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**Between wonder and entanglement: Fictions of community and
Theodore Dreiser's "Sister Carrie"**

Zaluda, Scott, Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1992

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BETWEEN WONDER AND ENTANGLEMENT:
FICCTIONS OF COMMUNITY AND
THEODORE DREISER'S SISTER CARRIE

by

Scott Zaluda

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty
in English in partial fulfillment of the
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With Jane Collins I am writing a book of life.

I dedicate this work to my parents, Jacob and Judith Zaluda.

CONTENTS

	Introduction	1
1	Between Wonder and Entanglement	29
2	The Changeless Desire of the Mind	57
3	The Jolly Corks and the Secrets of a National Community	91
4	A Carnival of Exclusion	112
5	Hurstwood and the Language of Liminality	158
6	The Performing Invalid of Thirteenth Street: Hurstwood's Neurasthenic Plot of Restoration	182
7	"An all-controlling power": Tammany Hall, the Machine of Community	237
8	Robert Ames's Sermon of the Many	253
	Notes	293
	Works Cited	312

Introduction

This is the study of a single novel, Theodore Dreiser's Sister Carrie, published in 1900. I have tried to read and place Sister Carrie within a discourse, mainly in the United States, about social relationships, specifically urban relationships, from the late nineteenth- to the early twentieth-century. I hope to demonstrate that within a novel which is always engaged by what its author called the "conditions" of its time, Dreiser explores and defines connection, togetherness, community, idiosyncratically. Instead of being rendered as a carefully framed, stabilizing setting for a drama of society, community is variously imagined and performed in reference to multiple and changing situations. Instead of being redrawn and reaffirmed in the aftermath of a social crisis, community or social connectedness remain throughout the novel both ambiguous and troubling.

For these reasons, among others, compared with other novels published in and around the year 1900, Dreiser seemed then, as now, to have written an unusual, at times surprising, work of fiction. Even when they praised it, in most cases the critics nationwide who reviewed Dreiser's new novel during the winter of 1900-01 hedged in recommending it to their newspaper's readers.¹ "While it describes unmistakably one side or phase of city life and tells a

story that is undoubtedly often repeated in real life in every city, it is not a book to be put into the hands of every reader indiscriminately" (Omaha Daily Bee 12/20/00). "While the story is not one to put into the hands of the young girl, it is not one either which grates upon the sensibilities" (Indianapolis Journal 1/14/01).

You would never dream of recommending it to another person to read. Yet the fact remains that as a work of literature and the philosophy of human life it comes within sight of greatness (Seattle Post Intelligencer 1/20/01).²

"Sister Carrie is neither a pleasant nor an edifying book," wrote one reviewer, "but it is written out of real life. The problem in the reader's mind is: was it worth the doing?" (Detroit Free Press 11/24/00) In all but a few instances, the reviews of Sister Carrie contain a common assumption: that novels should be written and read for their worth as "lessons" for individuals or a society. George Seibel of the Pittsburgh Commercial Gazette (12/28/00) wrote that "if the function of the novel be to give lessons in the art of life, this book has not been born in vain. There are in it many lessons." Some assessments of Sister Carrie thus differ over whether its particular lessons should be offered to the general public. For one reader, the novel was "too

realistic" and "too photographic" for general consumption. Another, expressing relief that "the name of God is not mentioned from cover to cover," remarks that the "spiritual lesson" of Sister Carrie is that fate is "not inexorable, that self-discipline and well grounded morals would have avoided every evil, and that man is still the captain of his destiny, the master of his fate" (Chicago Tribune 2/25/01).

Had Doubleday done more to promote the novel, praise such as this might have helped Sister Carrie's weak sales. At the time of its publication, literary naturalism was not in vogue in the United States. Writing, in an age of "progress" and "reform," was supposed to offer more obvious lessons for the amelioration of social problems, not leave them to be determined by some ambiguous, uncontrollable force. Ironically, this reviewer appears to have been appropriating Dreiser's new novel for propagating a moral rhetoric Progressive politics employed to reject the more conservative, mechanistic view of how a society should manage its progress. That irony is emphasized by the fact that more than one of its reviewers compared Sister Carrie to another novel of realism published in 1900, one directly linked to the cause of Progressive reform. Robert Grant's Unleavened Bread had come out in March. Years later in his autobiography, Grant would reflect that "for a novel with so unpleasant a heroine," Unleavened Bread became surprisingly

popular (Fourscore 224). In fact, by the time Sister Carrie was sent to bookstores, Unleavened Bread had sold nearly sixty thousand copies, a "best-seller" for its time. Grant, a probate court judge in Boston and trustee of Harvard, had the kind of help selling his book that would elude Dreiser. For one thing, unlike Sister Carrie, it was enthusiastically advertised; for another, Grant had several influential friends. In a speech before the "National Congress of Mothers," Vice-President Theodore Roosevelt himself commended (and recommended) Grant's new novel; and in a letter to the author he remarked that the "painful book" was, nevertheless, "the strongest story of American life that has been written in years" (qtd. in Fourscore 224). Praise would come from another friend and colleague, Edith Wharton, whose husband had gone to school with Grant, and from Bliss Perry, an Atlantic editor, who noted that in his unpleasant character of Selma White, a self-righteous, self-serving, and hypocritical social-christian reformer, Grant had "fixed the type" (qtd. in Fourscore 224). And Brooks Adams, in correspondence with the author, recognized Selma White as "the dominant type of our female population," praising the depiction for not degrading itself by giving into the "coarse flattery of American women" practiced by other novelists (qtd. in Fourscore 228).³

Of Sister Carrie, the Louisville Courier-Journal (2/23/01) wrote that "the same subtle quality or perception

of the motives of the average woman determined to rise in the world is shown in this book that is so strong in Judge Grant's Unleavened Bread." Roosevelt's allusion before a National Congress of Mothers suggests that in fixing an average woman in such a critical light, Grant offers all women moral enlightenment about materialism and warning about various false reform ideologies promulgated by intellectually undisciplined women such as Selma White, which contradicted the discourse of Roosevelt's own truer reform. The moral and political lesson of the character of Selma becomes clear for readers as she becomes, using Grant's own term, increasingly "unpleasant" in her criticism and destruction of the finer social types who cling to her, including the men, who, in Brooks Adams's words, learn "self-effacement" beside her. Sister Carrie, on the other hand, "is unrelieved by a single ray of light. The end is sad, and taken as a whole, it leaves a bad taste" (Indianapolis News 3/9/01), For another reviewer, the "slight sketch of Ames" provides "just a gleam of something better"--though "far too small a gleam to lighten the general effect" (Newark Sunday News 9/1/01). But while Sister Carrie presents "an appalling arraignment of human society...there is here no word of preachment; there are scarce any philosophic reflections or deductions expressed. The impression is simply one of truth, and therein lies at once the strength and the horror of it." Although "the book

is not a pleasant one to read, if one is to maintain a cheerful optimism," nonetheless "the author is right in assuming that America needs enlightenment rather than indiscriminate flattery, if the present rate of advance is to be maintained. If unpleasant, therefore, it is none the less deserving of perusal for the sake of enlightenment" (Chicago Tribune 2/25/01).

Perhaps if Sister Carrie had been seen to contain, in addition to fewer moral problems for young female readers, a less doubtful and more convincing reform message, it would have been more enthusiastically supported by its publisher and done as well on the book market as Unleavened Bread or other books published within that twelve-month period, including Roosevelt's The Strenuous Life. Nevertheless, when the novel was first read, like Unleavened Bread, commentary in the press emerged from perceptions it generated that it was (or was not) performing some kind of social work--that it could (or could not) make a contribution to the "progress" of the society. Indeed, most of the reviews, favorable and unfavorable, align Sister Carrie with a range of contemporary urban social issues, problems, and controversies. Moreover, both Ames and Carrie suggested the possibility of something better for society. Even though Dreiser has not generally been viewed as a dedicated reformer, but as an exemplar of pessimistic determinism, he had often published articles and columns

during the 1890s about solving contemporary social problems. R.N. Mookerjee makes the point that Dreiser's "reform" statements continued into the early twentieth century when Dreiser was the editor at Butterick Publications. Among other unlikely efforts, Dreiser organized a National Conference of Charities and Corrections for the welfare of orphaned children. In October of 1908, Washington, D.C. newspapers reported the details of Dreiser's meeting with President Theodore Roosevelt in connection with the conference (Mookerjee 31,33). The point I wish to make here is that for these early readers, Dreiser's naturalism did not lose sight of the particular social conditions which encouraged the formulation in his era of deterministic world views. Naturalism for Dreiser and his contemporaries must be seen as a strand of a larger dialogue on history and society.⁴

One reviewer of Sister Carrie, apparently unconvinced that Dreiser's writing was meant to cure society, complains of the triumph of vice in the narrative and notes derisively that Dreiser "might have been more descriptive" had he subtitled it "a novel of the worst side of city life." The book, he concludes, "is unhealthful in tone" (Denver Republican 1/20/01). As implied here, the social work of novels is activated like a virus or a salve when readers imagine a profound connection between their own bodies and the imagined worlds of fiction. Judge Grant's edifying and

allegedly more healthful best-seller also makes reference to the worst side of city life, though at most peripherally; centrally, he shows a picture of the conventional upper-middle class at dinner and in political meetings arguing matters of social improvement. Still, both novels participate, albeit from different ends of the dinner table, in a conversation on the nature of society. Noting where their voices cross may provide some insight into the interests and concerns of the book-publishing, -reviewing, and -buying audience at the turn of the century.

Both novels follow the career of a naive young woman who transplants herself from a rural community to the city, first a smaller city and then, in both cases, New York; though, importantly, Selma White, as she moves around, unlike Carrie, is legally married. Both then present these women within the socially dynamic setting of a growing city where new types of people are encountered for the first time who will change their lives. Both novels emphasize the familiarity of these characters and their social situations in the industrial society, a society which, as both authors tell us, is going through an enormous differentiation among its population as more, seemingly less familiar types, accumulate in greater numbers.

Both novels attempt to represent the social concerns of the late nineteenth-century city, including its population growth and diversification, by focusing upon simultaneous

sub-cultures--classes, sexes, occupational groups, families--going through some process of transition, and as seen in and against an undifferentiated national mass. In this sense, Sister Carrie is more socially complex than Unleavened Bread, the latter enclosing most of its drama of class transition, as I have said, within the social settings of the upper-middle class. Importantly, in Grant's novel, conflict arising from movement up and down class hierarchies is resolved through stable, enduring conventions of American class membership. On the other hand, in Sister Carrie hierarchy remains unfixed across a broader context of social settings, and social movement occurs contrary to generally accepted conventions--notably contrary to marriage. Unleavened Bread contrasts Sister Carrie most, perhaps, in this respect. Unleavened Bread's transitional "communities" are discrete and formal; at their center they are stable, orderly, enduring. A discontinuity of social contours, throwing the image of community out of focus subsequent to its being photographed, is therefore one significant factor setting Dreiser's novel apart from its 1900 competitor.

Thoughts and images of community, particularly in cities, are attached in this period to a variety of feelings articulated in both novels. A reading of various turn-of-the-century texts leads one historian to remark that turn-of-the-century feelings for togetherness burst forth as a "language of the commonweal" (Rodgers, Contested Truths

179). "From the settlement houses, from the social gospel preachers, from scores of crusading politicians girded for Armageddon, the dream (so deep in middle class Protestants) of reknitting the social body into wholeness blossomed in new, inventive forms" (179). The political language which emerged from this period of increasingly social stratification sought new ways all the time to rearticulate the notion of a whole society as a sort of master social order or national community. Writing and speaking in 1899, the Republican governor from New York, soon to become vice president, is a prominent example. In speeches delivered to audiences in the East and West around the same time Dreiser was composing Sister Carrie (later to be collected as The Strenuous Life), Theodore Roosevelt, called not only for a strenuous approach to living for working men and their wives and for a more strenuous United States participation in world affairs, but repeatedly, too, for "fellow-feeling, sympathy in the broadest sense," as "the most important factor in producing a healthy political and social life" (Strenuous Life 65). Indeed, when he spoke of "common interests," he was alluding to what he termed a "community of feelings as regards the essentials of manhood and humanity," one cleansed of class markings.

If ever there existed in the world a community where the identity of interest, of habit, of principle, and

of ideals should be felt as a living force, ours is the one. It is only in American communities that we see the farmer, the hired man, the lawyer, and the merchant, and possibly even the officer of the army or the navy, all kinsmen, and all accepting their relations as perfectly natural and simple. (70)

In the village, Roosevelt remarks, a man greets another man "strictly on his merits as a man," and therefore they form a community "in which there is singularly little caste spirit, and in which men associate on a thoroughly healthy and American ground of common ideals, common convictions, and common sympathies." It is important to note that Roosevelt makes no mention anywhere in his speeches of how marginalization was being enforced in American communities, often violently, by dominant subgroups; for example, the widespread occurrence of lynching, particularly in the south, testifies to the intentional naivete of this politician's images of simple American fellowship. However, when he confronts the diversity and economic disparity of the great industrial centers, Roosevelt's frontier nostalgia for community collapses into a kind of poignant faith in idealism--into a deep dream of assimilation. The chief evil in "the great industrial centers" is the way in which "the segregation of interests invites a segregation of sympathies" (267). Therefore, "our prime need as a nation

is that every American should understand and work with his fellow-citizens, getting into touch with them, so that by actual contact he may learn that fundamentally he and they have the same interests, needs, aspirations" (305).

Given Roosevelt's pre-occupation with racial uniformity in a world divided, to him, by intolerable differences, there can be no word in The Strenuous Life more charged or ambiguous than "community." One needs to consider that these speeches and essays compose a campaign, a political campaign and at the same time a campaign for remodeling America and the world. References to community emerge here because the idea of community at this time was such a passionately and popularly "contested truth," and because it was then, as now, a useful political buzz word when changing demographics dictated that Anglo-Saxon-centrism had to be domesticated for a diverse audience. Roosevelt, the cowboy-warrior, who would impose the deep dream of protestant "civilization" upon the barbarians of the Wild West and the Philippines, would advance his own and his party's candidacy for power by doing the same to the barbarians at the gates of the American city by way of assimilating them. Traditionally, the barbarian of Governor Roosevelt's home city, New York, an immigrant from Europe, was often represented in elections by the Democratic party organization, Tammany Hall--a "society" made strong through its own methods for assimilating the socially diverse.

Roosevelt's use of community thus invokes the ongoing political competition in a changing society for writing and selling the best fictions of community.

What is "unpleasant" about Grant's fiction of community for his 1900 audience is his main character, but other compensating characters, a logic and gentility of setting, along with the conventional irony of its conflicts and resolutions, allow the reader finally to experience Selma White in a stabilizing context of restored community.

Sister Carrie's poor commercial showing, the fact that its publisher eventually pulled it out of the stores and sold its plates back to Dreiser, has much to do with Victorian conventions pertaining to the behavior of young women like its main character. The publisher, perhaps believing he was acting for the "interests" of the "community," could not finally tolerate Sister Carrie's otherness in this regard. In Sister Carrie, unpleasantness is a far more profound textual value than in Unleavened Bread. Grant's plotting strains "common interests" but resolves conflicts of social stratification and fragmentation through implied sympathy with a master social order. Dreiser's narrative, however, leads the reader more deeply into non-resolution of its representative social dilemmas.⁵

F.O. Matthiessen records that Dreiser looked back upon Sister Carrie not "as a piece of literary craftsmanship, but as a picture of conditions done as simply and effectively as

the English language will permit" (qtg. Dreiser 60). To most generally characterize my arguments in this study, I can confront some parallel assertions made in 1966 by Richard Poirier and Lazar Ziff and in the mid-1980s by Philip Fisher about Sister Carrie and the nature of what "conditions" Dreiser might have meant. Both critics were attempting to clarify Dreiser's thinking and thereby to demonstrate what Sister Carrie's early reviewers were in disagreement about: that Dreiser's writing was an expression of consistent and coherent ideas. Their efforts were intended to make Dreiser's fictional "world" whole and organic on its own terms, but also to distance Dreiser from contemporaneous life, that is from the social conditions of the world and history he and his earliest critics lived through. Dreiser "does not proceed from any confident sense of his place in his society or his society's place in history," Ziff wrote.

The whole that results from Dreiser's remarkably detailed manner is a world in which nothing stands between the individual and the whirl of life. Dreiser looks and looks, wrings his hands, and looks again, but for all his details does not see families, friendships, or other forms of community which act as protective screens between the individual and the onslaught of his environment (338,339).

I offer Ziff's sense of Dreiser here as a clear diametrical opposite to my own. For in this study, I argue that a Dreiser who was confidently situated in society and history and who saw its problems, emphasized such details in his first novel as families, friendships, and community. Very much like Ziff, Poirier argued back then that Dreiser "had no interest in individual consciousness, in personal complexity, in... traditional and communal feelings....no concern, finally, even with the absence of 'organic society'" (249).

But by looking at the ways that Dreiser's novel enters into discussion with the organic societies other writers imagined in his time, and by looking through certain sociological, psychological, and anthropological frames at this historical Dreiser, I document much of what Poirier denies--denies, like Ziff, by way of de-politicizing and de-historicizing a novel which is so clearly engaged by politics and history, even if it be to contest them. Poirier is also arguing against readers in the 1950s like Charles Child Walcutt who were trying to explain the interplay of "will" and "society" in novels of naturalism. From the initial reviews until the middle of the twentieth century, the practice of Dreiser criticism had always included an emphasis upon Dreiser's contemporary representation. Writing in the journal Ethics in 1938, Eliseo Vivas insisted that there was "more to [Dreiser's]

own concrete picture of man and society than he finds room for in his mechanistic philosophy. And if we miss this more, we miss, I am afraid, what is truly significant in Dreiser" (qte. from Stature of TD 241). In this regard, Poirier takes a point made ten years before him by Alfred Kazin considerably further than what Kazin seems to have implied. "Dreiser is outside the agreed boundaries of our concern," Kazin wrote. "He does not accept our 'society' as the whole of reality." Nor would he "accept this society itself as wholly real" ("Introduction" to Stature 12). But Kazin's sense of Dreiser's outsidership is not an assertion that Dreiser "ignored" society. Indeed, though Dreiser was "infatuated" by "the movements...of single persons within huge dimensions of impersonal force," it goes against a close reading of Sister Carrie to conclude that Dreiser "ignored" what Poirier called "human relatedness." And while it is less arguable that Dreiser "had no intention of creating anything like a Jamesian 'house of fiction,'" the complexity of Sister Carrie, and what makes it interesting, I think, for most readers, demonstrates that it was shaped by more than "merely....his recollections" (238).

Writing for Dreiser, Poirier said, "obviously did not involve the 'building' of a world so much as reporting on one already existent" (238). But "worlds" in Sister Carrie, as I will argue, are certainly built of social conventions and economic processes, forms which are emphasized by

characters' ambivalent relationships to form itself, by desires to accommodate which are in conflict with desires to resist. Thus, I also disagree with Poirier when he claims that social and material conventions and environments "do not compel the interest of Dreiser or his characters" (238). Moreover, Poirier states that Dreiser "simply cannot permit, for the sake of story or of 'literature,' those conversational involvements that imply that the self or society is formed by intensities of personal effort. For him, character and society are antecedent to talk; fate has nothing to do with the value of certain words and phrases, with the conflict between people or between a person and his environment" (240, 241). I argue the opposite point about conversation. Although the narrator of Sister Carrie advises at one point against placing too much emphasis upon words, the narrative as a whole, both in its represented incidents and conversations and its own conspicuous outflow, makes a strong case for the social, political, and economic significance of human language--even, or especially, when talking seems, to use Dreiser's own word, so "pointless."

By the end of Sister Carrie, Poirier concludes, "nothing has been accumulated from the tangled relationships which hold any two people together, nothing of a personal kind modifies their distress at being in a relationship merely to external force" (246,247(. But "entanglement," as Dreiser calls it, is a problem enscribed by culture, ethics,

morals, and by history. Characters are often distressed in the novel because they find themselves inbetween unrelenting human culture and their "wonder" concerning things or forces over which they appear to have little control. Finally, then, the repeated rejection of the accumulation from relationships, along with a mixed projection of hope and futility for future entanglement, creates, not a victory for "force," but an undecided closure for Dreiser's 1900 dramatic picture of conditions.

Finally, in Hard Facts: Setting and Form in the American Novel, Philip Fisher elucidates the "root meaning of world" in Dreiser's writing--here he is talking primarily about An American Tragedy, but generally about "Dreiser"--as "anything outside the body that, if seen by another, contaminates or glamorizes the self" (143). Analogous to what I am saying, Fisher describes Dreiser's worlds as "temporary, magical improvisations," as transient, constantly transforming, atmospheres. But Fisher and I differ on his assertion that Dreiser's worlds are "neither economic, nor public, nor...permanent centers of activity." Seeming to follow Richard Poirier's sense of Dreiser's lack of interest in social distinctions, Fisher distinguishes the Dreiserian world and atmosphere from "community" or "society," where, in other fictions, "manners were the codes of behavior, often most precise in speech and language, encoding deference or intimacy, reserve, assumption or

condescension--codes of behavior that enact the rules of presence, the way in which we enter or situate ourselves in each other's experience" (141-42). Certainly, this reiteration of the basic point that social setting in the Dreiserian city differs from other writers' versions of "society" as an enclosed class group defined by manners, continues to hold interpretive value. But by framing all social relations as an impressionistic blur and denying the validity of what he calls "rules of presence" as a concept for characters' and readers' imaginations, Fisher overlooks significant direct relationships between characters and certain resonating desires which are at least evocative of society and community. Indeed, by excluding economic tensions, his notion of society in the novel limits itself to surface signs and runs the risk as well of closing off the historical evocativeness of Dreiser's texts, a critical trend which Fisher is attempting to reverse with his study of "hard facts." In Dreiser notably, worlds are sites of often fierce economic anxiety and contestation. In an atmosphere such as the one which circulates around Drouet or around the saloon, characters appear to conjure up ideas of "intimacy" which evoke imagined past experiences of community along with idealized images of the future, ideas based in part upon economic claims and responsibility, rather than what Fisher characterizes as a "blase indifference" to the claims and expectations of others.

