crane's novella. She chooses what she believes to be love, stability, and partnership as an alternative between these two undesirable choices, and encountered the unpleasant truth of Jimmie's assessment of her options the hard way. Maggie finds herself confronting both choices, engaging in a destructive union of the two—working in hell—and forced into sex work through exclusion from society. This dynamic neatly mirrors the one in *McTeague* in its conflation of the female body and the ability to generate a productive income, and ultimately results in similar destruction. Her body becomes the means by which she generates any small measure of income, maintaining a very meager foothold in the economy. In cashing in on the body itself, the resources at her disposal quickly run out.

Wharton's Lily Bart follows a slightly different path of bodily destruction than Maggie or Trina, but it is informed by the same anxieties about consumerism, womanhood, and production that fuel their downfalls. Lily's position in the production line might be more akin to product than producer, as the emphasis on her as an individual is frequently as one of artifice in Wharton's novel. In fact, when Lawrence Selden encounters Lily at the train station at the beginning of *The House of Mirth*, he likens her to a production requiring the sacrifice of people not unlike the figure of Maggie

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[1] Jimmie does his own damage within this problematic dichotomy to another young woman, who the reader meets only briefly, and who Jimmie engages in similar relations with as Pete and Maggie. When the young woman, Hattie, approaches him on the street, also begging her lover for assistance and allegiance, Jimmie swiftly delivers his signature line—"Oh, go teh hell"—and escapes into a "convenient saloon" (64). We are left to assume the possibility that Hattie has found herself in a similar situation as Maggie as a result of Jimmie's rejection, paralleling her dynamic with Pete and reinforcing the "place of forgetfulness" as an arena for rejecting one's adult responsibilities.

(excepting perhaps the "ugly" comment): "He had a confused sense that she must have cost a great deal to make, that a great many dull and ugly people must, in some mysterious way, have been sacrificed to produce her" (5). Lily here is described as a product, perhaps produced, in a sense, by the working class evoked by Selden's remarks. This is not the only time that Lily is described as artificial, a cultivated artifact of her particular milieu of New York society, and the implication that a lower class of individuals are sacrificed in some way for such a product is a reality that Lily comes in much closer contact with in the remainder of the novel. In a passage reflecting on Lily's charity work, Wharton writes, "It is one thing to live comfortably with the abstract conception of poverty, another to be brought in contact with its human embodiments. Lily had never conceived of these victims of fate otherwise than in the mass" (159). Here Lily is beginning to understand the generalized masses of the lower classes as individuals, perhaps shattering some of the illusion of her perch at the top of this pile. Wharton suggests in the lines to follow that this kind of awareness might "decentralize a life," foreshadowing some of Lily's undoing in later chapters, when she is faced with her own "gradual absorption in the dingy communal existence of the boarding-house" (159, 336). Lily's body, however, is positioned first as an artificial construction that transcends this dinginess, however, a total embodiment of the affect of pseudonature, and there is no scene more emblematic of this position as artificial construction than the classic *tableaux vivant* scene.

In one of a great number of party scenes in *The House of Mirth,* Lily is one of "a dozen fashionable women" who are convinced "to exhibit themselves in a series of pictures" which attempted to recreate recognizable works of art via the use of elaborate

costumery and the organic beauty of the young women in question (138). The *tableaux vivant* as phenomenon is described in terms not unlike the affect of pseudonature:

> *Tableaux vivants* depend for their effect not only on the happy disposal of lights and the delusive-interposition of layers of gauze, but on a corresponding adjustment of the mental vision. To unfurnished minds they remain, in spite of every enhancement of art, only a superior kind of wax-works; but to the responsive fancy they may give magic glimpses of the boundary world between fact and imagination. (140)

The “adjustment of mental vision” in order to obtain “glimpses of the boundary world between fact and imagination” evokes the mental restoration and emotional rejuvenation associated with experiences of pseudonature, and this scene offers further understanding of Lily’s deep connection with such spaces, and their affects, through her utter compatibility with such an artificial endeavor at recreating beauty.

The painting in which Lily is cemented is “Mrs. Lloyd,” by Sir Joshua Reynolds, which features a delicate woman dressed in gauzy ethereal fabrics against a backdrop of a pleasant woodland scene. Lily is described as a perfect fit within this artificial representation of nature, her presence in the scene described as “a picture which was simply and undisguisedly Miss Bart” (141). Lily is described as sharing such a kinship with her *tableaux vivant* scenery, that it seems that she originated from the painting as opposed to entering into it from the real world: “She had shown her artistic intelligence in selecting a type so like her own that she could embody the person represented without ceasing to be herself. It was as though she had stepped, not out of, but into, Reynolds's canvas, banishing the phantom of his dead beauty by the beams of her living grace” (141-

2). This scene not only cements Lily as belonging to a realm of artificial beauty from which city dwellers draw feelings of transcendent appreciation, but also harkens back to Tharaud's understanding of landscape paintings as spaces upon which to project a certain sense of freedom and possibility in considering alternate visions of the world and self. This sense is reinforced here by Selden's experience of the *tableaux vivant*: "Each evanescent picture touched the vision-building faculty in Selden, leading him so far down the vistas of fancy that even Gerty Farish's commentary…did not break the spell of the illusion" (141). The *tableaux vivant* scene evokes Kolodny's positioning of artistic reproductions of Nature as a compensation for the utter lack of sublime experience in the adult world. The significance of this scene is crucial to the discussion of the female body and of pseudonature as an artificial reproduction, a commodification, of beauty, as it presents an example in which Lily and the very concept of pseudonature have been morphed into one artificial creation, manmade but steeped in natural imagery, which is meant to be consumed by the upper echelons of urban society as a sight for sore eyes.

