

Sollers extends the metaphor of writing as painting more explicitly by his many references to framing (both literally and figuratively), and plays with this notion in his discussions of what exists beyond the frame. He reflects that there is light outside of our frame of vision. Do characters have a life outside of a scene in painting? Outside of the pages of a book? Do we have a life outside of what we know as life? Alas, Sollers's cleverness sometimes leads us nowhere except to the Land of the Lost, but more often this author's painterly prose forces us to look closely, to read closely, and at its best, to think critically.

For example, Froissart's characteristically cynical consideration of the Sistine Chapel's renovation begs a reassessment on our part: "We, Insurance Company H., chain of department stores W., offer you, united spectators, works of art constantly renovated, finally revealed in their restored authenticity. Here they are, sparkling, barely sprung forth from the mind and joints of the painter. How lovely, just like TV!" (148-9).

In short, Sollers's artfully written novel is literature for those who love to read—and read aggressively. His text is highly informed by premodern, modern, and postmodern theory, which is not surprising considering the author's position as editor of the French avant-garde journal *L'infini* and his marriage to the influential theorist/critic Julia Kristeva. And, as a postmodern novel, we should be alert to its attempts to deconstruct itself. Thus, the careful reader will take pleasure in *Watteau*'s many references to its own creation and the narrator's theory of his own text's significance. He questions, for example, whether his text will be fully appreciated within the frame of today's readership or whether, like the works of so many artists, his creations will be valued only by those of a later generation.

To be sure, *Watteau in Venice* indulges in the sort of egotistical fantasies that artists such as Picasso and Warhol have become notorious for, but this is not to say that this novel lacks a profound significance for a wider audience. Quite the contrary. Indeed, for all this text's haughty mannerism, the questions it raises are as pertinent today as they were for the first painters of the caves at Lascaux.

Irene Gammel

Sexualizing Power in Naturalism: Theodore Dreiser and Frederick Philip Grove
Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1994. Pp. 262. \$24.95

Reviewed by Axel Knoenagel

Naturalism has been one of the most important and long-lasting forces in Western, and particularly North American, literature. While European naturalism had its climax in its beginnings in the works of Émile Zola, North American naturalism did not begin in earnest until the 1890s when authors such as Stephen Crane, Frank Norris, and Theodore Dreiser began to publish. And whereas the naturalist focus on the determining force of the material circumstances of life soon gave way to modernist introspection in European literature, it remained a viable

force in American writing, influencing the works of authors such as Norman Mailer and John Updike.

Classic interpretations of naturalism, such as those by Charles Child Walcott and Donald Pizer, have focused on the deterministic philosophy and the social awareness behind most of the literature. Irene Gammel attempts to add a new facet to the discussion of naturalism when she argues that "the 'survival' and transformation of European naturalist conventions in a North American context is deeply rooted in the genre's preoccupation with sexuality and power" (1-2). The recognition of the facts of sexuality was a central impetus for naturalist fiction and caused much of the initial resistance to the writing, but Gammel goes a step further when she states that "in naturalist fiction, it is the principle of power itself that is sexualized" (12).

These references to power and sexuality suggest the relevance of Michel Foucault's thinking for this topic. Consequently, Gammel relies heavily on Foucault—as well as on some feminist authors, most notably Luce Irigaray—to argue that "by highlighting the construction of the female body while simultaneously questioning the female protagonist's freedom, naturalism exposes the cultural constraints involved in the practices and technologies of self that the social order uses to subjugate women" (47).

The literary basis for Gammel's study is provided by the center of the North American naturalist canons. Theodore Dreiser has long been established as *the* American naturalist, and various efforts have been made (by, among others, Ronald Sutherland and Rudolf Bader) to ascribe a similar position to Frederick Philip Grove in Canadian literature. Gammel devotes two chapters each to Dreiser and Grove, but the center of the Grove chapters is taken up by examination of *Fanny Essler* and *Maurermeister Ihles Haus*, the two novels Grove wrote in Germany in the first decade of the century under his original name, Felix Paul Greve.