Central to my thesis is the idea that while Sister Carrie is unique among the novels of its era in never reproducing a stable picture of community, the reader may be struck nonetheless by the persistence of habits of desire to be intimate with others, to mimic their habits, to be judged by or to sympathize with others in socially conventional ways. This need to imagine oneself defined by a subculture's rules of presence is often contradicted by desires of characters to identify themselves as being outside the very worlds they seek to inhabit.

#

Although no critic who has written about Sister Carrie, or Dreiser's novels in general, has explored the idea of community in any depth, many express their sense of the nature of society and community; I will refer to various commentaries, as pertinent, throughout my study.⁶ Apart from Dreiser's own writing, various period texts, and social and historical studies of the period, I have gathered a number of works to help me think about the idea of "community." These comprise an eclectic mix, American and European sociologists, anthropologists, other culture theorists and critics, who have written expressly about community since the last half of the nineteenth century. I cannot claim to have made the definitive historical study of the term. I wanted to develop a broad range of reference for identifying in texts, fiction and non-fiction,

tendencies of thought about social collectivity and connectedness. I have tried to work with a flexible notion of community, one which questions the nature, like Dreiser has, of inflexible criteria for classification. Therefore, with no rigid theoretical framework, what follows in the dissertation is my own synthesis and my own notion, based on many references, of what constitutes--and what constituted circa 1900--communal behavior, activity, thought, discourse.

Primarily, I am interested in how collectivity and connectedness are expressed, represented, constructed, and, importantly,, how they function in the "drama" of a fictional narrative. In this regard, my efforts to know community as it is expressed or contested in writing begin with Raymond Williams's challenge to emphasize for cultural analysis "certain kinds of direct and directly responsible relationships, as against a center of power and display" (Resources of Hope 1989, 112). There can be no doubt, Williams had written earlier in The Country and the City (1973),

that identity and community become more problematic, as a matter of perception and as a matter of valuation, as the scale and complexity of the characteristic social organization increased. [...]the growth of towns and especially cities and a metropolis; the increasing

division and complexity of labor; the altered and critical relations between and within class: in changes like these any assumption of a knowable community--a whole community, wholly knowable--become harder and harder to sustain (165).

After Williams, I am indebted to Benedict Anderson, whose influential work, Imagined Communities (1983), appears to start out as an attempt to gloss Williams's notion of the "knowable community," by looking at fiction, journalism, and at the societies in which these communal or "national" texts proliferate. Without trying to fit into Anderson's argument about the origin and spread of nationalism, my frequent recourse to the phrase "imagined community" and to notions of "simultaneous" or "plural" social signs and actions, points both directly and obliquely to Anderson's thesis and methods for discovering how texts "conjure up" social space.

But in some sense, I begin with my own sense of community. We read on any day in any newspaper where someone refers to their identification with a community: a community pulls together in an adverse situation; a community complains of their marginalization; a community rejects a perceived outsider; a community is disintegrating, etc. As Benedict Anderson sees it, the newspaper we all read (or television we watch) every morning is one way we have of knowing community, that is of knowing our connection

to the dispersed yet simultaneous activity the news conjoins and of the readership. But it is important to remember that the vague idea of community as expressed by the media and its community of readers often exposes assertions of particularity. For example, a recent radio news report on housing integration in Yonkers, New York (National Public Radio, July 10, 1992) used the term "community" expressly to mean the white residents who owned homes on a particular side of the city, while others, referred to as black and hispanic, who lived on the other side of the city, were depicted not as part of "the community" or even as "a community," but as people who would have an affect upon "the community." Similarly, candidates for public office in our own time, alluding in general to the communities of a region, state or nation, intentionally or unintentionally define community, an appealing, democratic term, according to criteria which are inevitably narrow and excluding. Often in United States history, political speakers have effectively used the word "community" to achieve political results.

In being asked one day by a friend whether I thought that I was part of a community, I understood, perhaps better than any articulated theory can elucidate, that in my own world at least identification with a community is either very difficult, impossible, or, possibly, unimportant. Although it may be true, as Williams says, that "unlike all

other terms of social organization," community "seems never to be used unfavorably, and never to be given any positive opposing or distinguishing term" (Keywords 1976, 76)), while working on this project I came to appreciate how I and others, now and in the past, have often had trouble, first of all, imagining a self securely and wholly within a community--though, in fact, we may more readily position ourselves against what we perceive as incompatible communities--and second, knowing ordinarily how to think community except by recourse to the most unanalyzed, often contentious, terms and feelings.

But to say that community is a problem, is, I have discovered, to repeat the wisdom and cliches of at least the last hundred years of academic analysis of the idea. The problems of finding criteria for defining community which engaged earlier generations of Western European and American thinkers, including Theodore Dreiser--grappling with decreasingly agrarian, increasingly urban, industrial, and fragmenting situations of human relations--were usefully summarized for me in two mid-twentieth-century scholarly papers. From the point of view of an already advanced industrial society, Louis Wirth's 1933 paper to the American Sociological Society, "The Scope and Problems of the Community," contrasts Ferdinand Tonnies's 1880s evolutionary dialectic of Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft with various twentieth-century movements of scholarship and communal

re-formation. And George A. Hillery's 1955 article, "Definitions of Community: Areas of Agreement," reviews over ninety published definitions of the term before concluding that there are, indeed, diverse criteria for understanding community and only a few areas of agreement. For a fairly thorough and readable survey of the academic terrain from the late nineteenth-century to the late twentieth-century, I have found Joseph Gusfield's Community: A Critical Response (1975) enormously helpful. Some of the subtlety of my thinking and writing I owe to the work of, among others, Robert Nisbet (The Quest for Community 1953, The Twilight of Authority 1975), Philip Abbott (Seeking Many Inventions: The Idea of Community in America 1987), Alan Macfarlane ("History, Anthropology and the Study of Communities" 1977), and, significantly, Richard Sennett (The Fall of Public Man, 1978; Families Against the City: Middle Class Homes of Industrial Chicago, 1872-1890, 1984), who has thought much about community, and about the psychology of the self within and against entities of connectedness in the late nineteenth-century American city--as will be made especially clear in my first three chapters. I have also referred during my research (more than in my writing) to the ongoing debate on community among cultural critics and theorists, epitomized in the recent publication of Community at Loose Ends (1991). These essays were compiled during discussion groups held at Miami University of Ohio by people from

various disciplines, largely responding to the work of Jean-Luc Nancy (The Inoperative Community 1991, translated from the 1986 French edition), who was also a participant in the conferences. The variety and "dissonances of this theoretical community" is testimony to, in the words of one contributor, a continuing "enthusiastic appeal" of "the concept of what it means to be together--of the communal" (ix). From Tonnies to Nancy, the movement of thinking about community has been away from the notion of community as a reified construct, that is as a particular place and juxtaposition of elements, toward understanding community as a dynamic or process or "problem"; ninety-plus definitions were themselves evidence in the 1950s that thought about community is a fluctuating, contentious, social "construct"--or, to use more contemporary terms, a series of negotiations.

Readers of Sister Carrie know how acutely the novel delves into problems of the modern urban condition such as anonymity, isolation, displacement, and disconnectedness. From my own angle I view these problems as a dramatic result of unachieved yet persistent desires for intimacy or connectedness--indeed, for reified community. My focus is upon how imagined groups create developing characters and how characters invent groups. I explore how imagined togetherness focuses individual motives and actions, defining and circumscribing or contesting the individual's

sense of his or her own subjectivity, evoking contemporary social, political, and economic tensions surrounding relations in common. Simply stated, I mean to examine the way represented individuals and groups experience, in Clifford Geertz's words, being "engaged with one another in multiple ways" (Local Knowledge 156). In attempting to synthesize all thinking about community, Gusfield arrives at what might be called a pure and simple relational theory, whereby community can always be conceived not as a determined entity to which people belong, but as an indeterminate "point of reference brought into play in particular situations" (41,42). As the second chapter will show, Carrie's initial days and weeks in the city might be summarized as adventures and struggles in comprehending the details and nature of "relations" in novel situations. The remainder of the dissertation frames community rather than through a single kind of relation, through a range of relational possibilities, all of which I find operating in the novel. Thus, to discuss the imagination of community, I employ relational terms such as dialectical, interpenetrating, constraining, circumscribing, and liminal, along with determining, dominating, and difference.

Clearly, the novel I study is not merely relational, not merely "pictures" of conditions. In Gusfield's words, communal points of reference are recognizable as such only as they are "brought into play." Recall, that Raymond

Williams, in criticizing the power structures of capitalist societies, sought to understand certain kinds of relations and references as against a center of power and display.

"Culture," writes a contemporary critic, "emerges as the result of competing or cooperating subcultures."⁷ One thing I try to demonstrate is that Sister Carrie's drama results in part from tensions in the "play" of competition and cooperation to determine which subculture's "points of reference" and relations will become dominant and reified, or which community will become the center of power and (significantly) display, the "knowable community," the references to which all other references have a relation of either inclusion or exclusion.

CHAPTER ONE

Between Wonder and Entanglement

I.

The narratives of Sister Carrie and Dreiser's 1931 autobiography Dawn suggest some of the same general questions about the nature of the self among others: how does someone--author/narrator and character--who moves about so much, from town to town, town to city, city to city, house to house, job to job, think about community? about life inside or outside a social group? about the experience of togetherness--of being or not being part of what Dreiser calls social "organization" or "arrangements"? One of the remarkable things about Dawn, composed in stages fifteen and thirty years after Sister Carrie's publication, is the familiarity of the stories it tells about the self in society. Certain key narrative fragments in the 1931 text had been told and retold in novels, stories, memoirs, and interviews many times before. Notably, stories from Dreiser's youth in Indiana towns and in Chicago contribute to the narrative repertoire of Sister Carrie, Jennie Gerhardt, The "Genius", An American Tragedy, A Hoosier Holiday, aspects of Twelve Men, and, to a certain extent, The Financier and The Titan. Among the narrative fragments contributing to these extended narratives are several pertaining to the problems of life in community and to migration across sociological landscapes. Indeed, the

problems of circumscribing relations within a defined social entity, a small town, a family, an urban association based upon common interests, were, whenever Dreiser told any story--fiction as well as memoir--inseparable from his basic conceptions of the self among others.

As the narrative closest to Dreiser's early years in the Midwest, Sister Carrie is his first effort to imagine as fiction some of the experience which would have primary importance for much of his subsequent writing. Sister Carrie and Dawn interpenetrate one another, but not simply as autobiography glossing fiction. If a "gloss" is understood as meaning which is already established at the moment of composition, then Sister Carrie is just as much a gloss for the autobiography. But in some sense, each text comes before the other. The autobiography is best read as a type of fiction, bildungsroman-like, embedding ideas and a fictional method already familiar from Dreiser's novels, giving form and meaning to life's formlessness. Although it purports to bring together the whole early life as a record of memory, its relationship with the actual fictions exposes the mythical content of remembered experience. Dreiser's repetition of certain narrative fragments of his own period of development in Dawn seems, on the one hand, to confirm some things the reader may have thought about the backgrounds of Sister Carrie. But the opposite is also true; the reconstruction in Dawn of fragments surrounding,

for example, the young character's discovery of urban social relations emphasizes that in both works these are made into centering moments for the invention of "character."

Dreiser as well as his many biographers have each in some way addressed the matter of autobiography's fictional tendencies. "I will not say that this is a true record," Dreiser writes in Dawn's third paragraph. "It is--as they say in law--to the best of my knowledge and belief" (7). (The legal justification is not mere glibness. He had begun this writing in 1915; his siblings and many of the others he "remembers" in such explicit detail were still alive and had families.) This passage, as it appears in the holograph of Dawn, becomes the epigraph for the first chapter of Richard Lingeman's recent biography of Dreiser, entitled Theodore Dreiser: At the Gates of the City, 1871-1907 (1986). Lingeman's title reconstitutes the Dreiserian myth of urban discovery. His initial epigraph then effectively credits Dreiser as the authority for all suspended disbelief regarding the autobiography. Nevertheless, like all the other biographers, Lingeman goes on to make use of Dawn as the basic narrative for Dreiser's early life. Finally, in a bibliographical note acknowledging all those who have come before him, Lingeman offers his own book as an attempt "to create Dreiser anew for readers of the 1980s and I hope beyond" (423, my emphasis).

Dorothy Dudley's 1932 biography, Forgotten Frontiers:

Dreiser and the Land of the Free, the first to be published, and coming out a year after Dawn, offhandedly offers the same kind of qualification; she begins an early paragraph with the words: "Yet, if we believe Dreiser's picture of himself..." (37). Comparing Dawn to Dreiser's nostalgic account of returning to Indiana in 1915, A Hoosier Holiday, Dudley, who had known Dreiser for years, notes that what Dreiser records "as having happened may every bit of it have happened, or may have been selected to have happened by later years of growth. This more likely is the case; his two records of childhood for example are not identical. They appear to vary according to the separate moods of forty and of sixty years. But both stories tell the artist's heritage, a genius for experience..." (29). She remarks that compared to A Hoosier Holiday, Dawn, written after "prudery...has been partially defeated," is far more "explicit"; and while she appreciates the copious detail of sharp-edged, imprudent Dawn, she is drawn to the warmer nostalgia by which the "Holiday" narrative is composed. In A Hoosier Holiday, Dreiser himself characterizes his method of "selection," explaining how his "genius for experience" is "limited." Referring to "the little things of rural life," Dreiser remarks that his "own powers of observation in that direction, and my delight in them, are limited to a considerable extent by my sense of drama. Is a thing dramatic? Or at least potentially so? If not, it is apt to

lose interest for me" (370). For Dudley, nostalgia creates the best history; for Dreiser, the only history visible is what can be transformed by a sense of drama.

Robert Elias's Apostle of Nature (1949) depends upon Dawn to tell the story of Dreiser's boyhood along with several kinds of corroborating evidence, including interviews with Dreiser. But except to refer to Dawn and A Hoosier Holiday as Dreiser's "admittedly autobiographical books," Elias never questions the autobiographer's method of self-invention. F.O. Matthiessen, however, offers this important qualification in the first paragraph of his posthumous Theodore Dreiser (1951).

Theodore Dreiser has left us his own picture of his childhood and youth. A writer's account of his experiences may not square at all points with the facts, but it is a kind of reality in which the novelist deals his image of essential life....It was characteristic of his imagination to make no sharp separation between document and fiction. This is not to say that he took liberties with the record, though he was acutely conscious of how hard it was to tell the truth, especially about his own character, and he believed he could succeed only by immense detail....He refused to leave anything out, no matter how unflattering to himself (3).

The problems for the historian posed by Dreiser's "kind of reality," by his shaping of "document" as he would fiction, and by his leaving everything in, fact or fiction, are of little concern for W.A. Swanberg's close retelling of Dawn's historical reality. "Much of my account of TDs boyhood," Swanberg notes in small print in the apparatus of his large 1965 biography, Dreiser, "is taken from his own autobiographical writings. Though he was indubitably correct about the household atmosphere, he was notoriously unreliable about details, which cannot always be guaranteed" (appendix).

But none of these biographers explore their disclaimers by reading Dawn critically, that is, by reading the autobiography as nostalgia or drama, as a kind of reality, as a kind of fiction. With a certain distance and scholarly authority, and by making use of corroborating texts and interviews, all the Dreiser biographies depend upon Dawn as their basic narrative, shaping their own narratives of the life of Dreiser according to the narrative Dreiser himself had written. But my point here is not to criticize these writers for not doing more with the idea that autobiography is, after all, a kind of nostalgia in itself--in other words, for not deconstructing "autobiography." I only mean to demonstrate the significance of certain embedded narrative fragments for the making of both what is "admittedly" fiction as well as the fiction "Dreiser."

Perhaps no narrative fragment is repeated more often through Dreiser's career than the young person's "discovery" of the modern city. Indeed, as the population shifted away from rural areas and as rural areas became increasingly industrial, the passage through the gates of the city became an essential story of late nineteenth-century America. For Dreiser, the young character's entrance into the city is an epic event. In Dawn, the passage through the gates, while not the establishing event for the entire narrative, is nonetheless a defining moment for the bildungsroman character, which creates an aura of aesthetic, if not actually heroic, glory. This moment is also a defining one for the character Carrie Meeber--but, as I will show, with some important differences in 1900 from 1931.

Nevertheless, for Carrie--"the child, the genius with imagination, or the wholly untravelled"--nonetheless than for the character in Dawn, "the approach to a great city for the first time is a wonderful thing" (SC 10). For the narrator of Dawn, "the city of which I am now about to write never was on land or sea";

or if it appears to have the outlines of reality, they are but shadow to the glory that was in my own mind...What a privilege to come as a child and see a modern city in the making!...I recall that at four o'clock of our first afternoon there, leaning out of

one of these back windows surveying this new world, I fell asleep from sheer weariness of wonder (163,166).

Referring obliquely to almost every Dreiser narrative from Sister Carrie to Dawn, Elias remarks that as a young man from the provinces, when Dreiser "entered the city, its bustle and excitement inflamed his imagination." Moreover, echoing the way Dreiser himself observed and transformed experience into drama, Elias notes that "when he gazed at the factories, the laborers, and the shoppers hurrying through the streets, he felt as though he were beholding a scene from a play..."(23). Thirty five years after Elias, and nearly sixty years after Dawn, Richard Lingeman explains that "To Theodore the city [of Chicago] was the ultimate wonder of his life." Lingeman goes on, then, to describe the Chicago of "Theodore," mimicking the tone and style Dreiser himself uses--wondrous, nostalgic, dramatic--in describing the city Carrie enters: Chicago is "bursting with new arrivals like an overripe melon" (55).

Theodore watched the spectacle until he fell asleep, exhausted, at the window....Peering through the new plate-glass windows of the great office buildings, Theodore could see the men at desks and boys scurrying to and fro, and he wondered about the mysteries of commerce (55,58).

Matthiessen, a literary historiographer, interprets Dreiser's novels in more depth than these others, and so the link between biography and the production of fiction is made more explicitly: "The train trip from Warsaw was the first he had ever made alone, and his excitement on his arrival is what he remembered when writing about Sister Carrie....The Haymarket riot had taken place only the year before, but no reverberations of social tension would seem to have reached Dreiser, for whom, as for Carrie, the streetcars were a song" (17). But the common gesture of all the biographies is a demonstration, with varying degrees of subtlety, that Dreiser's experience was "as for Carrie," or vice versa.

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To answer generally the question I began with--how do the voices in these writings think about community?--I can say, first of all, that community is a constituent "dramatic" problem. Dawn, like Sister Carrie, is filled with instances of its narrator attempting to depict community as provocative, as an idea signifying unresolvable ambivalence about social situation, as a dynamic setting within and against which character momentarily understands the self. Admitting the understanding that comes from a perspective distant in time, Dreiser remarks that as a youth he had not yet proved to himself "that ethics are purely minor group arrangements having no relationship to the

larger movements and positive dominating forces of the universe but rather to contrasting things that grow out of them, and in such an elastic way at times" (Dawn 350). This enigmatic statement, almost elegant from a writer whose effusiveness only occasionally strikes close to elegance, reads like an effort to gather together or to revise thirty or more years of a narrative cycle of building up and then breaking down the meaning of social systems. One system or structure constantly refers to another, an endless deferral of stability, let alone permanence, as characters struggle to achieve and subsequently to escape others' fictions of permanence. But once they are propelled back into the undifferentiated, chaotic swirl of larger movements, characters invariably struggle to situate themselves again among the unstable, elastic contrasting things of minor group arrangements.

In a general way, the terms of Dawn's dramatic contrasts correspond to those put forward by Leo Marx in The Machine in the Garden (1964). That is, the autobiographer Dreiser's concept of the self's relationship to group is dramatized within and against contrasting and conflicting "American" settings, urban, extra-urban, and pastoral, though not in terms of "wilderness," an important category in Marx's scheme; significantly, Dreiser's imagination contained no unpeopled landscapes. The problem, then, of living among people is focused in Dawn by a character's

tension among and between these landscapes, thereby also representing the historical problems of togetherness for a society whose sense of a primary landscape was changing in the turmoil of rapid urbanization. For Leo Marx, the tension between wilderness and a developing industrial society--and "the constant need to redefine the 'middle landscape' ideal" (139)--constitutes a crucial dialectic of the American imagination. However, in the autobiographical narrator's mind, the tensions focused by imagined landscapes in opposition at most appear to be dialectical. Indeed, it would be more accurate to say that imagined landscapes both contrast and overlap, without yielding to any clear compromise or ideal, and that ambivalent characters always remain psychologically and socially between landscapes and cultures.

The Indiana towns in which the narrator spends much of his youth are situated between a cultivated, pastoral countryside and the city. But as a potential middle landscape ideal, small-town life and relationships are never easily accepted by the youth remembered by the narrator. On the other hand, the narrator rhapsodizes about the impressionistic beauty of the pastoral setting as well as about the beauty of a city taken in as "nature"--as pure energy and multiplicity--ironically, the closest setting conceptually to a wilderness. Open nature and the city are both seen, that is, as a kind of undifferentiated blur

signifying freedom from constraint, while social constraints, embodied in the clarified particulars of small-town life, compose a middle landscape which is repeatedly rejected. Importantly, this negative middle landscape may be present in the imagination whether a character is in a small town, a large city, or a pastoral setting, as long as social constraints are apparent. In the city, particulars of society and economics inhibit the narrator's absorption into undifferentiated crowds and a dream of freedom. Even the pastoral setting, upon closer examination, reveals particular human "arrangements" that compromise its impressionistic integrity and keep the Dawn narrator at a distance, viewing them from their margins.