The aforementioned idea that Lily is above the working classes, reinforced by her positioning alongside highbrow artifice in the *tableaux vivant* scene, is echoed by several other characters in the novel, and when she ultimately must enter the workforce, it is to the shock and horror of various men in her life that she should stoop to such a level. The outrage stems from the sense that Lily, an object of rejuvenating beauty to which men feel entitled access, is too sacred and delicate to be subjected to the indignity of toil. And it is in this way that Lily's relationship to work is particularly resonant with reading the female body as linked to the land, and to pseudonature, as perhaps what the men really lament is a "despoliation" of the body upon which they project a restorative alternative to

the work that they themselves must endure. In a chance meeting with Mr. Rosedale, one of the smattering of rich men interested in her, Lily reveals that she is learning to be a milliner, and is met with outrage and incredulity. Mr. Rosedale exclaims in response, "'What a way for you to talk! The idea of your having to work—it's preposterous…It's a farce—a crazy farce!'" (314). Rosedale cannot conceive of Lily, who he too views as a product of highest culture fit only for trading among gentleman, as a person "obliged," as Lily confesses, "to work for [her] living" (305). Since she is perceived as a product of the high society which they navigate, the thought of Lily engaging in other modes of production—instead of herself being consumed by the likes of Rosedale—rings farcical, almost offensive, to him, and we get the sense that the true source of his offense is the loss of his own fantasy, that of seeking comfort in Lily by way of her proximity to the very system from which he would so like to escape. Given the positioning of Lily in the *tableaux vivant* scene as utterly conflated with the pseudonature which represents that escape, this disappointment and outrage can be interpreted as a response to the defilement of one's fantasies by reality. But the obligation with which she is faced, that is to toil in the workforce, comes from the mentality of so many other men in the novel which is exemplified in Rosedale, one in which Lily is a product to be consumed.

The impetus for Lily's downfall comes in the form of Gus Trenor, another high-society man who is interested in Lily sexually, but one who is notably less dignified in his pursuits than Rosedale—not to mention that he is married to Lily's friend, Judy. Early in the novel Lily approaches Trenor about investing a small sum for her in order to solve her financial woes as a single woman, and he agrees, but does not inform Lily that the dividends he shares with her are not in fact profit from her own investment, but money

from his own pocket that Trenor assumes serves as a down payment on Lily's affections. Lily is confronted with this harsh reality when Trenor summons her to his residence while his wife is away, revealing to Lily both the source of her funds and the expectations that come along with them. Lily replies with surprise and confusion: "'Pay up?' she faltered. 'Do you mean that I owe you money?'" (154). Trenor counters in sinister fashion, "'Oh, I'm not asking for payment in kind. But there's such a thing as fair play—and interest on one's money—and hang me if I've had as much as a look from you—'" (154). It becomes clear in this exchange that Trenor expects sexual returns on his investment, further commenting that "the man who pays for the dinner is generally allowed to have a seat at the table" (153). Lily, however, refuses, cementing her fate though she does not yet know it. Her refusal to trade her sexuality for money in this episode with Trenor harkens back to the plight of Maggie; Lily is also faced with the prospect of destitution or a form of prostitution here, and in refusing to sell her body in this direct exchange, she places herself on a path toward destruction of a different kind, now owing Trenor a sizable debt, the payment of which will ultimately siphon what remains of Lily's vitality. Lily experiences the emotional weight of this financial news in bodily manifestations, just as Hurstwood in *Sister Carrie* experiences failing bodily health in the face of financial destitution. After a particularly biting remark from Trenor, Lily feels that "the brutality of the thrust gave her the sense of dizziness that follows on a physical blow" (153). This occasion marks Lily's descent into poverty, forcing her into that so-called farcical job with the milliner which siphons the last remainder of life from her. Lily's inability to convert her body into a mechanism of production in these ways

results in the impoverished state which leads to her death, a fading away of the physical form which mimics the disintegration of her potential for wealth.

Both Lily and Maggie experience the awareness of their physical forms as commodities by which they can navigate the urban landscape, just from opposite ends of the social spectrum. Like that of Trina, Maggie and Lily's physical forms become linked to their ability to participate in a commodity culture, with the culture itself responsible for commodifying the body. And like Trina, Maggie and Lily meet an untimely demise—destroyed by the cultivating of the body as a commodity to be traded in the urban marketplace and the subsequent siphoning of vitality which results from such a dynamic.

The exception to this rule of destruction in the forming body-commodity complex is that of Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*, whose protagonist escapes the literal death that befalls these women by cashing in on her bodily form as a commodity to society, via acting and performance, rather than to individual men in the form of sex and romance. While Hurstwood deteriorates alongside his bank account, Carrie becomes increasingly independent during their time in New York through her growing success at entering the acting world. Carrie's success offers her access to all that she has coveted since first arriving in Chicago from the country: "Frequently she had considered the stage as a door through which she might enter that gilded state which she had so much craved" (270). Kirsten Pullen, in *Actresses and Whores* (2005), traces a long history of conflating actresses with sex workers in the cultural consciousness:

> The enduring tie between prostitution and performance, between actresses and whores, tells a great deal about Western cultural myths of women and sexuality…When actresses and prostitutes perform a version of femininity for

> their audiences and clients, they are citing established and historicized behaviors. The historical background of these behaviors insures that they will be read as specifically female and sexual. (2,8)

Conceiving of both of these endeavors as performances of femininity and sexuality unites Carrie's body-commodity complex with that of Maggie and Lily in its own way, as both figures, actress and "prostitute," are installments in the tradition outlined by Pullen which siphons entertainment from the femininity produced. Carrie's mode of production is a more sustainable one, since it requires lesser depletion of resources in the production of femininity. Papke writes that "Dreiser's Carrie is the American character most often recognized as spoken to, seduced by, and indistinguishable from commodities" (295). Papke's observation is reinforced by reading Carrie in just such a fashion, as a figure who dissolves herself into the most abstract iteration of production yet. In this way, Carrie's position is more aligned with the "superfluous" economy that Norman O. Brown suggests as the dominant force in the city. Carrie's mode of production is more abstracted from her physical body (like the urban economy is abstracted from land/agriculture) than the exchange of sex for money or working with one's hands in the milliner's shop, both of which rely on the physical form as the site of production. Carrie as actress is using her physical form to participate in the economy through her total immersion into a "place of forgetfulness," making her complicit in the system which siphons from other feminine forms. Her ability to use her body as a mechanism of production that does not involve sexual transaction or manual labor does prevent her from death, but only because it generates more income than other modes of bodily production are able to manage and sustains less bodily damage in the process.

The positioning of women's bodies as sites of production, or potential production, reaffirms Seltzer's observations about the symbolic weight of one's finances attached to the physical form of these naturalist characters, creating a body-commodity complex in which the female body navigates the urban structures of modernized society as a commodity rather than an extension of the individual self. The body becomes a stand-in for an individual's financial footing in the world, as a possession separate from what the individual perceives as their true self. We could almost ascribe the categories of the nature/culture dichotomy to this phenomenon, with characters' experiencing their internal lives (soul, mind, etc.) as connected to nature and their own bodies as a product of the surrounding culture, an equally toxic reversal of traditional dualistic understandings of the mind as elevated from the natural material form which it inhabits.