The structure of the study, originally Gammel's Ph.D. thesis at McMaster University, is very straightforward. An introductory chapter on "Naturalism and Foucault" lays the basis for the study by presenting perceptions of women, sexuality, and power that precede naturalism and by discussing the theoretical framework provided by Foucault. Gammel then alternates chapters on the fictions of Dreiser and Grove, beginning with two chapters on the female protagonists and concluding with two chapters about the male wielders of power in order to "emphasize that naturalist fiction is defined by its ideological contradictions: its resisting impulses and its opposite function as the arm of power; its inscription of desire as a driving force of consumer culture and as a force that often moves beyond the boundaries of the systems of order that wish to contain it" (54). Gammel's is clearly a "resisting reading" in Judith Fetterley's sense.

The opening discussion of *Sister Carrie*, which Gammel puts in the context of the new phenomena of mass culture and Freudian psychology, provides the best example of Gammel's strategy. After arguing that "power anchors itself in Carrie's body, penetrates it, and achieves its docility, and through this very docility also turns her sexualized body into a new tool of seduction" (71), Gammel turns to

Foucault's *History of Sexuality* and argues that "Dreiser's fiction inscribes [Foucault's] sexualization of the female body in a variety of forms" (92). This allows her to identify complicities between author, male narrator, and societal wielders of power to oppress women within and through the genre.

Gammel is equally successful in her chapter on *Fanny Essler*, in many ways a German counterpart to *Sister Carrie*, where, once again, the developments in psychology form a highly significant subtext. Analyzing also the wording in the German original, Gammel concludes that "like Foucault and de Beauvoir, Grove draws attention to the fact that the construction of the hysterical woman is tied into relationships that are inevitably saturated with power" (131). Unfortunately, Gammel destroys the positive impression created by her *Fanny Essler* interpretation when she tries to read Phil Branden, the protagonist of Grove's Canadian novel, *A Search for America*, as a resurrected Fanny. So she is forced to see Branden, temporarily powerless, as possessing a feminized body in order to make the opposition between "empowered (male) narrator and impotent (feminized) victim" (147) work. Here, as in several other instances, Gammel's feminist verve leads her to conclusions hardly warranted by the texts in question.

Gammel is quite clearly more comfortable analyzing female protagonists than male characters. So the chapters about Dreiser's Cowperwood trilogy and *The 'Genius,'* as well as on Grove's patriarchal prairie figures, provide solid accounts of the characters and narrations, but no particularly new insights. Overall, *Sexualizing Power in Naturalism* succeeds in demonstrating the gender bias of the genre which prevailed despite the frequently emancipatory stance naturalist texts assumed. The book thus adds an interesting facet to the study of the genre. It also provides thought-provoking insights into the fictions of Dreiser and Grove which, however, for the above-mentioned reasons, have to be taken with some caution.

Thomas R. Hart

Cervantes' Exemplary Fictions. A Study of the Novelas ejemplares

Lexington: University Press of Kentucky. 1994. Pp. 126. \$18.00

Reviewed by Roger Gerald Moore

It has long been accepted that if Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra had not written his masterpiece, *Don Quijote*, he would still have been a justifiably famous author on account of his twelve exemplary fictions, published in 1613, just three years before his death. The origin and purpose of the twelve exemplary fictions is uncertain. Were they perhaps twelve fictions to be intercalated at a later date into a burgeoning series of continuations of *Don Quijote*? We will never know! What we do know for certain is that the twelve exemplary fictions have long been divided into two groups: the so-called Italianate fictions, with their emphasis on idealism and romance, and the so-called realistic fictions, with their background taken from contemporary Spain. Interestingly enough, some critics see in Cervantes's fiction a progression from idealism to realism, whereas other critics call for a progression in the reverse direction, from the real to the ideal. Again, what is cer-