Dreiser's fictions of community may be generally described as constructs of economic or ethical "arrangements," or of "organization," penetrating the beauty, wonder, and terror of larger, undifferentiated movements or forces. "Community" when it is associated with the inability to see impressionistic beauty, urban or pastoral, and with constraint arising from economic necessity or an ethics of inclusion and exclusion, always carries negative connotations. According to Dawn, Dreiser and the Dreiser clan were usually unhappy in the towns and small cities of 1870s and 1880s Indiana. On the edge of solvency, the family had to scrape to get along and were often dispersed for economic reasons among several towns and

cities. Family members would be drawn into town life by visions of acceptance, but later alienated by a strong moral response to their streaks of independence. At times, they seemed interesting to the community, especially the sisters for reasons of physical attractiveness, but interest usually led to notoriety; their somewhat unconventional lives were often the subject of condemning gossip. No sooner did they make connections than they made enemies. Because Dreiser portrays himself as painfully shy and sensitive, the fragility of their connections to town life affected him strongly.

But the penetration of imagined community into larger movements is not always rejected in the narrative. Indeed, the drama of community is a function of the fact that images of connectedness remain desirable throughout Dreiser's writings; the desire to belong, to be "of" an imagined set of arrangements, as well as the desire to impose unity upon social separateness, in various ways informs characters' perceptions and dreams of self and society.

The experience of inclusion for the narrator of the autobiography is sometimes presented as a nostalgia, an ephemeral, sentimental fantasy of memory. For example, the narrator's mother, like many women of the nineteenth century, is ennobled as the spiritual soul of the family. Near the end of the century, economic necessity compelled an increasing number of married women to compromise the

feminine aesthetic of economic naivete and spirituality and find work outside the home. This trend of women working and gaining economic independence intersected with the popularity of songs and verses to an idealized "mother," such as those which brought Dreiser's brother, Paul Dresser, such success in the 1890s. The Dawn narrator's own panegyrics to his mother seem like a nostalgic reaction against the difficult stability of the Dreiser family in light of the diminished economic and ideological power of his father and his mother's having to hold the family together through running a boarding house and taking in laundry. The ennobled mother must also accept several transgressions of communal ethics among her fiercely independent children. It is the mother who, even during various family "scandals," remains "concerned always with the necessity and duty of keeping step with the social and economic standards of whatsoever community she was a part--herself working most and hardest to maintain them" (122). The nostalgia which frames the narrator's representation of "mother" extends in one place directly to a community. For "the charm of Warsaw [Indiana] as a town and, perhaps better, as a mental and emotional experience, was enhanced by" the fact that "this was my mother's home country..." (203) The family's "relationship to this new community....somehow seemed better and perhaps more class-conscious than any I had ever known" (204). Nevertheless,

this general sense of belonging to a class, of integration within a community, is finally penetrated by the sharper particulars of community life. Nostalgia, in other words, is penetrated by reflection upon its nature and viability. Even in Warsaw, when an unmarried girl is found to be pregnant, showing no affection whatsoever "the community affirmed its public morals." Thus the "matter" of the narrator's sister being made pregnant by some local "Lothario" "had a semi-stabilizing effect on me because it drove home quite definitely....the chill resentment, or at least evasive dread, which failure to conform to socially accepted arrangements invariable evokes" (272). This newfound stability, brought on by exclusion, signals here, and throughout Dreiser's writing, a characteristic retreat from nostalgia that frames integrated relations as productive and happy.

Typically, here as in much of Dreiser's fiction, the repulsion from "arrangements" evokes thoughts of an ideal city. "If we could only return to Chicago again....There our neighbors would not care what we were. The fact that some of us had not done quite as was socially expected of us or that we had not fitted in as I at least desired would not be held against us or me there. In Chicago were crowds....a great world!" (302-03). Chicago's voice speaks to the narrator: "'I am the pulsing urge of the universe! You are part of me, I of you!'" (307).

At first, taking in "the whole city, not any particular part," the narrator worries that its vastness is "almost too much for my by now almost rural brain" (311). But urban particularity soon becomes a kind of intellectual challenge. The observant young man and future "color" journalist begins to form a sense of the "economic and sociologic significance" of urban institutions, and to discover his ambivalence over being situated both within and against them. Indeed, as he becomes further "stabilized" in the city, his lovely impressionistic visions of universal totality are harder to maintain.

Initially in the idealized city, particularized images of community are rooted in the integrity and homogeneity of the family. The family serves as a kind of refuge from the city. For a while, family life there "was perhaps as good as it ever was before or after" (359). The narrator's vision of integrated individuals, the narrator and his siblings, each contributing to the economic stability of the group, is later extended to the warehouse where he works and where he comes to feel a kind of personal attachment through developing friends as well as an appreciation for business organization. However, in both settings, home and workplace, urban idealism is mitigated as the narrator discovers that individuality is becoming an increasingly divisive factor in his relationships. Thus,

In my own home I was garnering lessons in economics, sociology, or inefficiency versus efficiency, plus order, force and the like....Along with a kind of blood affection or rapprochement, there was in all of us a growing sense of individuality which effected eventually decidedly sharp differences in tastes and aims. Indeed, every single member of our family, in so far as I could see from then on was first as foremost an individualist, guarding his individuality with an almost savage vitality (367-68).

Simultaneously, the efficiency and order of the warehouse and its foremen are seen as more and more constraining to the narrator's own individuality. Earlier in the narrative, his youthful vitality had been constrained by the "terrors of a small town"; while the "wonder world" outside of town in the "beautiful, summery country" had offered "all of the things the human heart might desire: change, speed, color, variety, life" (106). Analogously, indoor work in the city is contrasted to the variety of streetlife. Feeling "more and more weary of all that I was doing....[I] would stand at one of the windows of this wholesale hardware house, reasonably concealed by boxes, and sigh for the freedom of the world I saw outside." Individual freedom is associated with a distant perspective and the relative lack of differentiation signified by an anonymous crowd.

Working Chicago! Working Chicago!....The crowds of commonplace boys and girls, men and women, who journeyed to and from work morning and evening, crowded so grotesquely in the vari-colored, small horse cars....the sublimity of crowds in half lights...(378-79)

Thus, at moments when confinement and organizational constraint are no longer bearable, the contours of particularity drop out of focus and an impressionistic ideal city of "force" once again fills the imagination; here, a day passes in a phrase and social proximity is discerned only through half light. In the course of the drama of social interrelatedness, the wonder of the child is at first drawn to the undifferentiated crowd and to its force, then, as he matures, towards comprehension and appreciation of the particulars of "rapprochement" and other economic arrangements; but finally, he is repelled by feelings of constraint and, once more like a child in wonder, finds relief in the anonymous crowd. Narrator or character shifts back to the margins of particularity for distant viewing, back to his sense of himself poised at the gates of the city and the relief found liminality, in unconnected existence between particular places and cultures.

When the narrator then moves back into the source of his negative feelings about social particularity, the

negative middle landscape of the small town, he loses his option of half-light sociological vision. At Bloomington, now as a student attending Indiana State University, he is immediately conscious of being an outsider. Bloomington sets up "new wants and new ambitions," associated with being accepted socially and, ultimately, with sexual pleasure. But "this small town world" is "sharp with imported levels and castes and God knows what prides and prejudices....new and biting contrasts...all the more sharp for their unfamiliarity" (402). Particularly insidious are the influential "letter societies," which extend "throughout all of the colleges and even the social and commercial life of the world outside, and therefore....would aid one in later years. Indeed, these really piddling and meaningless organizations were then and there painted to me by those in favor of them and those who knew them from the inside as ideal bonds of brotherhood which ended only with death!" (403). When "no fraternity accepted me...."

I soon found myself thinking that I was of no real importance here to anyone, destined to be taboo to these elements at work (405).

Once again, perhaps not unlike Thoreau at Walden, he is momentarily more comfortable resting outside of the elastic particulars of a socially dominant set of ethical

arrangements.'

Dreiser similarly explores the "ideal bonds of brotherhood" in Sister Carrie's depiction of fraternal organizations, notably the Elks Club, which is also closely linked to business success. The introduction of secret, exclusive societies in Dawn, as in the novel, signals the narrator's developing sense of how an individual must represent himself in an effort to achieve social and economic inclusion. Having gone to college for a year, he returns to Chicago to find that the social ambitions operating in Bloomington that he had finally rejected have nonetheless infected him. As a laundry pick-up and delivery man, he works among "the most wealthy and well-placed....with whom," as he now feels, "I most properly belonged" (575). When he is able to answer in the affirmative to a question posed by a millionaire idling in bed--had he read Huxley?--he feels elation over his ability to demonstrate a connection to this man's world. This identification with an exclusive group is somewhat surprising and seems to mark a shift in his attitude toward categories of social exclusion. Paradoxically, at the same time, he is regularly attending Sunday morning lectures by freelance, generally neo-Christian clerics who "attacked the wrongs of politics, the narrowness of sectarian views, the clannish isolation of families and social cliques and layers and offered as a substitute a love of literature, art,

music, and a freer, gayer, public life" (585). Here, then, a new fiction of community is introduced into the text, one which appears to contradict the narrator's sense that he properly belongs to an exclusive social clique and, for that matter, the very notion of exclusion. According to these preachers, with whom the narrator finds himself in sympathy, art breaks down conventional group arrangements as well as isolationism; art subverts hierarchy and brings all, the marginal and the central--an idealized "crowd"--together as one.

Ultimately, this ephemeral fiction of an ideal city of sympathy and togetherness is sharply contradicted by other realistic, "semi-stabilized" fictions of social organization. The narrator's momentary ideal of sociological totality cannot be separated from his growing sense of differentiation from his family and others, his sense of belonging to a well-placed class, nor from the other categories of exclusion by which he has begun to particularize urban society. In fact, the plural all of the ideal city is essentially a white, quasi-Christian elite. Thus, the narrator tells us that Jews were "anathema to me" (593). Wandering the "interesting" city, now as a collector of installment payments on inexpensive consumer goods, the narrator's sympathy with others seems more democratic, more Whitmanesque, than ever. But in marking out its imagined heterogeneous community of customers among the socially

"separate" working classes, the installment company with which the narrator identifies himself makes certain exceptions: "we never sold anything to the Jews and little to the Negroes" (602). Thus, in Dawn, as he moves more deeply into the economic webs of urban life, the narrator shifts between representing himself as "the other" outside of community to imagining himself provisionally belonging to one or another idealized entity of inclusion, which invariably defines its superiority through contrast with and exclusion of an unassimilable other.²

The contradiction-laden appeal for an undifferentiated all was complicated for Dreiser during the 1890s when he began reading Herbert Spencer's First Principles. In his magazine writings of the period, Dreiser would refer to Spencer's "law of segregation," the understanding that "the human races tend to differentiate and integrate, as do races of other living forms." Thus, Spencer wrote, the essential "likeness" of laboring men subordinates their "natural differences," while "those trained to brain-work have acquired a certain other community of character which makes them, as social units, more like one another than those trained to manual occupations. And there arise class-segregations answering to those superinduced likenesses" (First Principles 439,441). Writing his pseudonymous column in Ev'ry Month in October of 1896, Dreiser defines the "magnetism" which augments the population of a city as a

function of the "law of segregation,"

which simply means there is something in nature to make the many wish to be where the many are (Uncollected Prose 95).

But most of those who arrive in the city, he explains, fail to comprehend the inaccessibility of, in Spencer's words, the social units they most desire.

The dichotomy of integration and segregation, of desire for a universal many and the desire for "local differentiation" (First Principles 423), becomes a dramatic theme of Dreiser's first novel. Indeed, Dawn's brief allusion to an integrated heterogeneous society is not really a new fiction. It is clearly reminiscent of the imagined, undifferentiated human community coalescing around art which Robert Ames articulates to Carrie at the end of Dreiser's first novel. I explore Ames's fiction of undifferentiated "audience" in my final chapter. Finally, like Dawn's Sunday-morning idealists, a pseudo-clerical Ames tries to get Carrie to imagine that literary drama might be offered to her faceless "audience" as a substitute for their marginality, loneliness, and sorrow. In Ames's vision, Carrie herself becomes a "medium" for the "many" to be able to express their sympathies with each other. Sister Carrie moves through many problems of community toward proposing a

theoretical end to community in this notion of total consensus, of communal, almost spiritualistic, oneness--a notion of determinism the narrative finally backs away from. Perfect togetherness supposes a kind of human dominance that Dreiser's naturalism cannot finally accommodate. For Carrie ultimately, as for Dawn's narrator, the propensity for expressing sympathy is limited by what is known about the particulars of social arrangements. Thus, first in Sister Carrie, and later in Dawn, Dreiser's character negotiates between anonymity and feeling like the "other" within the crowd, the problematic particulars of intimacy and conspicuity within the crowd, and an ambiguously imagined ideal sympathy of the many. In both works, that negotiation is finally unsuccessful; no middle term emerges and character remains between cultures.

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In conclusion, then, how does someone who moves around so much, from place to place, from one state of social connection to another, think about the experience of communal togetherness?

The writer of Dawn thinks about community as an unresolvable problem. As is the case so often in American writing, community here and in Dreiser's novels is never left unexamined. Dreiser's idiosyncratic examinations of social arrangements can be accommodating to, though they are

more characteristically disapproving of those arrangements. On the one hand, community becomes a problem of the moment and the social texture for dramatic action. On the other hand, there is sometimes this reminder that other forces loom larger than the moment and that group arrangements are "minor." Nevertheless, those philosophical reminders hardly diminish the dramatic importance of social relationships; indeed, they tend to contribute a tragic dimension to the social drama. To encapsulate the basic plot of the drama, the first-person narrative figure's strong desires to be "of" a surface of social life leads him to discover the sharper contours of social particularity, engendering a strong and unresolvable ambivalence with regard to others. At times, he may think about inclusion in terms of an outright nostalgia, but these momentary fictions of togetherness finally cannot sustain the imagination of community against the pressures of either organizational constraints or larger forces; exclusion, he repeatedly discovers, can have a more stabilizing effect than inclusion. Or he may think about inclusion as a kind of absorption into the energy of the all and the end of communal organization; but even as that ideal hangs in the air, he is shrinking from the powerlessness of being an individual within an undifferentiated crowd by delineating his difference from others. Community is an idea born in small towns of a Midwest in the throes of cultural

transition from a rural agrarian to an urban industrial economy. The narrator's sense of interpenetrating landscapes suggests the difficulties of that transition. For community is also an idea which penetrates urban life in late nineteenth-century America. Migrants like the Dreisers appear to have brought their clannishness with them into the city. But something about modern city life makes clannishness feel extremely confining. Still, city life is the only acceptable life. The first "wonder" of the city seems to last as long as it takes to recall into being the negative middle landscape of communal ethics, notions of togetherness apparently brought in through the gates of the city by millions of immigrants and refugees. But even after it is strangled, wonder continues to live in the psychological refuge which preserves feelings of inbetweenness--which preserves the moment of arrival. Indeed, the wonder of the city is preserved again and again for Dreiser as he re-writes the narrative fragment of arrival.

Finally, Dawn is about nostalgia. Dawn is nostalgia, made into art. At times, Dawn's nostalgia is reflexive, that is, for moments the narrator appears to be reflecting upon his nostalgia as nostalgia, usually to show that nostalgic images and interpretations are not real. It is the discontinuities, "the great discontinuities in life, that we seek to bridge, or reconcile, or integrate, by

recollection, and, beyond this, by myth and art. Discontinuity and nostalgia are most profound, if, in growing up, we leave or lose the place where we were born and spent our childhood, if we become expatriates or exiles, if the place, or the life, we were brought up in is changed beyond recognition or destroyed. All of us, finally, are exiles from the past."³ I have tried to suggest that in writing Dawn, Dreiser was, once again in his life, creating myth and art to understand and perhaps to integrate a past among others and places which gave profound and lasting meaning to the word "discontinuity." Thus, in re-writing the wonder of discovering the city, Dreiser manages to focus his past, giving it a center; the wonder of discovery is one of several integral experiences which accomplish that for him and his reader in his autobiographies and his novels. By linking Dawn to Sister Carrie, Dreiser's biographers unavoidably imply that Sister Carrie is also nostalgia turned into art. I think that is true. Indeed, in the novel, nostalgic reflexivity is more pronounced than in the autobiography; the novel thinks through the dilemmas of nostalgia more analytically, more critically, than the autobiography. Sister Carrie looks most closely upon its characters who are exiles from the past, Carrie, and in the second half of the novel, Hurstwood. One strand of meaning in the novel that should not be overlooked is the frequent expression of desire by these characters either to integrate

or to abandon the seemingly uncontrollable discontinuity of their pasts as they interpenetrate or flow into and gloss their present situations. In Sister Carrie, the integral forces and movements of nature may have a continuous influence upon situation and the psyche, but in the society people have constructed for themselves discontinuity is the most repetitive life experience. Indeed, nothing continues as is because no one can bear continuation; these are restless characters, yearning forward and backward in time and place, running away from connections to others and places, while longing repeatedly for what Carrie Meeber thinks of as possibilities for a better kind of "contact." Repeated nostalgia and nostalgic reflexivity, expressed desires for continuity as well as discontinuity, throughout Dreiser writing, suggest therefore that Dreiser himself was working through several of his own questions about the possibilities for a better kind of contact.

CHAPTER TWO

The Changeless Desire of the Mind

For a moment, at the frontier, the bonds of custom are broken and unrestraint is triumphant. There is not tabula rosa. The stubborn American environment is there with its imperious summons to accept its conditions; the inherited ways of doing things are also there; and yet, in spite of environment, and in spite of custom, each frontier did indeed furnish a new field of opportunity, a gate of escape from the bondage of the past; and freshness, and confidence, and scorn of older society, impatience of its restraints and its ideas, and indifference to its lessons, have accompanied the frontier.

Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (1920).

Relations which are not precisely communal but which suggest a developed habit of or desire for community, are, throughout Sister Carrie, a matter of troublesome ambivalence for its eponymous character, once and always connected to a past as someone's "sister." While life for Carrie in the small town of Columbia City was, we learn, "thoroughly circumscribed" by habits and conventions, the city, like Frederick Jackson Turner's romanticized "frontier," initially promises "a new field of opportunity" for a future characterized by "triumphant unrestraint," and "a gate of escape from the bondage of the past." But in the city Dreiser imagines, in which all social relationships are based upon and guided by economics, for young women like

Carrie and Minnie the options for livelihood are few. The economics of urban relations and urban notions of the interrelatedness, are, in their own ways, thoroughly circumscribing. In the first part of Sister Carrie, as the young girl reconnoiters the industrial city, her mind wanders among various interpenetrating, imagined spheres: family and communal intimacy, the "wonder" and "terror" of an urban intimacy based upon economics, and the finer pictures Carrie generates in her imagination, images which seem to be an attempt to reconcile these other notions with an ideal notion of social relations.

The argument which follows assumes that for Carrie, as for many who migrated into the industrial cities of nineteenth-century America, pre-urban social arrangements continue to interpenetrate newer, urban notions of social relations. In this sense, I am continuing a dialogue established with two recent interpretations of the novel. I hope the evidence I present demonstrates why I would disagree with Robert Shulman's reductive assertion that Carrie is "lacking any experience of community," and that her connection to consumer goods has wholly replaced the "sense of individuality emerging from a community" (Social Criticism and Nineteenth Century American Fictions 1987, 286). At the same time, I hope to show that I am generally in accord with Thomas P. Riggio's inclination to see the enigmatic construct "Columbia City" as a node of emotions

present in the background of Carrie's consciousness. Problematizing Ellen Moers's sense that "Carrie's past slips out of the story with the slow but final rhythms of the Chicago train" (Two Dreisers 100), Riggio explores the "burden of psychological complexity" imposed by Dreiser's not having portrayed the specifics of early life in a story which "thereby collapses the conventional dichotomy between the provinces and the city found in the popular fiction of his day" ("Carrie's Blues" 30). But Riggio's focus upon Carrie's and Dreiser's psychic lives and the guilt they repress associated with leaving "home," takes a different direction than my own. I also explore the psychic manifestations of what Dreiser calls "transplantation," but specifically when the psyche is confronted with having to translate unfamiliar "social organization" into something comprehensible. As represented by Carrie, the ambivalent imagination of the new city dweller negotiates for expression between fictions of pre-urban community and the need to reinvent the self in terms of unfamiliar, though fascinating, social arrangements.

Ambivalence for Carrie comes to mean a kind of unrelieved liminality. Frederick Jackson Turner's language is so resonant here because the imagined frontier, a territory beyond social being, is so readily associated with liminality, and because Dreiser's city when first imagined by Carrie, appears as a fresh and liberating

undifferentiated environment.¹ As a liminal figure, Carrie is always at the gates of that city, as it were, always in transition. "To go to the city," Dreiser had written in 1896, "is the changless desire of the mind."² Carrie is always in a changeless state or status of going, that is of being between cultures, of being pulled by cultures toward absorption and of resisting absorption, of desiring connectedness within cultures and of being kept out, or of finding connectedness unbearable. Even when Carrie walks in from the gates and seems for the moment to be at the center of a "world," her centrality seems unreal and temporary. Carrie's example illustrates that no matter what social circle or refuge the city-dweller imagines he or she has created, some other influence of the city is always invading. In fact, the evidence in Sister Carrie is that "the city's hypnotic influence" penetrates every space and every relationship, finally invalidating any imagined definition of social space. Carrie remains ambivalent or between social entities, in part because social entities in the novel are never truly distinct; they interpenetrate, contaminate, and subvert each other. To repeat a point I made above concerning tensions of place in Dawn, the Dreiserian tale of urban discovery has no clearly delineated dialectical structure, but is more precisely a narrative of repeating, interpenetrating patterns; in Carrie's case, the paradigmatic narrative pattern forms around the moment of

arrival, the moment before absorption, the moment of being at the frontier, and of being psychologically outside while on the inside, of not ever having arrived.