In this regard, these naturalist representations uphold problematic essentialist understandings of the self which call for theoretical complication. The reliance upon dualistic understandings of nature/culture and mind/body in naturalism, reversed or not, still speak to a sense of the separation of mind and body, of self and material form, which allow for a sense of detachment from one's surroundings, a sense which denies the existence of transcorporeality and perhaps contributes to feelings of alienation from the surrounding environs. To this naturalistic sense of the separation of mind/body, we might apply Karen Barad's principle of "thingification," which she defines as "the turning of relations into 'things,' 'entities,' 'relata'" in a way that "infects much of the way we understand the world and our relationship to it" (Barad 812). Barad's application of posthumanism in this definition of "thingification" rejects the academic impulse toward classifying matter as passive (801). In *Material Feminisims* (2008), Stacy Alaimo further

defines Barad's "thingification" as "the reduction of lively, emergent, intra-acting phenomena into passive, distinct resources for use and human control" (Alaimo 249). Intra-activity, as opposed to interactivity, understands entities not as residing in discrete categories but in constant relational flux with other material bodies. The presence of a body-commodity complex in these texts is complicit in the assumption of the passivity of matter which Barad and Alaimo reject in favor of a transcorporeal understanding of the embodied human experience. Thingification occurs in these examples of naturalist figures, and their respective body-commodity complexes, in the treatment of the material body as an object distanced from the self, linked exclusively to commodity and economy rather than the individual person—a passive resource for the consumption of the larger systems in play. A return to the *tableaux vivant* scene demonstrates the impulse of society toward "thingification" of the female body in general, as the artistic renderings in the scene are ultimately an attempt to take the dynamic beauty of young, living women and turn it into a static artifact of that beauty for the consumption of onlookers. This process reveals an impulse toward the preservation of female bodies, the preservation of beauty, through an insistence on eliminating a sense of agency, instead relying on a passive understanding of the female form—a natural resource which, with careful cultivation, can be arranged into something which fuels culture. This orientation toward the body as a resource instead of an integral part of the self mirrors the problematic orientation to the nature/culture binary, which fuels the conspicuous consumption associated with American capitalism that siphons nature of its power and resources, in this case including the female body, in service of the perpetuation of culture.

In *Capitalism in the Web of Life* (2018), Jason W. Moore suggests that the aforementioned binary, which he classifies as Nature/Society, is the source of all other problematic binaries—the gender binary included—in that the category of Nature as separate from civilized society has long been used as a mechanism of oppression for any demographics classified as more closely associated with Nature than with Society (4). The preservation of this false dichotomy, Moore suggests, allows the privileging of humanity over all other matter, creating built-in justification for capitalism, which siphons the vitality of all that is deemed Nature, a category in which Moore suggests women have historically been included. Moore explains, "Capitalism—or if one prefers, modernity or industrial civilization—emerged *out of* Nature. It drew wealth *from* Nature. It disrupted, degraded, of defiled *Nature*" (5). Moore's understanding of this binary orientation to Nature/Society as it relates to womanhood presents illuminating implications, particularly given the link previously forged between the body of land and the body of woman as equally feminine and equally endangered by the capitalist forces threatening to obscure it. A necessary blurring of the lines between these binaries, including the mind/body binary of the individual self, must be applied to understand the full significance of the treatment of women's bodies as reflective of the land in these texts.

Stacy Alaimo's work in *Material Feminisms* (2008) offers a productive lens through which to engage with that treatment of land/body symbolism. Alaimo situates her argument by acknowledging first that the endeavor of much feminist theory, historically, has been to "transport 'woman' from the category of nature to the realm of culture," working within the constraints of the problematic nature/culture dualism that renders

women, racial minorities, and other marginalized groups to a lesser status due to a supposition of closer proximity to nature, as opposed to culture (239). She points out that one of feminist theory's more "radical" claims, "the concept of gender as distinct from biological sex," i.e. a social construction, relies on those preexisting categories of nature and culture, an idea also reflected in Moore's suggestion that the Nature/Society binary is the root of all others (239). The implication of her critique is that arguing for women's inclusion in the culture half of that dualism ratifies culture's perceived legitimacy over entities associated with the nature half and, because of culture's association with dominant social groups, reifies that dominance over marginalized groups. The unfortunate underpinning of this endeavor to switch dualistic sides as a means toward female empowerment is an acceptance of the realm of culture, and the masculine values which it privileges and values, as the superior option. This approach precludes the idea that the inclinations toward femininity, and the values therein which culture disavows, might be the better approach. The essentialism against which this material feminism rebels is the same essentialism which informs a dualistic understanding of nature and culture, or Nature/Society as Jason W. Moore describes it. In the same way that the understanding of the constructed identity of woman is harmful to the embodied reality of womanhood, the constructed identity of Nature, and thus pseudonature, is harmful to the material reality of lowercase-n nature, Moore's "web of life." Each denies the existence of woman and nature as a material body from which the cultural projection springs, privileging the cultural projection itself over the material form. The fate of the female body in these texts is uniquely linked to both nature *and* culture—to nature through the symbolic kinship to land and to culture through the utter destruction it suffers at the

hands of it, the commodification included. This tension invites a unique reading of the female bodies of naturalism through Alaimo's lens.