In a major study of Dreiser's life and writings (Theodore Dreiser: His World and His Novels, 1969), Richard Lehan tries to demonstrate the continuity of Dreiser's thinking and expression by describing the archetypal Dreiser character as a "displaced hero": "the man [or woman] whose desire for essential self-fulfillment is in conflict with his environment" (47). I am saying something similar here about Carrie and, later, Hurstwood. Lehan's displaced hero "has a place in the world but cannot find it...[is] never satisfied with his origins--his family or his present position--struggles for wealth and recognition--longs for stability but is caught in flux."

He is, in a word, a victim: a victim of his temperament, a victim of time, a victim of a society that can never fully accept or totally reject, a victim of a world that is in constant struggle. Most of all, he is the victim of his romantic illusions: his belief in the possibility of self-fulfillment and purpose when life, in reality, is moving in a furious circle, the center holding all in balance, like a raging whirlpool going nowhere (53).

Although there are echoes throughout my study of what Lehan is saying here, I must diverge and point out that "displacement" is not the best term for depicting the experience I find represented in Dreiser's first novel. Indeed, displacement is an appropriate and commonly used term--it is a technical term in the social sciences--for characterizing modern urban experience since the beginnings of industrialism. But my focus is slightly different. I explore a psychology and sociology, at times a phenomenology, of inbetween-ness, "interpenetrated" by notions of togetherness. I choose to displace Lehan's term because it does not go far enough in acknowledging certain characteristic problems and differences within Dreiser's sense of urban displacement. In fact, the term "displaced hero" has the effect of reifying displacement, and of suggesting a more singular and "heroic" identity than I think can be argued for all of Dreiser's characterizations. Displacement suggests a "history" of placement within a prior world, a historical idea which, in Sister Carrie at least, is dramatically questioned; together with the highly ambiguous word "hero," the notion invokes nostalgia for a time or place of pre-displacement, social coherence, and centrality, someplace in the backgrounds of the fiction and, to echo Lehan's framework, Dreiser's "world." In departing from Lehan, I hope to show how nostalgia for placement may penetrate the liminality of Dreiser's characters as an

invention necessitated by present circumstances--and that such nostalgia functions in desires to dominate or resist the present. Therefore, I am more confident saying that Dreiser is writing about liminality, or about an inbetweenness which leaves traces of what characters imagine it was, is, or can be like not to be between; and, as Lehan suggests, neither Carrie nor Hurstwood ever truly functions with stability within a stable community. Importantly, part of what makes the "circle" of reality so "furious" is that characters resist as much as they desire imagined communities and other romantic illusions of self-fulfillment. That resistance necessarily casts the term "victim" into doubt as well, particularly as it pertains to romantic illusions. For the nature of illusions in this novel varies with character, and different characters define and contest victimization differently.³

The record of Carrie's experience, at once groping for and resisting placement within what she perceives as confined or segregated worlds of the industrial city offers an interesting emotional history of the problem of resettlement in an increasingly mobile and urbanized nation. Specifically, I wish to focus in this chapter upon two manifestations of the problems of mobility and resettlement imagined by Dreiser as he wrote the early chapters of his novel: a rhythm of attraction, contraction, and repulsion, which characterizes Carrie's initial reactions to the

physical and social entity "Chicago," and a drama surrounding what Dreiser calls "establishment," when Carrie is living with Drouet in a "neighborhood," the city's most conventionally defined community. Establishment itself, as I will show, repeats the unrelieved, unresolved rhythm of attraction and repulsion. Throughout these early stages of her socialization in Chicago, the past, connoting both social connectedness and "meaning" for things and places, dimly, though importantly, informs, haunts, interpenetrates Carrie's perceptions, keeping her from returning "home" and at the same keeping her from ever resettling into any of the new worlds she is discovering. "There is not a tabula rosa," Turner wrote of the imagined frontier. "The inherited ways of doing things are there also." The past is not a living thing in Sister Carrie; but it is nonetheless one of the worlds between which Carrie is situated.

Carrie's first significant act of imagining herself outside of Columbia City and at the frontier of the real city occurs on the train to Chicago. The familiar is suddenly set into sharp contrast the moment Drouet reaches into his pocket and pulls forth his fat purse. "Such a purse had never been carried by any man who had ever been attentive to her before. Indeed a man who traveled, who was brisk and experienced and of the world, had never come within such close range before."

The fat purse, the shiny tan shoes, the smart new suit and the air with which he did things built up for her a dim world of fortune around him of which he was the center. It disposed her pleasantly toward all he might do (8,9).

Drouet's actions and words, as he hands her his business card, then reinforce Carrie's new conception of that "world." "'This is the house I travel for,'" Drouet tells her, pointing to a picture of a building on the card and conveying to her that he himself is impressed with being "connected to such a place" (9).

The objects that compose Drouet, including, significantly, the building to which he is connected, are metonyms radiating meaning. For Carrie, Drouet is of the world, and she projects that world as a dim circle of fortune. It is dim because presumably in the past she knew it only by its manufactured images⁴; and now her knowledge is fed only by the fragments that compose Drouet's air. It is important to note, at this point, that she conceives of a "world" as spherically contained and that individuals are both object fields and part of the object field of a spherical world--and that Carrie's imagination tends to conceive a dim notion of coherence, of an interrelationship of objects and people, of self-definition by connection. This dimly conceived circle, emerging from an intersection

of past and present perceptions, marks the beginning of Carrie's socialization in the city.

The characterizing aspect of Carrie's first days within the gates of Chicago is the trouble she has lining up her senses, her intuition, her imagination and what she already knows, with the plural worlds of the city. Beginning with the close-up specifics of Drouet and with her view from the window of the train, she is continually shifting her focus from the tangible particular and the realm of sense to the metaphoric general and the realm of imagination, in an effort to discover a comfortable--and for Carrie, comfort is all-important--as well as familiar, psychological and social position for herself in the mysterious city. Here Dreiser establishes his character's perceptual schema and rhythm, one which will later be repeated with modifications in Dawn. On the train, all at once, from a distance, she has a clear view of the open prairie, the "indications" of a middle suburban landscape--those telegraph poles stalking across fields toward regions of nostalgia--and the smoke stacks of "the great city." But immediately upon Carrie's arrival, all clarity of place, all familiarity, collapses into a terrifying blur of multitudes, of crowds--as in Dawn, an important term throughout the novel. After the open prairie and the intimacy of Columbia City, "only a little way off," Carrie suddenly feels "much alone" in "a tossing, thoughtless sea"--a "reality" of "maze" and "uproar." But

as she is carried along on the tide into West Van Buren Street, she begins once more to distinguish signs of urban particularity. With the open prairie and nascent suburbs behind her and the dim world of fortune surrounding Drouet all but vanished into the maze, Carrie's sensibilities are assaulted by the all-too-confining world of her sister's "lean and narrow life" indoors, in the small apartment, out of which Minnie never seems to venture. On the other hand, there is the attracting, unconfined charm of the Hansons's crowded, plural, animated neighborhood, a "street where at night the lights of grocery stores were shining and children were playing about. To Carrie the sound of the little bells upon the horse cars as they tinkled in and out of hearing was as pleasing as it was strange and novel" (12). Beyond the "circumscribed," "settled," "conservative round of toil" of the singular inner world of the apartment, a world connected to home and family, Carrie's focus dims and her imagination responds timidly to the plural novelty of the outer world of the neighborhood, a kind of small town but crowded, lit up, and busy into the night.

On her first day in Chicago, Carrie walks out of the West Side neighborhood to immerse herself in the oceanic, undifferentiated crowd of the economic city. Initially, this city, the "business part" that is, seems too vast, incomprehensible--"mysterious"; what she sees there causes a kind of overload for Carrie's "rural brain" (Dawn 311).

Walking bravely forward into its "power and force," Carrie feels a sense of helplessness.

These vast buildings, what were they? These strange energies and huge interests--for what purposes were they there? She could have understood the meaning of a little stone-cutter's yard at Columbia City, whittling little pieces of marble for individual use, but when the yards of some huge stone corporation came into view, filled with spur tracks and flat cars, transpierced by docks from the river and traversed by immense trundling cranes of wood and steel overhead, it lost all significance and applicability to her little world. It was connected with something of which she knew nothing, and was doing things which she could not understand (17).

Unable to penetrate the meaning of modern industry, Carrie's initial reaction to these streets is to draw into herself. This same overload of her rural brain occurs in the frenetic department store where more trinkets than she has ever seen make claims upon her. Dreiser called his first chapter in the 1900 edition, "The Magnet Attracting: A Waif Amid Forces." Indeed, the forces of the city, its vast buildings, its corporate organization, and the plethoric objects it displays, are magnetic, drawing Carrie into them,

making claims upon her. Her instincts draw her both toward and back from the particular, as if she were negotiating for her position or the terms of her absorption--which, in hunting for work, she is symbolically doing.

In one intimidating building where she applies for a position, while being turned down she is nonetheless drawn toward the familiar intimacy of a fatherly old man who does not, as expected, treat her coldly. But this momentary reduction of the city's unfamiliarity quickly passes when her next application, to one of the wonderful department stores, is rejected by a "sharp, quick-mannered Jew" (24). After this, she feels "a certain safety and relief in mingling with the crowd" (24). So rather soon after the terror of that first crowd in the railroad station, Carrie is learning to find pleasure in anonymous mingling. "The busy indifferent streets" are a "soothing refuge" from the factories in which she is "leered upon" by "sensual-faced" individuals "asking all sorts of embarrassing questions" (27); connectedness and, importantly, income are thus early on associated with sex and powerlessness. At the same time, reenacting the dichotomy of small family "cottage" and its "green environs", confining apartment and neighborhood, Carrie is having to find her way among and between extremes of intimacy when she experiences the physical enclosure of an urban workplace. The inside world of the manufacturing shops, as well as being sexually threatening is, like her

sister's apartment, painfully confining. "Her mere experience and the free out-of-doors life of the country caused her nature to revolt at such confinement" (26).

Once Carrie does find a position, her attitude toward the city abruptly changes. Suddenly, she imagines a life in the city which is at once limitless, round, organic. Discovering a new atmosphere on the street where now she walks among fellow workers, she thinks anew of her sister's home and the warm meal that awaits her. Her new firm is a "goodly institution." She will live in Chicago and be happy, having unthreatening contact with "great owners" as stylishly-dressed men occasionally look on (34). These dim dreams of ideal intimacy are, in due course, mitigated by the circumscribing particulars of her sister's apartment where her "high-flown speculations" and "imaginative delights" of urban pleasure are met with glaring disapproval. By the first morning of work, her spirits are greatly subdued by her fear of the new, but she is nonetheless reassured by seeing the people of the neighborhood coming out of doors onto the sunlit street. Sporting a piece of her past, the "small straw hat which she had worn all summer at Columbia City," she marches within that army, wondering at the "magnitude of this life" (34,35). But in the dark inner chamber of the shoe factory, tethered to a machine--sacrificing her body, if not directly to a powerful man then to the machine he controls--repelled

in general by the coarseness of her fellow workers, including the young man who "poked her," Carrie "instinctively drew into herself," preferring to remain "inconspicuous." "Her idea of work had been so entirely different." Like the narrator of Dawn whose intolerance of confinement impels him dreamily to the warehouse window,

All during the long afternoon she thought of the city outside with its imposing show, crowds and fine buildings (40).

But simultaneously, "Columbia City and the better side of her home life came back." During this first confusing experience of the city's economic rules of presence, Carrie's sense of reality, looking backward and forward in time, negotiates with her imagination for a better idea of "contact," for a better identity through context--for the possibilities of freedom and relationships. With the better side of Columbia City now more than a little way off, she imagines relief from her urban work ordeal in a new and dim circle of domestication, "a jolly home, a sympathetic reception, a bright supper table" (49). But then, venturing to walk into the magnetic neighborhood after dinner, and attracting "the overtures of a well-dressed man of thirty who in passing looked at her," Carrie is frightened by "something in the man's look" (53). Her dim girlhood dream

of domestic contact never matches the reality of actual intimacy, which, so far, always seems either confining or threatening. The fantasies of domestic intimacy she invents later with Drouet and then Hurstwood will end up bearing out all her apprehensions about finding a comfortable way between anonymity in the undifferentiated crowd and the intimacy of connectedness with others. The negotiation for intimacy, for connectedness, for absorption, never does have a comfortable resolution.

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Although it may have a "better side," when Carrie faces the failure of her factory career and has no way to earn her keep, the possibility of returning to the "dull little round" of Columbia City is an appalling concept. "The great mysterious city...was still a magnet for her. What she had seen only suggested its possibilities" (65). Thus, when she receives a gift of "two soft, green, handsome ten-dollar bills" from Drouet, she conceives of their power to keep her in the city. But as when she tried and failed to reconcile real and imagined versions of work and home, general speculation about money and its power is contradicted by the closely viewed meaning of particular objects. To dream of staying warm through winter, of the "possibilities" embodied in many beautiful jackets in many store windows is one thing, but the conversion of Drouet's gift into a jacket

means having to set up new domestic arrangements, a new apartment, paid for by Drouet, in which to hang the jacket; staying in the city means being "kept" there. With "a touch of misgiving," Carrie understands that Drouet's gift translates into deeper "entanglement," finally entangling the one "thing" she has so far protected, her body. But at this point, unable to pay for herself, Carrie "was not welcome" at the Hansons. Carrie's education in connectedness has reached the point that she has deciphered another of the city's mysteries: being "welcome" in Chicago means being able to pay for oneself, a truth as valid for her new arrangement with Drouet as it was for the one she walks away from.

"Contact" itself, Carrie discovers, becomes a term of barter in the city; and having contact means having to manipulate and "manage" contact. On the cold, December night that Carrie does pay for her keep with contact, Drouet has earlier taken her to the theater. In a scene which anticipates the evening's perceptual and emotional confusion, on their way out to see "The Mikado," "an opera which was hilariously popular at that time," Carrie's sense of presence and place is distracted by a vision of "home." Transformed by her new skirt, shirtwaist, gloves and jacket, sitting comfortably over a hot dinner in the Windsor dining room,

Carrie could see the western sky, still pink with the fading light, but steely blue at the top where it met the darkness. A long, thin, cloud of pink hung in mid-air, shaped like some island in a far-off sea. Somehow the swaying of some dead branches of trees across the way brought back the picture she was familiar with, when she looked from their front window in December days at home.

She paused and wrung her little hands (76).

The image is desolate, but in seeking refuge from the details of urban contact, Carrie is sometimes drawn to and comforted by such sad images. Importantly, "home" is a nostalgia haunting her ambivalence this night as her mind effectively cuts off the possibility of maintaining connection there. This turning-point scene builds up as a carnival of sense experience. Bumped and jostled by the crowd outside the theater, Carrie recognizes "a pair of eyes," belonging to one of the powerless machine girls from the shoe factory, and feels "as if some great tide has rolled between them" (77). Inside the theater, the "color and grace" of a comic opera about a prince who discovers his princess among the common villagers causes her to have "vain imaginings about place and power, about far-off lands and magnificent people." Dreiser uses this deeply psychological sequence to re-frame and re-tell Carrie's sense of her life

story, from Columbia City to the shoe factory to the domestic fantasy ever after.

As I remarked earlier, to relieve the indeterminacy he feels among the dominating forces and movements which are the controlling mechanisms of life and behavior, the naive autobiographical character of Dawn struggles to situate himself among "the contrasting things," the "elastic" ethics and minor group arrangements that are subordinate to those forces. This is an attempted transition from liminality back to community, impelled by the terror of disconnectedness on the one hand, and by a dream of fresh and better connectedness on the other. On the night Carrie is taken to--and by--"The Mikado," she watches all rules of presence at once becoming unfixed. "Habits," "customs," "household law," "home principles," visions of dead branches in Columbia City, shabbily dressed girls sacrificing their bodies to machines, throngs of "fine ladies" mounting fine carriages--referents for "contact," past and present, swirl into an insensible flow. In giving herself up to the wave upon which a buoyant Drouet is offering her the support of his body, Carrie is barely conscious of feeling distress. The crowd has been a refuge in the past and now its chaos, its lack of differentiation, the unfixing of principles, laws, habits, associations, is at once seductive and frightening. It is only afterward that Carrie begins to comprehend the trajectory she is on, when once again she is

conscious of having been propelled by her desires for security into another contrasting situation. Her dream of innocent freedom from moral and economic entanglement, of place and power, invoked by the opera and carnivalesque street scene is, when the sun rises again, "lost." The seductive swirl of the city's hypnotic influence has been, for now at least, imposed upon by new kinds of arrangements, constraints that had in a moment of utter insecurity seemed to offer security within freedom and with power.

Thus, the immediate outcome of her actions on this night is that "entanglement" deepens and becomes "establishment." Carrie becomes "comfortably established"--as "Mrs. Drouet" in three furnished rooms, "in Ogden Place, facing Union Park, on the West Side." The transformation of her position from the West Side street of the Hansons to this block not far away is extraordinary.

Union Park

was a little, green-carpeted breathing spot, than which today there is nothing more beautiful in Chicago. It afforded a vista pleasant to contemplate. The best room looked out upon the lawn of the park, now sear and brown, where a little lake lay sheltered. Across the park were Ashland Boulevard and Warren Avenue, where stood rows of comfortable houses built and occupied by a middle class who were both respectable and moderately

well-to-do. Over the bare limbs of the trees, which now swayed in the wintry wind, rose the steeple of the Union Park Congregational Church, and far off the towers of several others....The whole place was cozy....By her industry and natural love of order which now developed, the place retained an air pleasing in the extreme (88,89).

The fact is that while the narrator takes a paragraph to establish Union Park as a place, the dramatic interest of these scenes is that Carrie herself is never firmly established in the conventions and relationships of this middle-class neighborhood-community. Throughout her residence there, continually attracted and repelled, Carrie remains on the border of Union Park, or, more accurately, above it in a window. Whereas Drouet, a rather shallow character, evokes a world which surrounds him, Carrie's more complex characterization never seems to suggest such centrality. In Union Park, as throughout the novel, Carrie is unable to accommodate the exigencies of place to her desires. Thus, her rhythm in the novel is a continual movement to new places, typically without having bags to unpack.

Other late nineteenth-century residents of places like Union Park also experienced problems surrounding mobility and resettlement; that is, in spite of the community

centrality that Union Park dwellers may have attempted to conjure up, individuals continued to feel, even to propagate, their own marginality and unsettledness in the city. The point that Richard Sennett makes clear in his study of Union Park in the late nineteenth century is that home and neighborhood were the reference points of desires for, ironically, both connectedness and separation.⁵ A home in Union Park represented both class affiliation and economic superiority and a "refuge" from the pressures of urban economy. Home portrayed success and conjured a nostalgic and integrated world apart from demands of success that were responsible for fragmenting institutions of social connectedness such as marriage and the parent-child relationship. Importantly, middle-class homes and families in Union Park, dressed with the material splendor of the well-managed economy of production, composed a category of specifically urban success and connectedness at the same time that they practiced denial with regard to the cultural dominance of a large number of urban categories. Sennett's conclusions imply that the isolated individual, restless between interpenetrating categories, rather than secure within a coherent, well-defined, and uncontaminated group, is a defining figure of the modern urban, if not extra-urban, condition. And indeed, that is the condition of existence that, passing over the surface of elaborately described worlds, Carrie as well as Hurstwood enact and

represent.

The Union Park neighborhood upon which Carrie looks from her window--rows of cozy, ordered houses, a church steeple, a lawn and sheltered lake--appears to be a kind of matrix for connectedness modeled upon the small, integrated town, or upon a nostalgia for place and social relations uncontaminated by urban problems. By her industry and natural love of order, Carrie's efforts to create shelter mimic the "air" of the green-carpeted, comfortable, respectable breathing spot which she finds so pleasant to contemplate from above, from her window. By participating in the gossip of the neighborhood she appears to be tending toward integration within its sheltered paths of, at least, female communication. Thus, against the disorder, alienation, and uncertainty of her life in the city--indeed, in another West Side neighborhood--Union Park seems to offer Carrie, as it had for many others in the 1890s, "a halcyon harbor" of safety in belonging (SC 88).

But, again, Dreiser's use of the word "establishment" is ironic; seen from the point of view of a perpetual "outcast" and liminal figure, the safe harbor of Union Park is hardly protected from the wind and waves of the marketplace and social disorder. For Carrie, ultimately, the neighborhood, the community within the city, is a site of festering disaffection, crossed longings, insecurity, paranoia. Instead of rooting people in settlement, the

neighborhood dynamic, the urban matrix for small-town life, ultimately has the effect on Carrie's personality of resisting settlement. Establishment, for the characters of Dreiser first novel, is, after all, the root of much stress, one problem for which Carrie is in many ways aligned with her fellow city travelers, Drouet and Hurstwood.

There are several reasons why Carrie does not establish or transplant herself into Union Park. First, like the members of Dreiser's family whom he writes about in Dawn, Carrie's guarded individuality divides her from others. Second, she harbors a fear of exclusion based upon her country-town bred sense of the ethics around which minor group arrangements cohere. Although in Union Park no indication is given that anyone is concerned about moral laxity, Carrie sees her situation with Drouet as a conspicuous moral anomaly. Carrie's "average little conscience" represents "the world, her past environment, habit, convention, in a confused, reflected way. With it, the voice of the people was truly the voice of God" (89). In Carrie's mind, the community, the voice of God she confusedly imagines around her is calling her a moral failure, shunting her, urging her to return to Columbia City.

"Fresh from the air of the village, the light of the country still in her eye," Carrie "still looked about her upon the great maze of the city without understanding"

(122). But the past, for Carrie, is always finally irretrievable (3)--it is "something that could not be again" (251). Therefore, the third reason Carrie cannot root herself in the neighborhood is this: since her arrival in Chicago, and despite her occasional glances backward, she has been retreating from the nostalgias of home and community that "semi-stabilize" urban communal arrangements. Home, as we have seen, is at once the site of warm meals and "welcome," and of harsh economic reality that isolates individuals at the same time that it forces the sacrifice of their individuality. The voice of God Carrie hears inside herself, scorning her, blurts out what was only implied by Sven Hanson's suspicious silence: that Carrie is a "dawdler" and a "lingerer." Hard work is the ethic of Columbia City's "dull little round"--"hard work and a narrow round of suffering" (99). The sustaining nostalgias for homogeneous, integrated social arrangements which impel imaginary insulation and constructs of commonality in the city, represent for Carrie, as they did for Dreiser's autobiographical narrator, the most severe condemnation and circumscription.

Finally, the past and the possibility of a sustaining nostalgia is irretrievable because it is "old-clothed and poor appearing." Carrie's first December in Columbia City may be symbolized by bare branches. December in the city, however, is well-dressed. "The unsweeping of the dust, the

low hanging of the clouds, the smoke of many industries make the late fall and early winter days dull and cheerless--

If it were not for the artificial fires of merriment, the rush of profit-seeking trade and pleasure-selling amusements; if the various merchants failed to make the customary displays within and without their establishments; if our streets were not strung with signs of gorgeous hues and thronged with hurrying purchasers, we would quickly discover how firmly the chill hand of winter lays upon us (90).

From her window, Carrie looks out across Union Park to Madison Street, "the most enlivened and prosperous store street of the West Side" (88). To complement that view, Dreiser decorates Carrie's inner world with a Victorian middle-class catalogue of the mass-produced things that artificially warm the inside of the apartment: a good Brussels carpet, a large pier-glass mirror, a large, soft, green-plush-covered lounge (descriptive language like that used for money), several rocking chairs, pictures, and rugs; also, "quite an array of clothing--more than she had ever possessed before and of very becoming designs" (88,89).

But despite being enclosed by such material comfort, the dramatic pattern of Carrie's existence in Union Park is characterized by an endlessly deflecting comparison and

contrast, making the ideas of comfort, safety, and establishment almost impossible to preserve. "Every hour the kaleidoscope of human affairs threw a new luster upon something, and therewith it became for her the desired--the all" (145). Carrie comprehends her world for its "comparative insignificance." Therefore, the fourth reason for Carrie's disconnectedness from Union Park is this: genuine intimacy in the middle-class neighborhood seems untenable against the ideal "possibilities" suggested by the artificial fires of the city, in its stores and along the North Shore where Carrie is taken out "driving," and where mansions create fantasy reminiscent of her Mikado imaginings. Gazing into these "kingly quarters," she hears "the siren voice of the unrestful.... whispering in her ear" (116).

Carrie vibrates to the particular tones of whatever she momentarily sees or hears. "Her nervous composition responded to certain strains, much as certain strings of a harp vibrate when a corresponding key of a piano is struck" (102). As she sits at her window looking out across the park, wistful and depressed, she hears the distant strains of a piano being played by the "dressy" daughter of a railroad treasurer in the downstairs parlor of her building. The music "colored and enmeshed" her thoughts, and she "reverted to the things which were best and saddest within the small limit of her experience. She became for a moment

the repentant" (103). At the same time, visions of "the young girl's material state" pull Carrie back from her repentant nostalgia and into a new and equally unsettling contrast: her present state with that of the pianist's. The melody and the reddish light of the piano lamp "created a halo about nice clothes, showy manners, sparkling rings. It lent an ineffable charm to the world of material display" (104,105). In Sister Carrie, desirable places, but only places to which Carrie feels an outsider, are often encircled by light--a bright, rather than dim, circle which suggests a world's ineffable, complete, uncontaminated--and exclusive--charm. Rocking before the window, Carrie's envy of this other girl's, a neighbor's, material halo once more propels her away from the place where her rocking chair, anticipating future movement, is nonetheless established.

Some old tunes crept to her lips and as she sang them her heart sank. She longed and longed and longed. It was now for the old cottage room in Columbia City, now for the mansion up on Shore Drive, now the fine dress of some lady, now the elegance of some scene. She was sad beyond measure and yet uncertain, wishing and fancying. She hummed and hummed, as the moments went by, sitting in the shadow by the window and was therein as happy, though she could not perceive it, as ever she would be (116).

Once she is established, Carrie habitually and characteristically rocks, attracted towards and repelled from confused referents in a swirl of nostalgia and longing for things she does not have. In her indecision she becomes increasingly ethereal in these chapters, or, as Dreiser calls her, spiritual. Spirituality in a woman was considered attractive in the late nineteenth century, particularly among communities where the image of women as physically and emotionally unfit for participation in the economic world was more possible to perpetuate than among those classes whose women worked by necessity. Thus Carrie's spirituality, while it is a character trait intended to balance her unrelenting envy and materialism, aligned with her class aspirations, can be seen as a sign of upward social movement away from connectedness in middle-class Union Park. Indeed, Carrie's spirituality, as a fiction of class membership, sets her up for appearing sensual and desirable to Hurstwood, a lesser manager of the "great American upper class" who complains that true beauty, untouched by necessity, is missing from his life.⁶

By the time the dim world of fortune surrounding Hurstwood begins to penetrate the constraining mediocrity of the Union Park matrix, "the narrow life of the country had fallen from her as a garment and the city, with all its mystery, taken its place" (128). At times, Carrie's "spiritual side" causes her to sympathize with the "white-

faced, ragged men who slopped desperately by her in a sort of wretched mental stupor" and the "poorly clad girls who went blowing by her window evenings--coming from some of the shops of the West Side." She pitied them "from the depths of her heart" (145). Carrie sees these images of workers in the city--"Irishmen with picks, coal heavers with great loads to shovel"--"through a mist of poetic feeling," penetrated here, not by the scornful voice of a country work ethic, but by a seemingly purer nostalgia.

Her old father, in his flour-dusted miller's suit, sometimes returned to her in memory--revived by a face in a window. A shoemaker pegging at his last, a blastman seen through a narrow window in some basement where iron was being melted, a bench worker seen high aloft in some window, his coat off, his sleeves rolled up--these took her back in fancy to the details of the mill. She felt, though she seldom expressed them, sad thoughts upon this score. Her sympathies were ever with that underworld of toil from which she had so recently sprung and which she best understood.

Though Hurstwood did not know it, he was dealing with one whose feelings were as tender and as delicate as this. He did not know, but it was this in her, after all, which attracted him (145,146).

Toil, Dreiser writes, "now that she was free of it, seemed even a more desolate thing than when she was of it" (145). Carrie's "spiritual side" transforms the wretched urban poor into something familiar, something which her sympathies are "with." But this is only a surface and momentary transformation, one whose connotations, ironically, bolster Hurstwood's fiction that Carrie is of the world to which he tentatively belongs. Indeed, Carrie's aesthetic spirituality further separates her from the wholly desolate world she is no longer "of," whose inhabitants, as she assures herself from her comfortable position behind the window, behind a poetic mist of fancy she can now afford, are "other" than her--indeed, as if some great tide has rolled between them. Her strong reactions to economic adversity, here as in her factory days, serve to mark her distance from genuine sympathy and to emphasize an ever-revolving, restless sense of the possibilities for better contact, which keeps this city dweller, like others, between worlds.

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Finally, then, Carrie's perpetual unsettledness suggests that she remains hopeful. Although she initially finds that the city she has entered offers situations for togetherness which are almost as thoroughly circumscribing as the "village" she has fled, Carrie is the one character

in the novel which bears her name who is ready to believe in the possibilities for better contact. That is one reason, I think, that the novel does bear her name. For through Carrie, as she tentatively immerses herself into the only livable setting left in America, the large industrial, commercial city, Dreiser may be testing out varieties of social collectivity in order to discover whether or not "something better" might indeed be possible. Of course, the novel is critical of social habits and patterns, and it leaves Carrie dissatisfied; but, importantly, it leaves her "ever hopeful" as well. Whatever Dreiser may have been seeking through his character he hadn't found yet. But he does know already that the worlds which surround the characters of Drouet and Hurstwood offer nothing new in the way of community; in fact, as seen against Carrie, these men's worlds, though they are centers of power and display, are unhealthy and in decline. Carrie is, therefore, an oppositional element in the novel's presentation of social hegemony, though her opposition emerges out of her strong desires to become absorbed into centers of power and display. Carrie is thus a thoroughly paradoxical characterization.

It is necessary to make this clear distinction between Carrie and the first two men in her life in order to see that in spite of the futility which marks Carrie's experience, she does repeatedly evoke hopefulness. The

major observation I wish to make here is that within the narrative, a way of being which I will call male liminality, is different from the liminal way of being which characterizes Carrie. Carrie's paradoxical liminality bears traces of desire for and faith in the unlived future of a better experience of togetherness; finally, what Carrie represents for Dreiser and the reader intersects with Frederick Jackson Turner's romantic sense of the frontier's offering of liberation from "older society" and new fields of opportunity. Indeed, just as the dreams are parallel, the problems Carrie encounters are analogous to the problems concerning environment and cultural difference which characterized the frontier experience.

Male liminality, as I will show in depth in the next three chapters, finally bears traces only of reified, unmovable conventions of the present; male fantasy never intends to create anything new, but only to protect and preserve ways of being and forms of power. Dreiser refers to the characters of Drouet and Hurstwood, like Carrie, as "types" or as "pictures" of world's they represent. But, unlike Carrie, the men are never passed beyond their type, even though their social situations are changed. Significantly, Hurstwood is always called "the manager." And as I will show in the following chapters, significant as well is the fact that Hurstwood is middle-aged and Carrie young; that Hurstwood can always be found performing the old

male banter, while Carrie is trying out new kinds of discourse; that Hurstwood becomes sick and hungry, while Carrie's health improves as she becomes increasingly better fed; that Hurstwood becomes homeless, while Carrie is always moving into better and better accommodations; that Hurstwood is observed falling away from public acknowledgement, while Carrie is rising toward it; and that Hurstwood is forgotten by the world he once represented, while Carrie is making new history.

CHAPTER THREE

The Jolly Corks and the Secrets
of a National Community

Liminality is the domain of the "interesting."¹

I.

In Sister Carrie, as I have said, the relational and referential possibilities created by worlds outside the neighborhood exist in tension with the neighborhood in a kind of unresolvable cycle of deferral, as characters struggle to accommodate and subsequently to resist one or another fiction of togetherness. Two important social constructs in Dreiser's city, a city dominated culturally and economically by men, are the "resort" and the Elks Club. These males-only milieux create their own communal points of reference, thus further deferring--or, perhaps more accurately, competing with--the social centrality and stability of the neighborhood and family, reference points for nostalgic community. In chapters three and four, I will explore male togetherness as a kind of community generated by tensions of accommodation and resistance and further constituted as a balance or imbalance of "secret" and public performances.

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Just after the Civil War, a group of men, all of whom worked as minstrel show performers, met privately as an informal club in one or another "free and easy" gathering

place in lower Manhattan. They drank beer together, smoked cigars, and, most important, entertained each other with songs and comic routines or dramatic readings. These men took to referring to themselves as the "Jolly Corks"; white minstrel performers used burnt cork to blacken their faces. This informal fraternity, the nature of whose work kept them outside the ethical boundaries of middle-class society, would eventually begin to formalize their gatherings through electing leaders, developing elaborate ceremonies, and choosing symbols and creeds for their "secret" order. After much discussion, combined with research in the Cooper Union library concerning the habits of various wild beasts, the animal they chose to serve as their primary symbol was the elk. Male elks, they had learned, respected each other's territory and never fought unless it was over a female. They were brave, noble, independent, animals with sleek, strong physiques.²

In the early spring of 1867, the renamed Brotherhood and Protective Order of Elks drew up its first charter and elected the society's first officers, with, like other nineteenth-century fraternal organizations ranging from the Knights of Columbus to the Ku Klux Klan, quasi-royal titles such as Grand Exalted Ruler, Esteemed Leading Knight, Esteemed Loyal Knight, Grand Lecturer, and Inner Guard. Soon they were no longer meeting in the corners of drinking houses but in a downtown building known as Military Hall. On their new banner an elk's

head in profile was circumscribed by the four key values of their creed: charity, justice, fidelity, brotherly love. The meetings evolved as toned down, Masonic-style ceremonies, the parts of which were known only to members. But much of the time they were putting on entertainments, at first for the members themselves, later, as the society became less secretive, charity benefits open to the public, including women. Until the 1870s, the membership consisted solely of men associated with the performing trade; as the fraternity grew and spread out across the country, members began admitting men with other occupations who were attracted perhaps to the secret rituals or the kinds of men who belonged. During the 1870s, the Grand Lodge in New York granted a charter to the fourth Elks group to establish; at first the Chicago group would call itself Lodge D, later number four. Providing a certain continuity, besides the businessmen who were founding members, a portion of the original membership worked as minstrel show performers.

Like lodges in other cities, Chicago #4 annually elected new officers and organized a benefit performance. Thirteen years after its establishment, the twelfth annual benefit was held on Thursday, November 21, 1889. The bill that night was long and varied, including as its premier offering the last act of "Time Will Tell," performed by six men, all Elks members, and three women. The site of the performance was McVicker's Theater. Horace McVicker was an "enthusiastic"

brother, who in 1890 would be elected Grand Exalted Ruler of the Chicago lodge. In his time, McVicker was an important figure in the national theater industry. Apart from owning the Chicago theater, for a while he had managed the career of Edwin Booth; he would end his career in New York, an associate of the most successful theatrical producer of the era, Charles Frohman. McVicker's reign as Grand Exalted Ruler would be interrupted, in fact, by the demands of his business; before his term was out, he would have to step down. Perhaps because of this brief period of instability in the lodge, the Elks benefit of 1890 was never held. The thirteenth annual benefit, however, came off splendidly on the ninth of April, 1891. A troupe calling themselves the Lilliputians acted out "The Pupil in Magic." Indicative of how public the once secret society had become, the next day, one of the Chicago newspapers wrote about the event, calling it a "bouquet affair." It seems that every woman who attended the performance had received a boutonniere donated by the Kennicott Company. Such publicity was precious to the members, their wives, and to the corporation donating the flowers.

In a wide-ranging study The Idea of Fraternity in America, Carey McWilliams grandly calls the Gilded Age "the great age of fraternal orders." "In the townsman's search for some safe retreat from his daily life of competition, insecurity, and hostility," from the end of the Civil War

until the turn of the century, middle-class male organizations "sprang up across America." These groups of hard-working men did not altogether "try to conquer" the environment of urban struggle. Instead, together they would "escape from it into a world of pure affection, a momentary place of romance." Moreover, by "allowing the individual a faint, romantic echo of fraternity," association with a fraternal order also suggested "that in the gigantic and expanding nation he was not alone and insignificant, but one of a band of brothers with lodges about the land" (379,80).

Like Richard Sennett, McWilliams has concluded from his reading of the period's discourse that city dwellers frequently sought to create protected hideaways within the disordered, antagonistic city--refuges, escapes, momentary places of romance, nostalgic togetherness faintly echoing something which could once have been called "fraternity." In the case of fraternal societies, they organized their refuges across many cities, forming a mobile, national community of brothers. McWilliams's perspective on fraternities is generally affectionate. Indeed, his big, unwieldy book, a kind of romance in itself, seems to have caught the contagious affection of the fraternity's dream of creating a separate and exclusive space within society for acting out a romance or nostalgic fantasy of ideal relations. In fact, McWilliams shows little interest in the tensions which produced such dreams or in the insidiousness of these tensions for

individuals or for the band of brothers, except in recognizing that there was at one time something "other" within the environment of urban struggle which needed to be excluded, though not conquered, and against which an echo of fraternal romance offered at least momentary escape.

A far more probing exploration of the psychology of reactions to social conditions which generated and sustained societies such as the Elks and Masons was written around the same time that Dreiser published Sister Carrie. Writing in German at the turn of the century, Georg Simmel noted that the essential purpose of certain secret orders among men in Africa and among the Indians was "to emphasize the differentiation of men and women." The same purpose may have motivated male stage performers forming a secret organization in New York free-and-easies after the Civil War. Indeed, possibly in response to the increased presence of women, outside the home and in the workplace, as well as their growing economic power, the majority of commercial leisure-time settings, eating and drinking places--which, like fraternities, proliferated after the war along with the numbers of an urban middle-class of businessmen, professionals, and bureaucrats--catered exclusively to men.³

But reaction to the changing status of women must be understood as having formed only part of the context for the proliferation of fraternities. Simmel's study, "The Secret Society," was translated into English in 1906.⁴ Explaining

the secret society in Europe, the United States, Asia and Africa, in his own era, and making reference to the European Eighteenth Century, the Middle Ages, even to the classical world, Simmel opens a direction for understanding the basis for Elks, Masons, and other male fraternities proliferating in the United States during and after the Gilded Age. Indeed, like McWilliams and many other social historians of his own period, Simmel justifies his own understanding of the contemporary "society," and in particular the contemporary "interest group"--within which paradigm he places the secret society--through a reading of the social consequences of western industrialism. "The increasing objectification of our culture," he wrote, "whose phenomena consist more and more of impersonal elements and less and less absorb the subjective totality of the individual (most simply shown by the contrast between handicraft and factory work), also involves sociological structures" (318). But Simmel went on to emphasize that just as it is not merely to resist the feminine, it is not merely to compensate for a subjective emptiness that this unique structure, the secret society, continually comes into being. Rather, it emerges as a consequence of desires to accommodate and to resist a range of cultural conditions in fluctuation.

Charles Edward Ellis's self-published 1910 "Authentic History," is explicit about the reasons behind the Elks's formation. The Jolly Corks, Ellis writes,

were made up of the stratum of humanity--the theatrical profession--which for proceeding generations had been stigmatized as "vagabonds"--those children of genius who have done so much to beautify and enrich the world....[I]t has only been in later years that the general public has come to understand the great fraternity which sprang from the loins of this once despised theatrical profession (7).

Simmel frequently reinforces his thesis that secret societies always emerge as a reaction to the field of current social norms. They develop either "against the resistance of existing powers" or to protect "social endeavors and forces that are about to be replaced by new ones." In the case of the latter motivation, Simmel writes, "secrecy constitutes a sort of transitional stage between being and non-being" (347). In either case, however, the secrecy which infuses and builds relations between initiates is transitional; that is to say, because social norms themselves tend to change, so does the nature of the secret preserved against those norms. The relationship, then, between the secret society and the greater society which encloses it, is itself transitional. The hierarchy and ritual created by the secret society, the degree of freedom from normal social structure and the autonomy which initiation provides, the overall degree of "intensification of sociological exclusiveness and separation," all exist in

transitional states of passage across social norms which are themselves in transition. I am making a direct connection here between Simmel's ideas and Arnold van Gennep's book, The Rites of Passage, published during the same decade as Simmel's essay. Van Gennep classified stages of transition which underlie important moments in a lifetime from the ceremonies surrounding birth and attaining adulthood to the practices and beliefs surrounding puberty, marriage, or death. His categories for describing the "structure" of social change form around a notion of liminality; he uses this term to articulate the general nature of all important life passages. I have already discussed Carrie as a liminal figure who by choice or otherwise, at the same time that she imagines connectedness within an idealized community, remains outside of the communal conventions and structures she perceives as being stable or permanent. Later, I will discuss in more detail how a crisis of liminality structures Hurstwood's narrative of separation from community. My point there, as it extends from this chapter and the one which follows, is that in consequence of his passionate desire for Carrie, Hurstwood attempts to extend freedoms from moral and ethical constraint found within what is already understood as a liminal space, that is a space between being and non-being--the transitional space constituting male-dominated community and the males-only secret society. I hope that by imposing the concept of liminality I may restore historical complexity, primarily

through interpreting Dreiser's own readings of social conflict, to what McWilliams oversimplifies as "a momentary place of romance."

Although there is no evidence that he was directly aware of the thinking and writing of either Simmel or Van Gennep, Theodore Dreiser was, in 1900, apparently thinking about life transitions and their crises: for example, the passage into the city, the passage out of young girlhood, the transgression of moral constraints. Thus, without awareness of the abstract notion of liminality, Dreiser was nevertheless working in response to some of the same kinds of questions these other men were asking in his efforts to dramatize male togetherness in the industrial city. Indeed, Victor Turner, who in the late twentieth century became intrigued with Van Gennep's work (and whose work subsequently became intriguing to literary critics seeking to explain the nature of narrative), explains liminality in terms of a drama, or "social drama." It will be necessary to consider Turner's concept of social drama later where I analyze the way Hurstwood's "breach" and "crisis" leaves in its traces a picture of the dynamic of certain communal points of reference. In Sister Carrie, as I have said, there is more than one kind of existence between being and non-being, more than one, ultimately competing, instance of, in Turner's language, "standing aside not only from one's own social position but from all social positions and of formulating a potentially unlimited series of alternative

social arrangements" (1974, 13). My sense of liminality takes into account both the outsidersness of characters and their dreams of re-imagining society to suit their desires, important themes in much turn-of-the-century literature.