All of this contextualizing of theoretical applications is in service of making a specific point about Maggie, Lily, Carrie, and Trina, one drawn from a concept of Alaimo's work: that of the concept of "toxic bodies." Alaimo's emphasis on transcorporeality suggests that intra-activity between our material bodies and the external world is happening constantly, understanding the body as in conversation with the world around it, and vice versa. The idea of "toxic bodies," as Alaimo identifies it, relies on this principle of transcorporeality, understanding the body as a sort of record of environmental stimuli; she likens the relation between toxic body and environment as a sort of record of external stimuli imprinted upon the body as the rings of a tree keep environmental records of their growing conditions (261). Alaimo identifies many of the same sources of anxiety of the "body-machine complex" as sources of this potential toxicity: "Toxic bodies are produced and reproduced, simultaneously, by science, industrialized culture, agribusiness, capitalist consumerism, and other forces. Toxic bodies are certainly not essentialist, since they are volatile, emergent, and continually evolving" (261-2). Toxic bodies, she states, are "a particularly vivid example of trans-corporeal space," which "encourage us to imagine ourselves in constant interchange with the 'environment'" (262). The bodies of the women in these naturalist texts can be read through this lens, perhaps as symbolic manifestations of a real phenomenon. The significance of this concept to the feminine forms of naturalism is in Alaimo's interpretation of the body as a repository of social and cultural influences, not just physical stimuli; a practical current example that illuminates this point clearly might

come in the form of the water pollution crisis in Flint, Michigan, which is indeed causing its victims to experience toxic physical symptoms. However, the chronic and prolonged nature of these physical side effects is largely perpetuated as a result of more insidious class and racial prejudices which inhibit social response to the ongoing tragedy. Part of reading toxic bodies, then, is reading how class, race, and gender, among other determinants of privilege, also determine one's position on the spectrum of societal toxicity. Alaimo writes, "Thinking through toxic bodies allows us to reimagine human corporeality, and materiality itself, not as a utopian or romantic substance existing prior to social inscription, but as something that always bears the trace of history, social position, region, and the uneven distribution of risk" (261). This "uneven distribution of risk" is crucial to understanding the women of naturalism as emblematic toxic bodies. The anxiety reflected in the body-commodity complex emerging in these female characters reflects such an uneven distribution, as it is the women in these novels who ultimately perish because of the cultural anxieties it represents.

If we compare, for instance, the fate of these women and the fate of Hurstwood, we might glibly categorize them all as victims of poverty, throwing a wrench in the gendered reading of the toxic bodies of naturalism. But crucially, and infuriatingly, at no point in Hurstwood's descent into poverty is he confronted with the prospect of selling his body for sex in order to survive, and he ends up in his position not because the societal cards are stacked against him in such a manner that almost precludes his success (as it is with, say, Maggie), but because he actively chose to abandon the stability he had already required in favor of an enticing sexual alternative. (Much like his short-lived gambling career, he takes a risk that simply doesn't pay off.) Hurstwood aligns himself

with an entity closely linked to pseudonature when he aligns himself with Carrie, shirking his convenient and stable lifestyle in favor of an alternative to societal institutions. And in doing so, he unfortunately also shifts himself into a much more precarious position on the spectrum of societal toxicity, one to which the women of these novels were already categorically relegated.

An understanding of Moore's "web of life" as a collapsing of the false dualism between Nature and Society opens up the door to understand the vast interconnectedness between the forms which have traditionally been conceived of as landing in one category or the other, an interconnectedness reflected in Alaimo's concept of the "toxic bodies" which is applied to the these fictional women. The commodification of the bodies of these women in naturalism is as much a reflection of the toxicity of their environments as the pollution of natural resources—the perils of industrialized society cause them to deteriorate beyond all repair. This is the orientation of capitalism—that driving force behind newly emerging commodity culture—to nature as well, and it is this orientation that is reflected in the body-commodity complex by which we can describe this shared phenomenon. Maggie, Lily, Carrie, and Trina have all received an undue share of the risk of their environment by nature of being women in a society dictated by masculine forces, built in masculine forms, and fueled by the siphoned vitality of femininity which presents itself in the text through both these characters and the pseudonature with which they are associated. Reading them as "toxic bodies" suggests the true consequences of the masculine-ordered, capitalist-driven, fully industrialized world against which their struggles take place. The fate of these women, and their positions as products in the urban economy, demonstrate a total annihilation of the values associated with femininity taking

place within city limits during this period of encroaching modernity, and the pattern emerging in these texts must be read as a reflection of the anxiety felt in the cultural consciousness about that fading femininity inherent in both woman and pseudonature as the final vestiges of it slip through the culture's collective fingers.

A Park is Also a Product

The implication of reading the body as a commodity is that it also becomes disposable—something to be used and replaced, not necessarily cultivated at the hands of tender stewards. Norman O. Brown asks his reader "What then is a city?" and his answer is the source of the plight of the above women in a nutshell: "A city reflects the new masculine aggressive psychology of revolt against the female principles of dependence and nature" (Brown 281-2). The city as a very concept, in Brown's estimation, results in a categorical rejection of femininity in its emphasis on economic forces abstracted from physical needs for survival and utter lack of consideration for the "dependence" inherent in a community which privileges the well-being of its constituent parts, both human and non, via a conscious interdependence and custodial sensibility. This interdependence, unfortunately, does not evaporate simply because it is not given its due diligence. The interconnectedness of human and nonhuman parts in a community is still there—it is arranged, in urban environments, in a way that benefits the systems over the individual, the human over the nonhuman, and the masculine over the feminine. Moore writes that "capitalist relations move through, not upon, space—which is to say through, not upon, nature as a whole" (83). The capitalist system which dictates such an exploitative dynamic as the one which we see in effect in these naturalist examples is not extra-

natural, but a system by which natural matter, humans included, is organized in service of a force which is perceived as larger than life, and one which ultimately takes life from those in demographics unfortunate enough to receive an "uneven distribution of risk" of its toxic side effects. In other words, the capitalist drive at the core of this emerging consumer culture in naturalism, and its corresponding cultural moment, does not exist separate from the human forms who dwell within it. It exists *because* of the vitality of those individuals, feeding off of it with the reckless consumptive gusto of a gas-guzzling SUV.

In this way, the female form is, quite literally, fuel for the system which destroys it. The uneven distribution of risk experienced by said women is a result of the incompatibility with those feminine values—"dependence and nature," as Brown notes them—with the system in which they exist. The space of pseudonature, as nonhuman body, takes on these associations as well, as extension of the phenomena of commodified femininity—a reproduction of the restorative qualities which are associated with land and understood in terms of femininity. The female body in these novels is presented as a passive "thingified" entity from which these manmade systems siphon the vitality for sustenance, just as their romantic vitality was siphoned within spaces of pseudonature for the aims of men unwilling or unable to conceive of the destructive consequences of their actions. This connection between the female body and the spaces of pseudonature reveals the inextricability of the cultural systems from those spaces, and solidifies our understanding of pseudonature as a product of its cultural environment, a manifestation of the same anxieties of fleeing femininity which appear in the treatment of these women as commodified bodies.