In the 1860s, itinerant actors such as black-faced minstrel performers were conventionally thought to be in some way moral outlaws in a community. Their lives were too unsettled, too spontaneous; like performers in a traveling carnival, they were just passing through, creating a momentary carnival on the occasion of their performance, and then disappearing. We know from Dreiser's own autobiographical writing that traveling performers were sometimes associated with another sort of "vagabond" or outlaw whose existence also connoted unsettledness and outsidersness, namely the prostitute. This association of minstrelsy and prostitution was made uncomfortably clear for the young Dreiser when his older brother, Paul Dresser, returned home after four years of absence under "burnt cork make-up" as a star of the minstrel circuit, and introduced into the fragile social life of the family his devoted lover, Sallie Walker. The "owner of a very successful, even imposing 'house of ill repute,' in Evansville, Indiana," Walker brought both groceries and social embarrassment into a household which was barely succeeding at insinuating itself into any sort of stable community relationship (Dawn 118-121).

Here are my own speculations about why and how the Elks

came together and developed as a group. As itinerant performers, the men who formed the Jolly Corks were socially conspicuous, but that visibility placed them outside the protection of normal community life. "The first internal relations typical of the secret society," Simmel wrote, "is the reciprocal confidence among its members. It is required to a particularly great extent, because the purpose of secrecy is, above all, protection. Of all protective measures, the most radical is to make oneself invisible" (345). Before the audience who paid to see them would come to accept them as having something in common with the "public", the Jolly Corks, who concealed their real identities behind blackface make-up, concealed themselves in downtown bars and concealed the secret of their internal cohesiveness outside of a society which excluded their ordinary participation. Of course, that cohesiveness developed at first in New York City, a place which by 1866 could in no way define itself as a homogeneous or a harmonized "society." Thus, it was both against the existing powers which condemned them and the fractures of social togetherness that the Jolly Corks protected themselves. Based upon the premises of "fidelity" and "brotherly love," a fraternity of vagabonds could also serve as an abstract substitution for both family and community. Possibly, as well, it was even more interesting than what it replaced, in keeping with the interesting qualities of the members' professional lives as performers and vagabonds. "The essence

of liminality," Victor Turner writes, "is to be found in its release from normal constraints making possible the deconstruction of the 'uninteresting' constructions of common sense, the 'meaningfulness' of ordinary life....Liminality is the domain of the 'interesting'" (1985, 160, my emphasis). Moreover, by offering psychological support to each other as black-faced singers and comedians, the Jolly Corks/Elks were protecting a way of life and livelihood which was itself in transition as the general society's tastes in entertainment underwent change.

By the early 1870s, however, the Jolly Corks had already altered the status of their liminality, moving closer toward being from non-being, through charters, symbols, meeting halls, and secret rituals as the B.P.O.E. As such, their existence was less secretive; their establishment as a club, eventually with branches in other cities, rendered them less itinerant and more settled and acceptable like other community organizations such as the Freemasons, whose established circumstances they had attempted to imitate. By the time Simmel was writing, because the Freemasons no longer desired to make themselves invisible, the secrecy of the order had long been "limited to mere external formalities"--to the rituals and ceremonies rather than to the "being" of the order (356). Similarly, after the Elks' existence had become public, secret knowledge of formal ritualistic activities continued to serve externally to bond members now chosen more

generally from a wider spectrum of social types. However, it is important to note that even as some secrets are spread out and disappear, and others are externalized as ritual, secrecy in other forms may become internalized by a group's continuing anti-social desire for a degree of exclusivity and what Turner calls "release from normal constraints." Indeed, secrecy assures that as the society becomes more public it will continue to be seen as an "interesting" alternative to normal constraints.

The secrecy surrounding their theatrical rituals continued to emphasize both the publicly visible structural being and the invisible, anti-social non-being and separation of the less-secret order. Indeed, on the one hand, through rituals, hierarchies, and an aura of secrecy, the visible secret society, Simmel writes, may continue to "seek to create a sort of life totality" to compensate for some kind of revised opposition to the totality of structures in the normal society. On the other hand, although the society may to some extent live "in an area to which the norms of the environment do not extend," formalism itself seems to make the secret society acceptable as "a sort of counter-image of the official world, to which it places itself in contrast." Here, in a dichotomy of resistance and accommodation, "we find," Simmel noted, "the ubiquitous sociological norm": "that structures which resist larger, encompassing structures through opposition and separation, nevertheless themselves repeat the

forms of these structures" (360).

In their own transition toward "being," from reactionary invisibility to internalized secrecy, the Elks tended to become increasingly community-spirited. Originally to protect their reputations from the label of vagabond and perhaps to sever themselves from an association with "vice," the Elks attempted to become more conspicuous as contributors to communities, often by staging charity benefits which wives and children could attend. They avowedly sought, as their historian asserts, to demonstrate that they could enrich the world. By publicizing its values of charity, fidelity, justice, and brotherly love on advertisements for those benefits, the changing fraternity was attempting to demonstrate to the community at large that it shared its highest values. Nevertheless, by internalizing secrecy and maintaining anti-social practices, the Elks, like analogous organizations, also attempted to construct an autonomy and a space of freedom from communal values.

By the time about which Dreiser writes in his first novel, the early 1890s, the "despised" theater "profession" had indeed become more professionalized⁵; at the same time this was happening, businessmen and professionals from around the country were becoming members of the B.P.O.E., a former theater organization whose improved social standing contributed to the improved standing of the theater professions. The Elks and official society had been moving

toward each other for more than twenty years. The social conspicuity of Elk members was no longer a subject of stigmatization. Nor, interestingly, was itinerancy any longer a clearly defined value. The nation in general had become more ambiguous in its feelings about unsettledness as it became more mobile with the railroad and with major changes in its economic geography. Indeed, it was not uncommon for a businessman or salesman (such as Charles Drouet) to travel routinely across a state or across many states, or for individuals and families to migrate for their means to a living. To be "between," to be crossing frontiers, was more than ever a common social status in the United States at the end of the nineteenth century. Migrants and immigrants alike accounted for a large proportion of the increasingly urban-centered population. Again, Dreiser's family offers an appropriate illustration. While Paul Dresser had been traveling the middle west with a minstrel troupe in the 1880s, his family, divided into two households, had been moving like outlaws from city to city in search of their sustenance. For Dreiser, being between places, between being and non-being in terms of community life, was the only "stable" experience of place.

Given the kinds of social transformation generally identified with the late nineteenth-century surge of American industrial and corporate power, the liminal space imagined by white male, middle-class Elks of the 1890s may be seen as

intended to protect against a variety of social problems, including the pressures of urban family life, the increase of women's economic power, the social strains brought on by competition in the marketplace, and the massive social "disruption" of dubiously "American" "blackface"--types. "The separateness of the secret society," wrote Simmel, "expresses a value: people separate from others because they do not want to make common cause with them, because they wish to let them feel their superiority" (364). Simmel calls this an "aristocratizing motive." From the membership records included in Ellis's history, it appears that during the last decade of the nineteenth century, the Elks aristocracy of white middle-class men perceived little common cause with the southern and eastern European-born laboring man, with the Catholic or the Jew, with the black or the armies of homeless and unemployed leading itinerant existences across American society. The Jolly Corks wearing blackface make-up had ironically signified their status as social outlaws, as the community's unwanted, as "blacks." But the Elks had grown into a national community organization with official and unofficial criteria for membership, some of them economical, some racial and ethnic, all strongly nationalistic. Thus, if Ellis's history is indeed authentic, its record indicates that by 1890, the national community of Elks was excluding the "blacks" of an increasingly pluralistic society. This exclusivity might be viewed as an effort to shape not only a

preferred social group but, in the case of a widely disseminated organization, to shape a nation as well. And in the aftermath of the Civil War, who besides a nationally distributed order of businessmen was in a better position to reimagine the "reunified" nation as indeed unified, as homogeneous, as ordered? Records of Elks benefits through the end of the century show that blackface performance continued to give pleasure to Elks audiences. But those later comic representations of a social outcast no longer expressed the genuine social status of the performer behind the mask. The burnt cork mask had become wholly externalized, separated from its wearer. Emptied of its ability to define the wearer, the detached image of the black face now made comic reference solely to the outer borders of a reimagined nation.⁶

Finally, to return to Simmel's ubiquitous sociological norm: the Elks not only resisted competition, difference, and isolation, they also repeated and came to terms with the encompassing structures of the official world. Thus, for example, their hierarchical structures and titles seemed in time to be mimicking not so much those of a remote medieval world but those of the allegedly antithetical corporate world. Indeed, because business and the fraternity became so mutually dependent, male fraternities changed the way business was conducted in America. To succeed in a certain business environment, it helped to be privy to the secrets of an order of businessmen. One might say that the main secret protected

by these orders was that there were insiders and outsiders in commercial society, those whose status was interrelated with the group's, and those who had no such status because they were either inferior or superior to the group. Founded as a refuge from certain dominant social values that determined "inclusion," as it evolved and went public, the Brotherhood and Protective Order of Elks maintained with their rituals and separateness some performance of liminality, now, ironically, with the purpose of reinforcing the legitimacy of dominant values and powers. The once secret society by the 1890s was therefore protecting its social centrality and its power to determine which points of reference would define the character of a national community.

We might also speculate upon the nature of an internalized secrecy, of what men did together and said to each other beyond the secret rituals when there were only men present. As I suggested earlier, the Jolly Corks may have sought to protect their moral reputations from an association with prostitution among other vices which were popularly perceived to threaten the sanctity of the community. But their performances of morality may, in fact, have served only to better conceal an association with the transient boundaries of society without making that association disappear altogether. As the Elks organization became more established and as it integrated itself with the general male population, the black-faced minstrel show performer, as long as his craft

could survive, continued to lead a vagabond existence and a life on or outside of the ethical borders of communities. The question we must ask here, then, is whether any association with life near or beyond those borders was somehow reified in the aura of male secrecy perpetuated by the Elks, once they were so socially conspicuous and focused upon their situation among internal points of reference to conventional community. In other words, to what extent was relief from normal constraints part of the secret which became "interesting" to non-minstrels wishing to defer one community and take up another by concealing themselves within the liminal space of the secret order?

In the following chapters, I will show that Theodore Dreiser's perspective upon Elks society, admittedly a fairly satirical one, imagines the contours of a performed liminality and deferral of the community's normal constraints complementing the Elks central function of protecting and preserving their hegemonic coerciveness for defining communal points of reference. In Sister Carrie, a discourse of business, politics, and sexuality are implicated in Elks-style conviviality. By way of their seemingly phatic conversations, "Gentlemen Elks" like Drouet and Hurstwood protect male pleasure and power against an imposition of desexualized marriage and against the social disruption of women and non-Elk types in general. Altogether, it is curious that Dreiser made the Elks such an important factor for fleshing out the

circulation of power in his fictional city. He was saying that power circulates in this strange way in Chicago, as a function of leisure and pleasure, male intimacy and secrecy. It was either a naive worldview or an acute perspective on processes of cultural hegemony. One thing is clear. Contrasting the novel's sense of New York, Chicago is a construct of naivete, of childlike wonder which, for Carrie and the reader, inhibits penetration beyond awe-inspiring, unfamiliar surfaces. In the act of writing (or re-writing) Chicago, Dreiser seems fixed by the memory of what Chicago looks and seems like to a young person learning it as an outsider. But the separation from the subject which is evident in the storyteller's satirical voice indicates, nevertheless, that this naivete fixed by nostalgia is in turn being realigned by a sharper-edged realistic understanding of what is, indeed, strange about the interior spaces of power.

CHAPTER FOUR

A Carnival of Exclusion

Our vision is continually active, continually moving, continually holding things in a circle around itself, constituting what is present to us as we are.¹

I.

A fixture, hierarchically centralized within a "circle" of men, an objective and subjective circumference upon which his "resort's" discreet "atmosphere" is an important boundary marker, manager George Hurstwood's talent is to nurture the pleasure and self-satisfaction of men such as Drouet by making them feel genuinely welcomed into the circle. While Hurstwood who was once a bartender is skilled at modifying his manner according to the social level of his immediate audience, his most sincere fellowship is reserved for ordinary men like Drouet, men in whom he sees himself reflected, who loved "entertainments," particularly "that most fascinating of all the pleasures--for the type of man there represented at least--the ladies" (48). Hurstwood and Drouet could "talk races" or Drouet could tell Hurstwood "interesting incidents concerning himself and his experiences with women, and report the state of trade in the cities which he visited" (44). Hurstwood's essential bond with the "interests" of the successful male community is emphasized during his early courting of Carrie when, to

absorb her fancy, he confines himself "almost exclusively to his observation of men and pleasures" (117). Such is the scope of Hurstwood's as well as Drouet's cultural knowledge.

One event, briefly alluded to, suggests how pleasure operates both as a cultural bond between men and to bond "conspiring" male "friends" against social forces that would disrupt their conspiracy. In the context of an argument between Hurstwood and his wife concerning money, Dreiser has Hurstwood go off to Philadelphia for ten days on a "junket," arranged by a local politician, with "several who were his friends." "'Nobody knows us down there'" one of these friends tells him, suggesting that initially Hurstwood needs convincing. "'We can have a good time'" (86). After telling his wife that he is going away on business--pleasure is, after all, Hurstwood's business--he "enjoyed himself thoroughly, and when it was over he was sorry to get back. He was not willingly a prevaricator and hated thoroughly to make explanations concerning it" (87). Thus, Hurstwood's pleasure in a place where he is not known is as thorough as his feeling that his wife is becoming a "disagreeable attachment."

Life inside the Hurstwood home is actually given little attention in the novel, and the attention it does get is critical. The Victorian morality which governs family and community life is revealed to be empty, soulless. While occasionally a man might be attracted to "a woman whose

youth, sprightliness and humor would make his wife seem rather deficient by contrast," he knows better than to complicate his home life and, by extension, his position by failing to be appropriately "circumspect," a kind of synonym for the secretiveness of successful men in this novel. "A man, to hold his position, must have a dignified manner, a clean record, a respectable home anchorage." "When some one of the many middle-class individuals whom [Hurstwood] knew, who had money, would get into trouble, he would shake his head....A man can't be too careful" (85). Thus, when Hurstwood joins the "local alderman's junket," his ten days of male pleasure require that he make disagreeable "explanations." In Chicago, a man who ventures into public on a Sunday, goes with his wife and children. When in the company of his family he visits a Wisconsin resort, he spends these "stiff, polished days, strolling about conventional places doing conventional things." The word "junket" is therefore intended to be synonymous with escape. The pleasure of the escape, financed no doubt by the corrupt alderman's campaign chest, is thorough when it removes itself from the awareness of the knowing world. But when junket-like pleasure is being taken within Chicago, that is within the protection of the resort or the men's social club, the knowing world's opposition more directly impinges not only upon the nature of male pleasure, but upon the nature of male friendship, resulting in conflicts over

maintaining an adequate balance of visibility or conspicuity and invisibility in its various forms.

Georg Simmel has suggested a kind of ratio for understanding both the internal and external tensions that constitute group relations. In the secret society, he remarked, "as everywhere else, the intensified seclusion against the outside is associated with the intensification of the cohesion internally" (369). I want to explore Simmel's theory by looking closely at Sister Carrie, a narrative in which male relationships figure prominently. For this and the following chapter, my general thesis is that Dreiser uses the males-only saloon or "resort," the male fraternal order, and male relations in general to illustrate the nature of human society at the moment of the novel's composition. Specifically, my point is that Dreiser was working through problems of what Simmel calls seclusion and internal cohesion with his representations in the novel of "fellowship" between all men, and in particular Drouet and Hurstwood. I argue that the "gentlemen Elks" who lounge about chattering in Hurstwood's resort are held together as a group by tensions of eroticized self-love as well as aggressiveness toward women, toward others perceived as outsiders, and towards each other. Through this tense, often contradictory, and unsentimental picture of social relations, Dreiser reproduces and comments upon a common social maneuver of his day: in an increasingly plural and

stratified urban society, an imagined community competes to present itself as the dominant paradigm of inclusion--in this case, ironically, by conspicuous performances of fellowship.

Philip Fisher's remarks about how windows in Sister Carrie serve to theatricalize experience, provide some terms for describing how what Dreiser calls a circle of men forms itself upon perspectives from inside and outside the circle's permeable rim. Fisher writes in Hard Facts that the "huge plates of window glass" which "gave an imposing appearance to most of the wholesale houses" (SC 16) in late nineteenth-century Chicago, "turned the work inside into a show designed to play out the operation of the business for the chance spectators who were passing" (Hard Facts 156). As Fisher notes, Dreiser ends his description of these structures by saying that their effects were "calculated to overawe and abash the common applicant, and to make the gulf between poverty and success seem both wide and deep" (SC 17). Fisher concludes, then, by saying that windows create "a polarized world of inside and outside, actor and spectator, rich and poor that would not occur if what were going on inside were simply unknown" (156).

But this argument takes a view of those polarities which misses much of what is happening in the places where men perform, whether it be on the ground floors of wholesale houses or in brightly lit restaurants or on city squares

outside theaters; in Sister Carrie pleasure and performance are integral, constituting elements of male work and play. The point I wish to clarify here is that what goes on "inside" the world characterized by rich, successful "actors"--men at work or men extending work into the leisure settings of the resort and Elks Club--remains, in spite of windows and other openings through which outsiders peer at insiders, partially unknown. For example, after getting over the awe which prevents her from entering the wholesale and manufacturing houses, Carrie is hired for her shoe assembling job in "a portion of a stock room which gave no idea of the general character of the floor" (SC 28). The secrets of the floor and the "nature of the work" are only revealed to her on her first day when she is led through a labyrinth of aisles, rooms, and doors to the center of the building where young women toil all day long, six days a week, for less than five dollars (36). The plate windows play out one facet of business: a male social "scene" not unlike the scene over which Hurstwood presides in his resort. Windows transform businessmen into performers, but to the naive spectator they preserve the secret that there exists an adverse backstage machinery which literally supports the performance.

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Dreiser may have preferred to keep secret his source

for the earliest performer of Carrie's experience in the city, Charles Drouet, in whose display Carrie sees a "world." But in places the resemblance between Drouet and George Ade's Cousin Gus in the 1899 "Fable of the Two Mandolin Players and the Willing Performer" is word for word.² In both Gus and Charlie Drouet we meet vain men with strong physical natures, a lust for pleasure and ease at finding it, self-admiring figures in business suits, fedoras and highly polished shoes--men who have an appealing way with the current slang. Drouet, a "drummer" and, like Cousin Gus, a "masher," wears rings upon several fingers; a neat gold chain dangles from his vest suspending "the secret insignia of the Order of Elks" (5).

Drouet enters Sister Carrie from another text; he is a stolen character but not a newly invented one because "this order of individual" was already ubiquitous; the term drummer, Dreiser notes, "had sprung into general use among Americans in 1880" (5). Though Drouet's textual milieu is a skyscraper compared to Gus's bungalow, the novel hardly attempts to push Drouet beyond the fixed image of the typical "traveling canvasser for a manufacturing house." In fact, because it is an important aspect of Dreiser's thinking about how individuals interacted together and had knowledge of one another in the city, each of Dreiser's characters are described as representative types with physical, behavioral and social characteristics in common.

Thus, Carrie is the country girl leaving home, Hurstwood an interesting character "after his kind." Character invokes the mass or masses, interrelated and interdependent in a city populated by a number of discreet mass groups.

Dreiser moves easily from describing Drouet and Carrie as individuals to speaking impersonally of their "kind." The "she" of the second paragraph of the novel is Carrie; the "she" of the third paragraph is any girl who leaves home at eighteen to enter the cunning wiles of the city. The "she" of the fourth paragraph has multiple meaning as both Carrie herself and Carrie as "a fair example of the American middle class." The same flexible significance must be attributed to pronouns surrounding Drouet. Under Carrie's initial observation, Drouet is not himself so much as the things by which he surrounds and composes himself; for Carrie, Drouet is merely a circle of metonyms: "The purse, the shiny tan shoes, the smart new suit....built up for her a dim world of fortune around him of which he was the center" (8,9). Dreiser's impersonal pronoun implies recognition experienced by the readers he hoped to attract by his representations of the city's colorful and ordinary. These types are members of the reader's circle, or else they are members of a circle from which the reader is, intentionally or unintentionally, segregated. This is one reason why the clothing and slang of a character like Drouet is given so much emphasis in the characterization. These

particular conventions of representation were important for implying the commonality of the novel's world and its audience's. The further implication of Dreiser's typification is therefore a diminishment of the idea of individuality within the paradigm of characters, and, by implication, readers. Both Drouet and Gus stand for the fact that there are only paradigmatic characteristics, that a character's actions, thoughts, appearance are all determined by the influence-in-mass of the paradigm he represents. These characters are less selves composing a circle than self-reflexive metonyms. Dreiser exposes social paradigms to demonstrate their tyrannical inclusiveness, their total power to define and determine the nature of character. His urban characters, as such, can only be "pictures," to use his word, of what they represent. It is this aspect of characterization, the determinism of the paradigm or circle, which will be the context for Hurstwood's dramatic, unsuccessful maneuvers against conventions of representation.