If we conceive of the body as a repository for cultural anxieties, and we conceive of the bodies of these women as related to the body of land, then just as the women in these novels are presented as products, manifestations of anxiety about commodity culture, pseudonature is a parallel product also stemming from these anxieties. At the moment of the creation of these works of naturalism, America was experiencing a sense of the closing of the frontier—a realization that the promised negative freedom of untouched virgin land no longer existed, as the spaces of America were increasingly incorporated into the fold of civilization. The anxiety of the sense of being locked into place within a system which oppresses leads one to dream of escape, and pseudonature can be read as a product intended to meet that very need.

The sense of being locked into inevitable cultural forces, however, is an utter fiction. This is naturalism's eternal fatal flaw—that it insists upon accepting the consequence of collective human choices as a force beyond all efforts at revision. But the perception of this anxiety by naturalist writers, whether or not they are consciously aware of their complicity in this perception of society as immutable, is experienced as real, as true, and as very threatening. The anxiety reflected then is really an anxiety of being left without alternative, forced to drudge through the society which has been cultivated all around us and which threatens misery, poverty, and death to all who contradict it. As a coping mechanism, pseudonature then takes on the role of a simulation of the possibility of an alternative, the promise of a mode of existence more consistent with the human experience and less toxic to the human form. Like the American landscape paintings which Tharaud in *Apocalyptic Geographies* identifies as "immersive spaces" for contemplation of society and self, an engagement with possibility, pseudonature serves as

a reproduction of something which modernizing America finds itself wanting (33-4). Pseudonature presents an illusion of the interconnectedness of man, a feeling of human connection via the feminine principle Brown identifies as "dependence," and a communion with nature which provides the sensation of transcendence to something more spiritual than that which surrounds it, though it is nothing more than a mass-produced replica of those sensations. This sense of possibility is the same sense which Drouet, Hurstwood, Pete, Selden, Rosedale, and Trenor project onto the female form in these novels. But because of the commodification of both—the women and the pseudonature—by larger cultural forces, what remains of both is utter artifice: an artificial production of femininity in the commodified bodies of the female characters, and an artificial representation of Nature (and nature) in the form of the pseudonature with which the use of those commodified bodies is associated.

Under this system, pseudonature is produced as a consolation prize for the loss of the thing obscured via human progress—that original unspoiled feminized body of land which was the object of a collective cultural fantasy of escape from the despair of what Kolodny identifies as the "adult" world of society. In these novels, the anxiety felt at the loss of this fantasy is projected onto the female body and to the body of pseudonature—both presented as products which are to be consumed in order to scratch the itch that remains of this desire for freedom from oppressive societal systems. Reading these bodies together—both of women and of pseudonature—is a reading of the body-commodity complex as a projection of the same central cultural anxiety onto both forms: the anxiety of certainty. It is an anxiety of the false sense of loss of cultural possibility perpetuated by naturalism's insistence on reading the forces of culture, the product of

human choice, as inevitable, inscrutable, and immutable. And in these novels, both products offer illusory, but not actual, escape from the dread of existence in a miserable world that seems inescapable while sustaining actual, not illusory, damage to the material from which those projections are cultivated.

CHAPTER V: PSEUDONATURE BEYOND NATURALISM

"Ah, now I know where I am…" intones a robed Henry Miller dropped suddenly onto the streets of his childhood cityscape, "back in that old shithole, New York." The short documentary film, *Asleep and Awake* (1975), finds Miller reminiscing on a changing New York City from the perspective of his old age, and he pulls no punches in deploring the destruction left in the wake of the wheels of progress, as he describes "a place where I knew nothing but starvation, humiliation, despair, frustration, every goddamn thing. Nothing but misery." When he considers how the New York around him, one devoid of anything but brownstone and concrete and commercial signage, has changed since his childhood, he muses, "It's a different city, a little more horrible. Gets worse all the time. Today I think it's the ugliest, filthiest, shittiest city in the world."

This diatribe is what I like to imagine running through the mind of Lily Bart in *The House of Mirth* as she leaves work at the milliner's and heads for the dismal boarding house she's forced to call home, though Edith Wharton describes her feelings in slightly more polite terms: "She dreaded to return to her narrow room, with its blotched wallpaper and shabby paint; and she hated every step of the walk thither, through the degradation of a New York street in the last stages of decline from fashion to commerce" (303). Politeness aside, Lily, much like Henry Miller, reflects on the fading away of a shinier, happier New York which she had previously called home as she trudges toward the relative squalor in which she resides at the end of the novel. She, too, has experienced despair, frustration, humiliation, and misery at the hands of life in New York. And I have to wonder if she does not also experience some of the same bitterness toward this arena of life which has so forsaken her pride, her happiness, and her wellbeing. The American

space to which both Miller and Wharton refer is central to the American imagination, and New York is also the central urban space against which most of the drama of these novels (*McTeague* excluded) takes shape. It is an American symbol associated with many of the core values which have long defined an American sensibility—the idea of progress, innovation, and the promise of profit as far as the eye can see, when that horizon is not interrupted by a phallic skyscraper or two. This is the space we see in film, in television, in literature, and it is the focus of these naturalist novels not because it is where most of American life takes place, but because it is the space with which we most associate American-ness.

That the space itself has little bearing on most American people's existence, or that, as Henry Miller points out, it contains its fair share of miseries, is less prominent in the cultural consciousness, despite the fact that it is this very misery which so consistently prompts individuals to seek out rejuvenation whether in Nature, pseudonature, or some other "place of forgetfulness." To recall Lawrence Buell's phrase, "exurban spaces" are what we might call the places traditionally associated with the restorative Nature which city dwellers are wont to seek (56). Pseudonature is a substitute meant to provide that rejuvenation of the exurban space; Buell calls the restorative association an "enabling myth" (56). The problem with pseudonature, of course, is that it is categorically not exurban at all. It is locked into the urban space, locked into the misery it holds in its hidden (or sometimes painfully visible) recesses—locked within "that old shithole." And if that space, the New York of our collective imagination, is the imagined space which reflects our cultural values, then what values exactly are reflected in the presence of pseudonature within it?

In the previous chapter, I argued that the space of the urban park—the central space of pseudonature—can be best understood as a product of the capitalist system which dictates the design and function of the rest of the urban space which surrounds it, and that its value to that system is as a source of replenishment for those within it who are producers. Mary E. Papke suggests that naturalists "document through meticulous attention to the phantasmagoric value of things the ways we continue to pay for America's emergence in the nineteenth century as the leading capitalist, industrial power in the world" (292). The "phantasmagoric value of things" to which Papke gestures most certainly includes the value of pseudonature, one such product of the cultural moment in question, just one that unfortunately attempts to commodify a spirituality which categorically cannot be reproduced. And not for nothing, the value which is commodified by pseudonature is quite dreamlike—a facsimile of that sense of wonder and oneness which is associated with romantic and transcendental orientations to Nature. Despite the fact that, as J. Susannah Shmurak points out, "park planners and their supporters conceived urban parks as an antidote to the modern city's artificiality," spaces of pseudonature are no more organic than the phallic skyscraper of Leslie Kern's critique—but perhaps more insidious, given that they are intended to provide the illusion of an alternative to the spaces around it (Shmurak 131). Like Carrie on the stage, the pseudonature of cities is perhaps meant to dazzle the viewer into distraction from the structures beyond it which threaten to overwhelm and destroy as the grip of modernization becomes ever tighter. In this way, the value reflected in pseudonature is a bastardization of the most sacred "oceanic" feelings to which all humans are privy,

capitalizing on that feeling's ubiquity in order to produce the perfect supply for this particular universal demand.

Lest we think that the impulse toward rejuvenating spaces marked by industrialization is a marker of history long past, as part of the December 2020 COVID-19 pandemic relief bill passed by Congress, legislation designated the New River Gorge in West Virginia as America's newest National Park. In a write-up on the New River Gorge in *The New York Times*, a reporter notes that due in part to "logging during the late nineteenth century [stripping] vast portions of the gorge bare" there's been a "multigenerational effort…to transform a *tired* industrial area into a national landmark" (Montague n.p., emphasis added). This rhetoric places America's latest endeavor in park-making firmly within this tradition of the rejuvenating power of nature against parasitic industrial forces, and conceives of the current levels of resource-fatigue in our national spaces as direct consequences of the spatial negotiations between nature and culture that were taking place during the late nineteenth century. Curtis White points out in *We, Robots* (2015) the suggestion no one dares to make that "the National Park system is also our *worst* idea because it puts a boundary on nature beyond which we are free to be as destructive as we like" (159). The National Park, in White's view, justifies all the destruction which is wreaked beyond its boundaries, an insurance policy against culture's total annihilation of nature, and our latest installment within that system indicates that this mentality is still the informing principle by which we organize American space—with the delineation of "wilderness" applying only to that which demonstrates, as Roderick Nash puts it, a "uselessness to civilization" (113). It seems that in our current moment, as Papke points out, we "continue to pay" the consequences of the rapid

development of America as industrial power at the time in which American literary naturalism was taking shape.

The echoes of these consequences, though first identified perhaps in the pseudonature of naturalism, have continued to rear their heads in American literature, film, and art since this period, like a recurring nightmare that the great American unconscious cannot seem to shake. A strong case could be made, for instance, that Willa Cather's *My Antonia* (1918) uses the memory of nature as a form of pseudonature for its protagonist, Jim Burden, as he reflects on his youth alongside his own rejuvenating female figure (Antonia) against a backdrop of prairie life as a mental and physical escape from his more civilized East Coast adulthood. J.D. Salinger's classic American coming-of-age novel *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951) cultivates a conscious association for Holden Caulfield between Central Park and a retreat into the nostalgia and innocence of childhood, bolstered by his association of the space with his little sister Phoebe, which alleviates the psychological stresses of his immersion in the adult world by way of frequent forays into this familiar territory. Colson Whitehead's recent Pulitzer Prize winner, *The Underground Railroad* (2016), evokes pseudonature in a fascinating and richly complex manner. Protagonist and escapee from slavery, Cora, makes a brief home of a community of former slaves under seemingly benevolent government supervision, in which parties in the communal green space—I might classify it as a "place of forgetfulness" in my pseudonatural parlance—are featured as a significant benefit of the arrangement, only to be revealed as a distraction from the fact that the government supervisors in question are conducting harmful medical experiments on those in the community. (Whitehead's evocation of pseudonature takes the notion of pseudonature's

complicity with toxic cultural systems and victimized bodies to an entirely new level and invites a reading of pseudonature alongside issues of race in much the same vein as it can be read alongside issues of gender.) Clearly, there could be dissertations several times over on the examples of pseudonature and like phenomena in American art since the onset of the parks movement in the 1870s, but these are just a handful of surface-level observations that demonstrate the breadth of pseudonature's reach in our artistic tradition, mile markers along the journey that literary representations of pseudonature have since taken. One example which I will flesh out slightly more is that of the 2018 film *Leave No Trace*, which evokes all of the conventions of the pseudonatural, but also offers a thought-provoking antidote to the limitations suffered by the representations of pseudonature that precede it.

The film *Leave No Trace,* directed by Debra Granik and based on the novel *My Abandonment* (2009) by Peter Rock, introduces Will, a veteran of the Iraq War, who is living with his teenage daughter, Tom, inside a park in Portland, Oregon. Pseudonature, in this film, seems to serve as a mechanism by which Will might manage the intense post-traumatic stress disorder which has thus far prevented him from reentering "civilized" society. The park functions as a sensory escape for an individual who has been damaged by the aggressive mechanisms of culture which lay beyond it, namely the toxicity of the military-industrial complex, perhaps the most masculine of all masculine aggressions which we can identify at the heart of the culture half of the nature/culture binary. Rather than offering another installment of the pained and suffering woman at the destructive center of this narrative, however, it is young Tom who survives least scathed at the end of this film, and the preservation of femininity in this act is central to the

themes of the film itself. The conclusion sees Tom embracing a community which offers dependence on others and human connection outside the traditional societal structures. After Will sustains an injury, the pair end up under the care of a group of people living in mobile homes and RVs in a low-impact lifestyle which offers a clear example of a community that is at odds with society, and more closely linked to nature, which appeals to Tom. Though Will ultimately retreats once more into the static space of pseudonature, which offers escapist satisfaction but not actual escape from civilization (and certainly no psychological healing), Tom stays. She tells her father, the "same thing that's wrong with you isn't wrong with me," which amounts to a powerful rejection of the baggage of the patriarchal society which has infiltrated her father's psyche and damaged his ability to form such a community as the one she embraces. In this way, *Leave No Trace* depicts a narrative in which the feminine impulse toward "dependence and nature," as Norman O. Brown puts it, is given a chance to flourish, and it is in this way that the film demonstrates a prescriptive philosophy for seeking better spaces in which to live, separate from both pseudonature and the culture which necessitates it.