Therefore, Drouet's characteristic egocentrism might be understood to be undermined by his typicality and by his strong, almost effacing, identification with his objective surroundings. Dreiser gives us the type of Drouet in terms of its limitations. "In his good clothes and fine health he was a merry, unthinking moth of the lamp....He bobbed about among men, a veritable bundle of enthusiasm--no power worthy

the name of 'intellect,' no thoughts worthy the adjective 'noble,' no feelings long continued in one strain" (63). At Rector's, a restaurant of "some local fame," Drouet, the "merry child," "clever, successful businessman," finds more "satisfaction" in "the company and acquaintanceship" of other successful men, than in the dinner fare--though a large, expensive dinner also satisfies his sense of self worth. Here, one can encounter "politicians, brokers, actors, some rich young 'rounders' of the town, all eating and drinking amid the buzz of popular, commonplace conversation" (42)--all, in a sense, "actors." At Rector's, Drouet also spies Mr. G.W. Hurstwood, "someone worth knowing," who knows Drouet's employer Caryoe, "quite well, having drunk a glass now and then with him, in company with several others, when the conversation was general" (44). "Quite well," the narrator tells us without the punctuation of irony, means no more than generally. No paradigmatic man in Sister Carrie knows any other man except by the general characteristics of the paradigm, and that is all the knowledge one needs to make "friends."

Having moved onto Hannah and Hogg's resort, Drouet encounters its elegant manager, and the reader is given his first close-up listen to what for those staring in through windows is a kind of silent theater.

"Why hello, Charlie old man," said Hurstwood as

Drouet came in that evening about eight o'clock. "How goes it?" The room was crowded....

"What are you going to take?"

"Old Hennessy," said Drouet.

"How long are you in town this time?" inquired Hurstwood.

"Only until Wednesday..."

"George Evans was in here Saturday and said he saw you in Milwaukee last week."

"Yes, I saw George...Great old boy, isn't he? We had quite a time there together."

".....What's become of Caryoe?.....I haven't seen him around here in two weeks."

"Laid up, they say....Say, he's a gouty old boy!?"

"Made a lot of money in his time though, hasn't he?"

.....Hello, George," said a voice, and Hurstwood turned around to put his hand in that of another worthy, resplendent in dress and figure, who had arrived from some other part of the country. They now conversed in pointless phraseology, while Drouet drew out his purse to get a bill. The bartender saw his action however and signaled with his hand.

"It's on the manager," he said, smiling merrily. Hurstwood had them so trained that they knew.

"Let me introduce you to my friend here..."

"What are you doing tonight?" said the newcomer after a time.

"Oh, I think I'll go over to the Grand in a little while," returned Drouet.

"What's there?"

"Hoyt's 'A Hole in the Ground.'"

"Well, if I hadn't see that several times, I'd join you," he remarked with the spirit of ready companionship which seems to be characteristic of the thoughtless (45,46).

Like the bartender, all of these men have been trained to respond to what is commonplace in a thoughtless spirit of ready companionship. And yet the narrator's term for their dialogue, "pointless," seems somewhat inaccurate. This dialogue, which "would not warrant a commendation of the scene upon intellectual grounds" has an agreed upon purpose in the dynamic of their relations. The men in this scene know the same men, engage in the same activities, and, importantly, speak in the same phrases. As far as the reader is shown this pointless phrasing composes their only medium of exchange. Indeed, pointless phraseology, like much else concerning appearance, is another sign composing typicality.

In a much later scene, on the night leading up to Hurstwood's theft and flight, a group of Cook County

politicians, businessmen, actors, and other merry-makers-- well-known men who knew Hurstwood--are gathered closely around the bar in the late hours. No one knows that Hurstwood's wife has already initiated divorce proceedings. The men at the bar begin a "pointless" social discourse, "so common in American resorts where the would-be gilded attempt to rub off gilt from those who have it in abundance." Hurstwood inclines toward the "notabilities," warmed by the reflecting gilt of their company. "He considered that, if anywhere, he belonged among them," shining as a gentleman, received "without equivocation as a friend and equal" in the gathered "circle of chatting celebrities."

Tonight, disturbed as was his state, he was rather relieved to find company....It was not long before the imbibing began to tell. Stories began to crop up-- those every-enduring droll stories which form the major portion of the conversation among American men under such circumstances.

"Did you ever hear the story of," and "that reminds me," were the most repeated phrases. Scanlan led all with his humor. Hurstwood was not to be outdone....He told story for story as the turn came.....He felt as if his troubles were not very serious. (266)

Hours after this, he will be running with stolen money and Carrie to catch a train out of Chicago forever. For now, he engages in a ritualized competition with other American men to tell stories. The stories have been told more than once, and all the men know many stories, though Hurstwood seems to have heard a few more than most. Scanlan, an actor by profession, possibly a minstrel showman, tells his stories professionally³. But they all tell stories "professionally." After all, the competitive performance of stories is how these men--politicians, businessmen, actors all at once--conduct business.

"Several of the boys around here have got talent," Quincel, an Elks official, tells Drouet at another point in the novel. "There's Harry Burbeck--he does a fine black-face turn. Mac Lewis is all right at heavy dramatics" (153). Trading entertainment around the tap room was how the original Elks converged as a club just after the Civil War. Those men, blackfaced on the stage, acted, told jokes, sang, and gathered after working hours to offer each other fraternity in the form of pleasure. The allegedly pointless communication of men who frequent Hurstwood's resort, which can always be characterized as storytelling and joking, and which may sometimes evolve into more formal narrative competitions, is analogous to the fraternal connections made by those nascent Elks, the Jolly Corks, in downtown Manhattan. If pleasure is so important for the consummation

of business transactions, then it is no surprise to learn that American businessmen were early on drawn into fraternal organizations built by men committed to giving each other pleasure through performance among men only. In Sister Carrie, among the men of Chicago, conversation, performance, and transaction--a managed exchange of pleasure and symbolic gilt--constitute analogous action.

The stories men tell in meetings like this are invariably about disruption or potential disruption to the moral agreements of community. The narrator almost certainly implies that they are stories about male pleasure in women. Although some stories may have been generated originally as the gossip of real social transgression, all disruption has by now been transformed into humor. The moment of storytelling provides an outlet from the strains of certain publicly agreed-upon ethics, by acting out a resistance to moral and ethical order; telling and listening to stories, these men perform and experience a momentary liminality. The acts of telling and listening to stories are performances of control and of freedom from control; in relieving some of its stress, momentarily intact is the ever-stressful balance between individualism and community constraint. The stories themselves and the secreted act of telling stories in the late hours of the evening creates the life totality which exclusive togetherness demands. Therefore, it is not surprising that at the conclusion of

the storytelling, Hurstwood, whose social position has virtually fallen apart, can feel "as if his troubles were not very serious" (266).

In Sister Carrie, the intimacy of the circle is to some extent a matter merely of physical proximity and of vision--vision which, in John Berger's terms, is "continually active, continually moving, continually holding things in a circle around itself, constituting what is present to us as we are." For one typical businessman, Charles Drouet, seeing and being seen among men in certain public places evokes success and pleasure as indistinguishable. Drouet is virtually seduced by the air of the carnival-like setting of the restaurant, resort, or theater. He is, "lured as much by his longing for pleasure as by his desire to shine among his betters."

The many friends he met here dropped in because they craved, without perhaps consciously analyzing it, the company, the glow, the atmosphere, which they found. One might take it after all as an augur of the better social order, for the things which they satisfied here, though sensory, were not evil. No evil could come out of the contemplation of an expensively decorated chamber. The worst effect such a thing could have would be perhaps to stir up in the material-minded an ambition to arrange their lives upon a similarly

splendid basis. (47)

The "worst effect" of this juxtaposition of influential elements, considering what happens later to Hurstwood, may, as Dreiser's irony anticipates, be far worse. Nevertheless, the phenomenon of well-dressed, successful men, reflecting upon the surfaces of this chamber, promises no less than the potential for a "better" social order, within which the men see themselves among the "many friends" in whom they may know themselves. Significantly, to delineate their craving for this better social order, Dreiser introduces what appears to be an element of eroticism into the gathering. "The fact," he writes, "that here men gather, here chatter, here love to pass and rub elbows, must be explained upon some grounds. It must be that a strange bundle of passions and vague desires gives rise to such a curious social institution or it would not be" (47). Drouet was "lured...by his longing for pleasure"; the men here "craved" the "sensory" atmosphere. "What a lamp-flower," Dreiser writes of the resort, "a strange, glittering night-flower, odor-yielding, insect-drawing, insect-infested rose of pleasure" (47).

To begin to think about the passions and tensions which Dreiser insinuates within this circle of vision, along with Simmel, we may refer to Freud's early twentieth-century analyses of group psychology. Freud emphasized the sexual

"secret" of male group relations. "The essence of group formation," he wrote, "consists in new kinds of libidinal ties among members of the group" (Group 35). In men's social relations, these may take the form of "desexualized, sublimated homosexual love...which springs from work in common" (35). Dreiser's language clearly indicates that Drouet's interests in the chamber, and the social order this gathering augurs, are associated with the satisfaction of libidinal needs. Although the homosexual connotations may remain understated, the men here are quite openly expressive about how women function to infest their rose of pleasure. For one thing, their conversation, when it is not focused on business, is often directed to the "sporting entertainments" held "at some of the clubs and those more unmentionable resorts of vice--the gilded chambers of shame with which Chicago was then so liberally cursed" (44). When Carrie's name is bandied about at the bar, she is thereby equated with the "ladies" who provide the pleasures which may be indulged but not mentioned. In his coarse idiom, Drouet tells Hurstwood, "I struck a little peach coming in on the train Friday" (48). Thus, what Dreiser calls the "pointless phraseology" of men in the resort, a phraseology of crude fraternalism, by consensus marks the feminine as a delineation of manliness and its pleasures. Women, in this sense, are commodities, and in referring to them with particular phrases men are proving their right to membership

in a circle which has many other material criteria for inclusion. But in Sister Carrie, women also wield social power which potentially disrupts the circularity of male relations. A very uneroticized wife, for example, is a kind of outsider to male pleasure who must nonetheless be accommodated within communal arrangements which publicly support conventional ethics of the family. A women charged with eroticism like Carrie, who is not a wife, may function to delineate the sexual power that two members of the circle hold in common. But Carrie is also the cause for exposing the aggressiveness of men, not only towards women, but toward each other.

But for the most part, a gregarious man like Drouet feels a kind of sexual gratification gazing into the room and warming himself by seeing himself lit by the lamp whose light also shines on well-off men. Drouet's excitement is generated by what this occupational paradigm signifies: marketplace success. Drouet the Elk identifies with the symbol of the wild male animal, chosen originally by the founders of the Elks in 1867 for its physical characteristics and for its fidelity to other males. But as the bearer of that symbol on a gold chain attached to his vest pocket, Drouet also marks himself ready to "rise" with other men of the herd in the market-driven hierarchy. Although the Elks had been established by a group of social outcasts, mid-nineteenth century minstrel show performers

who were seeking fellowship and protection from a moralistic, sometimes hostile community, by the last decade of the century they had become increasingly associated with mainstream ambition in business. Nevertheless, in the world of Dreiser's novel, objects in a room like this lamplit chamber invariably have a value which, like the gulf between other spectators and performers in the novel, remains unattained by the person gazing at them. Indeed, the envy generated by Drouet's ambition suggests that his narcissism is unable to wholly transform the chamber into a representation of himself. Moreover, identification, as Freud wrote, "is ambivalent." The feelings which hold men in a circle may be harmlessly interrupted by envy; or they may, in Freud's words on group psychology, "turn into an expression of tenderness as easily as into a wish for someone's removal" (Group 38,37).

The meaning of the ubiquitous word "friend" in Sister Carrie may be held in place as follows: for a man to be a friend means that he can fit himself into a prevailing sexual and commercial discourse and that he feels a strong pleasure based upon physical intimacy with other men among bright objects. Overall, it means that he agrees to maintain what Erving Goffman has called "a veneer of consensus" as to how the situation of his coming together with other men or with women is to be defined and controlled (The Presentation of Self). He agrees, that is, to openly

express his affinities with other men and to conceal his aggressiveness as a desirous commercial and sexual being. In these terms, Hurstwood's eventual crisis might be summarized as at first his playing with, then later his exploding, the limits of male friendship. When he is first seen, Hurstwood is characterized as master of the resort whose "role" is to control behavior, that is, to set everyone in the right tone with everyone else; in essence, he orchestrates difference (occupational and hierarchical) into community. To paraphrase Goffman again, Hurstwood helps initially to define the situation of the resort projected by the individuals there, and to provide a plan for the cooperative activity that follows their admittance (Goffman 12). In this sense, Hurstwood's role within the circle intersects with his title: he is the manager of both competition and cooperation in the group. Compared with Hurstwood's, Drouet's situation in the group is far more marginal. Indeed, he looks toward Hurstwood with a kind of narcissistic arousal, while Hurstwood merely patronizes his less affluent, less "successful" companion. Drouet has "no power of analyzing the glance and the atmosphere of a man like Hurstwood" (108). On the night Hurstwood comes to Drouet's apartment to meet Carrie, choosing not to spend the evening with his own wife, he spends much of the time teasing Drouet for not doing an adequate job as "husband." Their teasing banter is, as usual, both "pointless" and

pointed. "'You ought to have a piano here, Drouet....so that your wife could play.'" "'Charlie, you are neglecting a part of your duty,'" Hurstwood observes to Drouet, "most affably." This is Hurstwood's way to make Drouet "feel that he admired his choice" (94). "'I'll show you how to trounce your husband,'" Hurstwood says playfully. But the nature of the attention given to him by Hurstwood makes Drouet feel "really closer to him than ever before."

Drouet's pleasure here results from seeing himself being admired and appreciated by another man for his choice of a woman--like the choice of a pair of shoes--and from noticing what he takes for an increasing intimacy with the admiring man, actually his rival. But any developing rivalry is carefully controlled through their teasing, cliché-ridden banter, creating the veneer of consensus which for now assigns equal value to the subjectification of male togetherness as to Carrie. In some sense, the onset of any rivalry is also controlled by the easy availability for both men of commodities such as clothing, jewelry, and women such as Carrie. Hurstwood's controlled hierarchical relationship with Drouet is expressed in their distinct appearances: "What he wore did not strike the eye so forcibly as that which Drouet had on" (94). However, although Carrie could not help feeling that there was a distinction," and although Drouet is losing at cards, both men agree to know, as men, what kind of game Drouet is playing with Carrie. "The

object of this peculiarly involved comedy" for the time being remains somewhat aloof from both men. But the friendly banter of men when she was not present has connoted the coherence of the male group as a conspiracy which objectifies women. "'I want you to come out some evening,'" Drouet has said earlier in the bar. "'Out where?'"... 'Out to my house, of course,' said Drouet, smiling. Hurstwood looked up, quizzically, the least suggestion of a smile hovering about his lips..... 'I'll introduce you'" Drouet says (80). This smile between men connected by their gender indicated that there is a woman to share.

It is this kind of commonplace banter and intimacy, naively witnessed by Carrie as through a plate glass window, that the "comedy" of this triangle turns inside out. "I've invited my friend Hurstwood to come out some day, and spend the evening with us," Drouet earlier informed Carrie (92). "Good friend of mine," he repeats once Hurstwood is gone after that first visit. On the one hand, the good fellowship Hurstwood extends to Drouet on this evening is part of a veneer of consensus among men; on the other hand, however, it is revealed as a mask for his violent intentions to conquer Drouet's "little peach." Later, Hurstwood thinks "how charming it would be when Drouet was disposed of entirely" (143). For now, he "troubled himself not at all about Drouet's priority or individuality" (106). Composed of more "distinct" signs than his rival, Hurstwood's envy of

Drouet soon exceeds the envy which Drouet feels for him. Hurstwood knows that his power is diminished by Drouet's ownership of Carrie and by the lack in his own view of himself when he sees himself without Carrie. It will take some time, however, for Hurstwood to aggressively eliminate Drouet as a rival in order to transform Carrie into a projection of his own sexual potency.

Of course, in the comedy of this triangle, Carrie is, in fact, thoroughly involved. However unintentionally, she is the cause of this sudden closeness of Drouet and Hurstwood as well as their rivalry. At the same time, both men, in their own ways, are manipulating Carrie in order to have their secret pleasure without sacrificing their membership in the group or the larger community. In Simmel's terms, Carrie is therefore closely associated with the seclusion against the outside and the intensification of the group's internal cohesion; she is the "other" outside of the circle as well as the object of desire which informs male discourse and relations. And as the "other," the outsider to the circle, she is linked to several other social types in Dreiser's late nineteenth-century American city.

One scene which plays out the dynamic of these "associated" internal and external tensions takes place on the street outside a theater where Hurstwood has taken Drouet and Carrie to see "The Covenant," a play in which

"the wife listened to the seductive voice of a lover, in the absence of her husband." Drouet is too satisfied with himself in the luxury of this extended intimacy with the socially important manager to notice the irony. By now, Hurstwood has visited Carrie several times while Drouet has been travelling, and Carrie, no longer so aloof, has come to suspect that he is going to marry her; at the same time, Hurstwood is feeling more and more disagreeable pressure from his wife to give of himself, particularly of his money, to support her social aspirations. That night, Carrie watches "his every movement with pleasure," so that she forgets poor Drouet, "who babbled on as if he were the host." For his part, Hurstwood "was too clever to give the slightest indication of a change." Feeling somewhat torn between their male bond and his desire to crush Drouet here and now, he "paid, if anything, more attention to his old friend than usual, and yet in no way held him up to that subtle ridicule which a lover in favor may so secretly practice before the mistress of his heart. If anything, he felt the injustice of the game, as it stood and was not cheap enough to add to it the slightest mental taunt" (138).

Outside the theater, as they make their way "through the showy crush about the entrance way," a voice at Hurstwood's side is heard begging for the price of a bed. At first, the voice is ignored by all. He pleads again that he is without a place to sleep. Drouet is the first to see

this twenty-eight year old "picture of privation and wretchedness." He hands over a dime "with an upwelling feeling of pity in his heart." Hurstwood and Carrie remain largely oblivious (139).

It is this kind of ironic disruption of character types that, despite his plagiarism, perhaps makes Dreiser's departure from satirists like George Ade more evident. The Depression era commonplace and blues lyric, "brother, can you spare a dime?" may not be spoken here, but certainly for the modern reader it is invoked. Here are three men, two "old friends" and a gaunt-faced stranger. The two friends are in fact lodge "brothers" in Chicago's Elk's Club. The third man is wholly outside of any fraternity or community. He is hardly real; belonging to another paradigmatic mass, one which could never form itself as a circle, he resembles the other men nonetheless in being merely a "picture" of his condition, albeit an easily forgettable one. But the stranger is someone in whose face these men cannot see themselves reflected and whose language is both foreign and antithetical to theirs; indeed, he is identified with an ever-increasing paradigm outside of all community, one within which Hurstwood, as Dreiser plays out this irony, is destined to find himself. But for now, except for a wholly anomalous moment of discovery by Drouet, he does not exist at all. The meaning of friendship among the men of the resort is reinforced here as an agreement not to disrupt the

community with adversity; oblivious of adversity or concealing its existence, their coherence is proportional to their exclusion of adversity.

Immediately after handing over the dime, Drouet is babbling again: "I like a comedy best," he says. In this case, the phatic dialogue of the trio helps to defer the discovery of what is really happening: Hurstwood is increasingly encroaching upon Drouet's "property." Nevertheless, for a moment Drouet has felt a stranger's plight, and disrupted not only the comedy but his character; indeed, the small display of justice may make him slightly less paradigmatic. Yet it is hard not to remember that he has just been lying to his "little peach" about his plans to marry her or that four pages before this Drouet is seen gloating over having charmed "Burnstein--a regular hook-nosed sheeny" into buying "a complete line." On the one hand, Hurstwood feels the injustice of the game he is playing with his Elks brother. On the other hand, along with women and the homeless, the tense dynamic of Drouet's and Hurstwood's narcissistic politics of male fraternity displays no "confidence" in the Jew.

#

"Drouet was a man whom it was impossible to bind to any one object long" (105). "Hurstwood, however, was a man who

was less light-minded and consequently more subtle."

He saw a trifle more clearly the necessities of our social organization, but he was more unscrupulous in the matter of sinning against it. He did not, as a matter of fact, conduct himself so loosely as Drouet, but it was entirely owing to a respect for his situation. In the actual matter of a decision and a consummation, he was worse than Drouet. He more deliberately set aside the canons of right as he understood them. (196)

Drouet bobs about men and objects, such as Carrie, lightmindedly, all volume, but Hurstwood's subtlety conceals a greater willingness than Drouet's to transform into a projection of himself whatever he is drawn towards and, significantly, to risk setting aside the canons of right to do so. Hurstwood's social presentation is far more "circumspect" than Drouet's, while his sins against "our social organization" are covered for by the upper class respectability of his job, his home, his family, and his connections. Hurstwood's identity is inextricably bound up with objects which have value in the social organization, his "investments." His subtlety is necessitated by the nature of what he has to lose. Regarding his gamble with Carrie, the narrator hauntingly remarks, "He did not know,

he could not guess, what the result would be" (107).

When he makes his first appearance in the novel, Hurstwood is forty years old. At forty-three he will have already accelerated a long descent into social disorganization, resulting in small part, we are told, from the normal deterioration of aging. But at forty, Hurstwood still has "a good stout constitution, an active manner, and a solid substantial air"--one more distinct than the insect lightness of Drouet. This air is "composed in part of his fine clothes, his clean linen, his jewels, and, above all, his own sense of importance" (43). The other part of the image is focused by Hurstwood's public titles: manager, husband, father. Hurstwood's sense of his sexual and political power is predicated upon a "position," which is "fairly important."