This embrace of femininity and relegation of the forces of masculinity to the wayside is a crucial component that American literary naturalism lacks, and at this point we have the fictional female body count of the movement to prove it. The portrayal of femininity, represented by pseudonature and the associated women, in naturalism is one in which it is obscured by imposing masculine influences, those inevitable deterministic forces which are depicted as fate rather than the result of so many individual choices. And at the hands of that masculinity, the emblematic women in question—Lily, Maggie, Carrie, and Trina—either die or are entirely swallowed by the mechanisms in place. In *A*

World Elsewhere (1966), Richard Poirier suggests that in American literature a dichotomy emerges between texts which envision societal alternatives and those that accept the forces of environment as they are:

> The distinction to be made is between those whose protests sometimes take the form of creating in their works an alternative environment…and those for whom the environment of the real world simply overpowers…any effort of the imagination to transcend it. In this case the imagination, as in the novels of Dreiser and Edith Wharton, can only reproduce the effect of environment as force. (Poirier 16)

The frustration of naturalism is that there is transcendence within—these pseudonatural bodies and female bodies do represent an alternative to the society at hand. But in naturalism, these bodies that represent alternative imaginings are destroyed, or at least obscured, by the forces of the environment that are already in place. The philosophy inherent is that these qualities of a feminine organization of cultural institutions—those elusive qualities of dependence and nature—stand no chance against the oppressive masculine forces built into the structures of society, that they experience those forces as fated. Naturalists, as Donald Pizer writes in a 2006 "Reintroduction to Naturalism," set out to compose a "literature of the authentic" to some degree, to present the world as it *truly* was, and humans for how they *truly* are (194). They set out "to render life as it was, based on one's concrete and personal knowledge of that life" (194). But what ultimately came of that process is a diagnosis without a prescription—a vivid account of the hellishness of modern society with no suggestion of an alternative, and no awareness that this is a fate created by man for himself.

The body of pseudonature in these works represents an unconscious anxiety about such certainty of the given order lurking in the farthest reaches of each author's mind. That is not to say that these writers are not conscious of the romantic and transcendentalist tradition into which their pseudonatural scenes interject, but rather to say that their acceptance of pseudonature as a reasonable substitute for something a great deal closer to Emerson's eyeball reveals both an impulse toward transcending the "shithole" and a shortsightedness about the possibilities beyond its boundaries. The very association of pseudonature with the female body in these texts reveals a reliance on older modes of understanding about the land and its treatment—and one in which the human form is still privileged over others. Stacy Alaimo notes what many an ecocritical text has previously acknowledged, that Nature is "a cultural repository of norms and moralism" (239). In these novels, the female body takes on the weight of these cultural norms as well. What is left unsaid, however, is that the physical body of nature, much like the physical body of woman, is neglected into disrepair within this understanding—the projections are sustaining only to those who consume them, not the bodies from whence they originate. It seems that the presence and treatment of pseudonature in this light indicates that the inherent anxiety which these authors convey is a complicity in this way of thinking, reflected in a small simulation of the spaces upon which these norms and morals are customarily projected. Pseudonature is presented as a container in which society may compartmentalize its doubts about all that surrounds it, all that we call "civilization," or Society, or culture. And the purpose of any container is, of course, to contain—to keep something in its place until it is next needed, and safely out of sight, out of mind while it is not. In this case what is being contained, kept in a limited space for

limited use, is an opportunity to feel transcendent feelings, to envision a mode of living more consistent with human desire, to entertain alternatives to that which makes the relief of pseudonature so welcome to those who encounter it. And the naturalist writers who depict this phenomenon are perhaps in as much need of a space to envision other worlds as their characters.

Stephen Crane writes in *Maggie* that the saloon is where residents of New York go to "annihilate sorrow," which the naturalist writers take for granted—that the modernized city creates sorrow that must be annihilated (46). But unlike *Leave No Trace,* which rejects the societal standards which breed such alienating sorrow, these novels chart the havoc which they wreak upon the individuals. The annihilation of sorrow is a good starting place to identify the ills to be remedied in the structures of American society, but I have to wonder if there is not a better way than drowning our sorrows in the proverbial saloon. The effect of pseudonature is not unlike a mind-altering drug, as evidenced by, if nothing else, Wharton's description of Lily's use of the sleep aids which ultimately lead to her death:

> In the uneasy snatches of her natural dreams [Selden] came to her sometimes in the old guise of fellowship and tenderness; and she would rise from the sweet delusion mocked and emptied of her courage. But in the sleep which the vial procured she sank far below such half-waking visitations, sank into depths of annihilation from which she woke each morning with an obliterated past. (Wharton 310)

Lily uses drugs to annihilate sorrow, just as alcohol functions to annihilate sorrow in *Maggie*, only Wharton takes the parallel one step further in suggesting the crucial link

between Lily's annihilation of sorrows and her ability to reenter the urban structure: "The drug gave her the momentary illusion of complete renewal, from which she drew strength to take up her daily work" (310). Pseudonature as drug is a reading unto itself, but a quick connection between the two suggests both addictive and palliative qualities to its affect—an opiate of the masses which lulls them into the precise sense of complacency which perpetuates the standards by which pseudonature is created. In this way, pseudonature becomes an indvidual's solution to individual pains, but one that does not alter anything beyond the mind in a temporary fashion—not in a good way, anyway. The encounter with pseudonature provokes an altered inner state as compensation for altered external spaces which create the need for relief in the first place. The psychological need for transcendence and spirituality, feelings of communion with nature and man, is met with pseudonature like a temporary high from a particularly crave-able drug, an insular pseudo-solution that provides psychological relief and toxic bodily ramifications.

The "republic of the spirit" that Lawrence Selden describes as his own mode of "personal freedom" in *The House of Mirth* offers a window through which to see the shortcomings of this insularity quite clearly (Wharton 70-1). Selden's "republic of the spirit" is the thing which sets him apart, it seems, from many other men in the novel, and it is part of why Lily is drawn to him: his self-proclaimed freedom "from money, from poverty, from ease and anxiety, from all the material accidents" (71). In reality, the "republic of the spirit" is a fiction for Selden to perpetuate his own individual brand of exceptionalism, a mechanism by which he rejects the structures of society from his identity in order to align himself with more of those "oceanic" feelings instead. Because of this internal space which Selden marks as his own countercultural mode of existence,

the character is often figured as a sort of romantic holdout against the backdrop of modernizing society, using his position as further evidence of Lily's attraction to him as alternative to the society in which they are both firmly entrenched, all republics of the spirit aside. I cannot, however, help but see Selden's "republic of the spirit" as a coping mechanism against the psychological and moral destruction of turn-of-the-century New York as the equivalent of an exploitative corporation suggesting "mindfulness" as a technique by which to cope with workplace stresses. And Lily's reaction is not unlike my own, as she asks him, "'Why do you call your republic a republic? It is a closed corporation, and you create arbitrary objections in order to keep people out'" (71). The insult Lily lobs at Selden's self-image might just as neatly be applied to the society which his "republic" attempts to reject, and the futility of his internal space of freedom—locked within a body which is subject to the cultural structures—is akin to the futility of pseudonature locked within the built world.

Selden's insistence on his own radical psychological separateness from society mirrors the solipsism which is frequently offered as a critique of romantic thought. Roderick Nash describes how the practitioner of romanticism is often seen "to exercise the cult that he frequently made of his own soul" (47). Selden's soul-cult falls into the category of inward-turning that might be criticized as idealistic rather than pragmatic. (This is the perhaps the same disdain with which conservative ideology might critique a policy that privileges the human dignity and wellbeing of people beyond the realm of the privileged few as "idealistic" based only its incompatibility with the practical machinations of a society which was built on a set of similarly conservative ideals, but which could just as easily—or incredibly, incredibly difficultly—be built on more

progressive ones.) But the problem with Selden's republic of the spirit, the problem with pseudonature, and the problem with the limitations upon romantic (idealistic) thinking that it presents is that none of them have any bearing on the external world—none of these emblems of alternative modes of thinking have the power to evoke change. The challenge is, so to speak, to unincorporate the "republic of the self"—to allow the internalized idealism which leads to pseudonature as a balm seep out of the self and into the society in which we are part and particle.

To do so requires a gargantuan effort, and a total upheaval of the complacency which has seeped into our cultural consciousness, perhaps in part due to its presence in the naturalist texts which we now know as canonical American classics. Leslie Kern writes in *Feminist City* that "once built, our cities continue to shape and influence social relations, power, inequality, and so on" (14). The physical spaces of the built world have the power to dictate how individuals experience the world, and if the built world began to reflect a resurrected femininity, the same one which we see fading into obscurity in the period of American literary naturalism, then who's to say what positive changes toward a more just and equitable built world could be brought into existence? In *Radical Innocence* (1961), Ihab Hassan writes: "Tragedy, we know, is an inevitable part of life since man's reach, the horizon of his awareness, often exceeds his grasp. Tragedy means that there is no way out…But as [Karl] Jaspers put it, 'Where there is no sense of the infinite vastness of what is beyond our grasp, all we finally succeed in conveying is misery— not tragedy'" (119).[1] Under this assessment, tragedy occurs when "the horizon

[1] Hassan quotes here from philosopher Karl Jaspers' *Tragedy is Not Enough* (1952).

of [man's] awareness" of how different things could be extends beyond the present boundaries, and misery when it does not. This is one way to succinctly explain the frustration of naturalism's complacency outlined above, that while it dwells in sorrows and ways to annihilate them, its mode is one of misery rather than tragedy, one of the immediate problems rather than how the "infinite vastness" of the horizon might be rearranged into a better system of living. Naturalism acknowledges only the misery and none of the tragedy, only what is and not what could be.

An oft-quoted line from Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* (1854) is the following: "We do not ride on the railroad; it rides upon us" (76). This aphoristic take on the wheels of progress is meant to indicate that the weight of innovation is frequently at the expense of the individual, is sometimes destructive to older modes of life. At a glance, it's the type of thing you might associate with the archetypal grumpy old man of a back-in-my-day persuasion, and it's probably most frequently cited as such. But Thoreau's real caution is against accepting wholesale the imperative of newness of which capital-P Progress is always in favor, newness which might become naturalized into normalcy, and then treated as the naturalists have done—as fate. And his caution comes in the form of a warning against how society has the unfortunate power to arrange public spaces, such as the railroad, to the detriment of its individual components. In the conclusion to *Feminist City,* Kern cautions against "looking to the past" as an alternative to the current spaces in which life is lived (as the aforementioned archetypal old fogey might) given the vast swaths of people who have historically been excluded from stable footing within the society of the past: "we need to set aside the rose-coloured glasses and notice who is missing from that picture of idealized city life" (172). Instead, she argues for a reclaiming

of the decision-making which dictates how these spaces are arranged: “Once we begin to see how the city is set up to sustain a particular way of organizing society—across gender, race, sexuality, and more—we can start to look for new possibilities. There are different ways of using the urban spaces we have. There are endless options for creating alternative spaces” (176). Examining pseudonature as it appears within naturalism is to call attention to the ways in which old modes of urban space are complicit in the unjust organization of society that Kern notes and to invite a radical shift in understanding of the need for and ability to conceive of new arrangements. Those arrangements, ideally, would include spaces which provide the same emotional sustenance that pseudonature aims to replicate, spaces for living which reflect a more feminine impulse toward nurturing community and a rejection of the dominant patriarchal structures, both physical and the societal constructions of which they are emblematic. A less frequently quoted railroad line of Thoreau’s is that “the universe constantly and obediently answers to our conceptions; whether we travel fast or slow, the track is laid for us. Let us spend our lives in conceiving then” (80). Thoreau’s train track is our path as a civilization, one which he believes mirrors the intentions of society, not the other way around. His prescription is one that we should take to heart in envisioning a world in which pseudonature is no longer necessary. It is the suggestion that while once the track is in place that is indeed where the train of life is headed, we should not let the certainty of where the existing track leads obscure the fact that it is entirely up to us—the collective individuals which comprise society—to determine where it should go.

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