For many readers, Hurstwood's depth as a character, because of his dramatic decline, exceeds that of any other figure in the novel. However, strangely like the starving man he ignores that night outside the theater, Hurstwood is characterized throughout the novel as being less himself than a representative image of his type. Early on, for example, he is "the picture of fastidious comfort" (45). In fact, the phrase aptly describes Hurstwood's social and economic value: he is better than anyone else at performing pictures of himself. His work, "for the most part," consists of lounging about, "dressed in excellent tailored

suits of imported goods, several rings upon his fingers, a fine blue diamond in his necktie, a striking vest of some new pattern and a watch of the latest make and engraving" (43). But it is Hurstwood's paradigmatic use of language, as eloquent as a situation requires, that truly underscores the emptiness of his core--an emptiness which he comes to feel. By constantly transforming his voice and phrasing according to the status of whomever he is momentarily addressing, Hurstwood orchestrates the cooperative activity that follows admittance into his realm, Hannah and Hogg's elegant resort.

But while his scale of gesture and verbal formality is the key element of Hurstwood's management skills, one type of modified performance, his circumspectness with regard to his home life, is the keystone to all his communal relations. "If there was one quality which might be predicated more than another of Hurstwood at this time," the narrator tells us, "it was circumspectness, which the state of his home life and the tenure of his position depended upon" (111). Home, in Sister Carrie, is a node of contradictory meanings and values, linked to sentimental conventions and to marketplace necessity. "A lovely home atmosphere," explains the narrator, "is one of the flowers of the world than which there is nothing more tender, nothing more delicate, nothing more calculated to make strong and just the natures cradled and nourished within it"

(81). Whether, when he wrote this, Dreiser was thinking of his own fractured family life, we cannot say, though it seems likely that he was. On the other hand, this is the practiced sentimentality of a former women's magazine writer, one who may have wished simultaneously to get beyond sentimental literature and to validate his novel's domestic conflicts for an audience of consumers which found pleasure in sentimentality. Ironical reference to genres of sentimental fiction and to Ev'ry Month, a magazine Dreiser edited which published sheet music, including the tear-jerking ballads of "home" by Dreiser's brother, Paul Dresser, may be obvious in these effusive sentences from Sister Carrie.

To those who have never found in [home atmosphere] the tolerance and love which are chief among its constituents, the song and the literature of the home are dulled. They will not understand wherefore the tear springs glistening to the eyelids at some strange breath in lovely music. The mystic chords which bind and thrill the heart of the nation they will never know. (81)

In working both within and against his experience as an editor of a magazine for women, Dreiser, like many others in the period, associated domestic sentimentality with the

market place and consumption⁴. The magazines, like Ev'ry Month which Dreiser edited in the 1890s, conventionally shifted the meaning of social coherence among family, home, morality, and advertised goods. At the same time that the home represented an alternative source of value to, and in Sennett's words refuge from, the marketplace, a notion reinforced by magazines and sentimental fiction, the homes of urban dwellers projected their power as consumers. That power was attached to their owner's occupations. As such, the homes of the Hansons and the Hurstwoods seem to serve as extensions of work. Hanson's stark, unadorned, badly lit apartment is indistinguishable from the refrigerator car he cleans; both settings become indistinguishable from the inside of the shoe factory. Analogously, Hurstwood's "perfectly appointed" home, which, like Hurstwood, is a picture of comfort, is an essential part of what he wears on the job and even resembles the resort in which Hurstwood had started out as a bartender. In the dining room of Hurstwood's residence,

stood a sideboard laden with glistening decanters and other utilities and ornaments in glass, the arrangement of which could not be questioned. Here was something Hurstwood knew about. He had studied the subject for years in his business (81).

But comfortable as it may seem, related as such to the pressures of the marketplace and to work and the normal constraints of community life, home in Sister Carrie is less an escape itself than a problematic setting from which to escape. To some extent, Hurstwood is able to escape into fraternalism. But male friendship, while it is an outlet from the strains of domestic ethics, is largely subordinated to paradigmatic typicality, which prescribes a conspicuous demonstration of ethical constraint. For Hurstwood, this circle comes to seem rather vicious. Finally, then, what Simmel referred to as subjective unfulfillment, such as Hurstwood experiences regarding his conventional home and work situations, generates a narrative of overpowering, finally destructive, sentimental longing for subjective fulfillment which disrupts his circumspectness, that "fine reserve" which characterizes "his manner toward the entire domestic economy of his life" (82).⁵

But as long as he remains complacent in his circumstances, Hurstwood is "respected" both in the neighborhood and "down town."

His family was on speaking terms with his immediate neighbors, several of whom had considerable money. When he rode down town in the cars of a morning, he had the satisfaction of brushing elbows with numerous plethoric-pursed merchants and of answering

solicitations concerning his wife and children which were made in the perfunctory manner common to Americans of the money-making variety. These things seemed to give him standing and as such they were worth while.

(111)

The description once more informs the reader that participating at this level of society paradoxically requires one to conspicuously display, albeit in a perfunctory manner, fine reserve. The essential balance and tension of circumspectness and conspicuity is reflected in turn by the next generation of successful men, represented by Hurstwood's son, George, a "junior" of his father. Twenty years old and "connected" with a large real estate firm, he has "some ability, considerable vanity and a love of pleasure that had not, as yet, infringed upon his duties, whatever they were" (82). But "he was not laying bare his desires for anyone to see" (82). On the same night that Hurstwood goes to McVicker's theater as the host of "Charlie Drouet and his wife," George Jr., also in attendance--conspicuously on the arm of the daughter of a wealthy drygoods merchant--while sitting back out of the light, spies his father. "It was his wont to sit this way in every theater--to make his personality as inconspicuous as possible, where it would be no advantage to him to have it otherwise" (113).

Women, because they are portrayed as dependents, do not have the luxury of easily managing their own visibility and invisibility. Indeed, visibility also becomes Carrie's problem once she becomes independent as a well-paid stage celebrity. On the other hand, Jessica Hurstwood's only hopes for inclusion in "society" require that, almost like a streetwalker, she display a particular picture of herself as conspicuously as possible in the vicinity of a particular circle of friends, girls and boys who likewise gave themselves "airs befitting the thriving domestic establishments from whence they issued" (82). Perhaps, then, through Jessica, and through her son's "possible success" and her husband's "fixed" position, Julia Hurstwood herself "might rise a little." Julia's knowledge of life "extended to that little conventional round of society, of which she was not, but longed to be, a member" (83). Ever endeavoring to "shine" among her social superiors, as yet Julia has not achieved adequate conspicuity.

II.

In fact, the Elks Club benefit presentation, featuring "Carrie Madenda" in her amateur debut, precipitates Hurstwood's break with his wife because he has failed to invite her. Julia Hurstwood is angered because in missing this important social event, her invisible status of looking

in from outside the circle is accentuated.

It is of particular interest that Dreiser invokes the name of Nathaniel Hawthorne as he begins to render the multi-layered, carnivalesque scenes the night of the Elks Club benefit.⁶ This is the night that Hurstwood begins to maneuver his fine reserve and his visibility, and that his "social drama" may be accurately said to begin. "The life of the world behind the curtain," Dreiser writes, is a fascinating thing to every outsider with theatrical leanings, as we well know. It would require the pen of a Hawthorne and the spirit of the 'Twice-Told Tales' to do justice to that mingled atmosphere of life and mummery which pervades the chambers of the children of the stage" (176.)⁷ Led from those chambers out to the mingling atmosphere of the street, then through groups of men conversing in and around the theater, readers, by allusion to Hawthorne, may be reminded of any one of a number of signature street scenes in his tales or novels, for example, The Scarlet Letter's second chapter, "The Market-Place." There, the moving eye of the narrator sets the stage for a drama of community disruption in overlapping descriptions of buildings, crowds, individuals, snippets of conversation, color of sky--in Dreiser's language, "mingled atmosphere." Such "market-place scenes" render the simultaneous multiplicity of action and dialogue within social space as a field of congruities and incongruities, evocative of

community. In Sister Carrie, the market-place scenes in and around Avery Hall the night of Carrie's amateur debut in Augustin Daly's Under the Gaslight, staged by the Elks to raise money to buy new lodge furniture, call the community into being. In depicting the Elks benefit, Dreiser uses the circle and carnivalesque crowd as metaphors to organize references and relations into an inclusive community surrounded by what it excludes. Hawthorne's street scenes represent the importance of life within community. In The Scarlet Letter and elsewhere, as Myra Jehlan has remarked, Hawthorne emphasizes the necessity to live within the city limits (64). These scenes in Sister Carrie emphasize that same necessity in order to dramatize both Carrie's and Hurstwood's actual and potential disconnectedness.⁸

These moments in the novel, along with other carnival scenes in Chicago and New York, all of them outside theaters, create a panorama of people living together within the city limits. In fact, Dreiser uses panorama very deliberately at various stages in the narrative to mark his main characters' social circumstances. The scene most like this one which has already passed occurs outside the theater where Drouet has taken Carrie, recently transformed by the thrill of owning fine clothing, to see "The Mikado"; in the crowded street, at this turning point, Carrie's past and her fantasies for the future pass before her. The next moment in the novel resembling the street scene outside the Elks

benefit occurs when Carrie is taken by Mrs. Vance to parade along New York's Broadway, and once more her past, present, and future circumstances are painfully contrasted in the midst of, and against, the crowd. Dreiser uses the crowd as a kind of gestalt for exploring the dichotomy of social reality as, on the one hand, organized and systematized by human desires and efforts, and, on the other hand, fluid and unknowable. That is to say, within the mingled atmosphere of life and mummery on the street outside the theater, the reader observes a fluidity of gestures signifying layers of economic, political, and psychological meaning for a complex plural society.

Indeed, much is going on when, on the occasion of a stage performance, the community is called into being. Dreiser uses the performance itself to invoke the most traditional moral conventions of togetherness; on stage, transgressions against the community along with fantasies of ideal cooperation are predictably and happily resolved and fulfilled in accordance with the audience's prevailing ethical guidelines and desires. But Dreiser always makes it obvious that the play is not the thing--that the play is an influence contributing to the atmosphere of mingled events off stage.

In the first place, however, Dreiser concocts this scene to present a contest between two "friends" straining to keep in balance constraints of male fellowship, overall

communal ethics, and powerfully erotic desires. Nevertheless, there are other things happening, particularly outside the theater, that expose the way inclusion and exclusion function in this plural city. First of all, Dreiser's energy in this genre of episode is given over to an exuberance in the telling of the story. That exuberance is, to a large degree, a function of narrative multiplicity; the little theater, on this night, resounds "to a babble of successful voices" (180). But the narrator is everywhere, traveling through the streets to get to the theater, arriving, inside and outside the theater, in the eyes of both "audience" and players, with a particular character or eavesdropping arbitrarily upon conversations. Indeed, the multiplicity of these scenes exposes the fact that in urban society there are many conversations going on at once, set to a pattern of congruity which is difficult to interpret.

Dreiser calls the community into being by also presenting the incongruous world that surrounds and looks into it. Echoing Bakhtin, Dominick LaCapra writes that "the public square and the streets adjoining it are the proper place for carnival. The public square brings what is marginal or borderline in ordinary life to the very center of the community. On it all ordinary opposites meet and intermingle, and in this zone of festive familiarity there are no footlights to separate spectators from participants" (301). However, Dreiser uses bright lights to emphasize

such a separation. In other words, Dreiser's is not a democratic carnival, nor, finally, a carnival celebrating what LaCapra calls "the unofficial side of life." Indeed, because it excludes, its designation as carnival in Bakhtin's sense becomes doubtful. On the surface, it seems more like the idle aristocracy's afternoon parade in a London park in English Restoration comedy than the more carnival-like, pluralistic country grain market in Dreiser's beloved Mayor of Casterbridge. The Elks play out their "aristocratizing motive" in order to let others "feel their superiority" (Simmel 364). While the Elks meet and intermingle in the presence of a serious, often awestruck gaze from outside, among their self-adoring numbers they appear to remain untouched by any serious social incongruity. But while narcissistic exuberance reigns, the gathering Elks remain oblivious to the seriousness festering within their celebration, the oncoming explosion of a comic triangle and the downfall of one of their luminaries. Finally, Dreiser's scene in the public square is indeed indebted to Hardy or to Hawthorne for its insinuation of adversity into superiority.

Here Dreiser explicitly frames urban plurality in terms of a circle. Thus, from an outer circle in the shabby neighborhood of the Avery Theater, "the fascinated gaze of children and shopkeepers and people living in flats across the way" is drawn inwardly toward "the lights of a certain

circle--"

--the circle of small fortunes and secret order distinctions. These gentlemen Elks knew the standing of one another. They had regard for the ability which could amass a small fortune, own a nice home, keep a barouche or carriage perhaps, wear fine clothes and maintain a good mercantile position.....Hurstwood....who....commanded friendship by intuitive tact in handling people, was quite a figure among these. He was more generally known than most others in the same circle, and was looked upon as someone whose reserve covered a mine of influence and solid financial prosperity." (178)

On the one hand, the inner circle has so far appeared to constitute itself by agreements to abide by certain "distinctions," to carry on a particular sort of "regard" and "reserve," and to standardize its phraseology. In the public square or in the lobby of the playhouse, the "animated conversation concerning the company present, and the general drift of lodge affairs" is no less pointless than what we heard in the resort; but, importantly, at the same time it directs all the men's attentions inward toward "the company present" and the subjects that hold this company in a circle: wealth, business, politics, women,

marriage.

Although convention dictates that wives be present at this gathering, not one of them speaks throughout the scene. Still, the men remain wary of their presence; men never look into the circle without also being aware of who is listening behind them. Dreiser represents the secrecy involved in what men say to one another by having them whisper or speak in asides. The conspicuous veneer of consensus is penetrated, in fact, by conflict both from within and from outside the focal center of the carnival. A primary purpose of this scene, Hurstwood's impending crisis, shows the reader that consensus itself is a mire of contradictions. Tensions within the carnival initiate a dangerous fantasy, Hurstwood's passionate dream of escape from normal communal constraints. At the same time, the people living in the flats across the way have an ironic presence in the novel which penetrates the stasis of homogeneous inclusion. That the city is plural or multiple is itself a sort of irony which disrupts secret order distinctions. Again, in Simmel's terms, the seclusion against the people gazing in from the flats across the way is, indeed, associated with the intensification of the cohesion internally; but rather than seeing this in a linear ratio, I am suggesting that Dreiser's novel works through a model of interpenetrating circles with continually problematic associations between the conspicuous, performing inner circle and the invisible

outside world which, in circumscribing it, creates its circularity.

Finally, in line with the way Simmel describes the fraternity's contradictory desires for secrecy and social visibility, the gentlemen Elks' public performances of prosperity and haughty reserve may be seen as their assertion of centrality for delineating what Raymond Williams would have called a "knowable community" within the plural city (The Country and the City 165). After all, the small circle these businessmen, politicians, and actors, fashion covers "a mine of influence." Their brightly lit circle in the middle of social multiplicity is thus revealed to be a metonymic abstraction radiating influence, a competitive strategy for focusing the delineation of what Dreiser has earlier called a "better social order."

Expressions of fellowship by the Elks may not, on the surface at least, seem aggressive or even oppressive. Indeed, their relations are introduced as a bundle of erotic passions. But taking together everything that Dreiser tells us about these men, and in particular their treatment of and language for women and wives, the conditions of work in their factories, their marginalization of the homeless and Jews, we might ask whether such a claim of fraternity, no matter how secluded in its enactment, can be labeled non-aggressive. As I began by saying, fraternal orders are used by Dreiser to illustrate the nature of human society. With

these particular social formations, Dreiser's novel makes rather clear that in general human society is careless, self-centered, even cruel towards its individual members. Exclusion itself is a violent act, and the excluded are victims, a case Dreiser strongly makes, I think, without sentimentalization.

As I have already suggested, the Elks gathering is an ambiguous "carnival" because it is not truly democratic, nor is it truly liberating. Finally, then, the gathering Dreiser represents exposes the falseness of Elks-style liminality, which is really nothing more than a re-affirmation of "serious" oppressive systems such as the corporation or the Victorian morality which controls everyday life. Social exclusion and the aggressive assertion by a "circle of small fortunes and secret order distinctions" of its dominance to delineate community in Sister Carrie's city is, therefore, masked here by carnival. Nevertheless, "carnivalization" is effected by Dreiser as a charged setting which forces action and change.

The focal point of the Elks gathering ultimately becomes the manager of Hannah and Hogg's, George Hurstwood, who, as a result of this evening's events, is impelled to change his social situation. "'I'm an Elk myself,'" Hurstwood has announced earlier. And he is an Elk with a standing "worth talking about." Indeed, it is Hurstwood who has called the community into being. In remembering that

he, too, is an Elk, Hurstwood uses all of the power of his personality, his eloquence, and his connections to consummate a great act as leader of the male circle--a circle which merely shifts its base from Hurstwood's resort to the Elks's precincts. Indeed, the political significance of the resonant term "manager" is reinforced here as one who brings together and manages a community.

All "the boys" buttonholed by Hurstwood to see Carrie's performance have not come to aid the cause of new clubhouse furniture. The mere fact that Hurstwood should ask them to come out "was sufficient indication...that there has something more back of the request than the mere performance" (174). Hurstwood, "a man of few words," has "considerable influence locally," and so the Elks, themselves, who are "rather influential locally," rally "like Romans to a senator's call." Rallying these "many men of his own kind," Hurstwood is "in his element" (174). "'Here we are,'" says Hurstwood, as though to proclaim the conspicuousness and totality of the circle. And though he has rallied his "audience" to create an audience for Carrie, rallying this group remains Hurstwood's most impressive performance of generosity toward the delineation of community. Thus, it is logical for the drama of the novel that it should be his last such act. On the verge of risking everything, Hurstwood is "evidently a light among them, reflecting in his personality the ambitions of those

who greeted him. He was acknowledged, fawned upon, in a way lionized. Through it all one could see the standing of the man. It was greatness in a way, small as it was" (180).

CHAPTER FIVE

Hurstwood and the Language of Liminality

He was shut out from Chicago, from his easy comfortable state....He began to think he would try to restore himself to his own state (SC 287).

Before going on to examine the long and interesting narrative of Hurstwood's mental and physical decline in New York, briefly, I wish to explore certain ways that Hurstwood changes while he is still in Chicago. By the time Hurstwood becomes "attracted by Carrie," he is already sensing that he is not himself. "Alive with thoughts and feelings concerning Carrie," with "such anxiety and enthusiasm" as "had not affected him for years," the forty-year old manager "was a youth again in feeling--a cavalier in action" (124). At the same time, he is having trouble concentrating on his work; moreover, "the complete ignoring by Hurstwood of his own home came with the growth of his affection for Carrie" (138). At family breakfasts, he is "all at sea as to what they were talking about."

...he was used to being considered--in his official position at least, and felt that his importance should not begin to wane here (143).

Meanwhile, "he looked and dreamed a new dream of pleasure

which concerned his present fixed conditions not at all" (147).

After Hurstwood has been described as a character, and after he has conceived an affection for Carrie, the remainder of his story concerns his "problem" of not being that descriptive self or "picture" in terms of how he behaves, feels, thinks, and looks. In the course of his narrative, the gap between Hurstwood and his "own state" continually and dramatically increases. By referring to Hurstwood as "the manager" throughout his homeless wanderings and until his suicide, Dreiser never allows the reader to forget the irony of that separation.

The momentum of Hurstwood's decline away from his "own state" builds as a result of his perilous but deliberate shift into a "new dream of pleasure" and away from concern with his fixed conditions. His story, then, after he flees Chicago, concerns his efforts to recover his "own state." Therefore, nostalgia plays an increasingly important role in the second part of the novel. Hurstwood's nostalgic longing re-imagines and reconstructs elements of an old state as it is desired-to-be in the present, focusing a new perspective upon the constituent elements of the imagined old state while emphasizing the emptiness of the present state. But finally, the nostalgia Hurstwood lives by exposes the fact that the emptiness of the new state is a stark reflection of the emptiness of the past.

Along these lines, what does it mean for Hurstwood to be called "the manager" throughout the novel? We are told, for example, that "the life of the resort he managed was his life" (85). But "manager" is merely Hurstwood's title; his "position" is actually "a kind of stewardship which was imposing but lacked financial control" (43, all emphasis mine). Hurstwood is the "picture" of what he is. He is "an interesting character after his kind" (43). He is altogether "a very acceptable individual of our great American upper class--the first grade below the luxuriously rich" (44). Lacking genuine affection, his home life nonetheless makes "a good showing," giving him "standing" (111). He "looked the part" of a "very successful and well-known man about town" (43). Importantly, part of that role is performed by Hurstwood's body; he has a physical presence in the novel--"a good stout constitution" which in the end becomes "flabby." But Hurstwood's physical presence is actually ambiguous: employing an oxymoron, Dreiser describes Hurstwood as having a "solid substantial air" (43). If he has some kind of essential self, Hurstwood never exposes it; "He was circumspect in all he did" (85). His person is described as a "finely graduated scale of informality" (43); in other words, he is protean, a domesticated version of Melville's confidence man. The solid and substantial term "manager" therefore suggests a protean composition; Hurstwood's appearance, his existence,

is "composed" of elements which connote meaning for whomever is the present spectator. When Dreiser continues to refer to Hurstwood ironically as "the manager", well past his tenure with the resort, he emphasizes not only a material decline, but an aspect of modern experience: the essential incongruity of identity and the self. This is Carrie's "problem" as well as Hurstwood's; the incongruity of her stationary domestic presence as a "wife" in picturesque Union Park and her isolation and restlessness there is a good example, one which anticipates the discrepancies surrounding her public image as an "actress". The narrative of Hurstwood's life expresses the problem in different ways. Specifically, Hurstwood offers readers the history of an "upper-class man" who is a picture of a "world", and whose basic problem is that he is not, nor has ever been, himself. I emphasize the social labels as well as the notion of history because I believe that the narrative implies that this particular condition of irony is a cultural one. Identity here means identification with that which composes a place or a group in time. As I will continue to stress in these next two chapters, Hurstwood's experience of not being himself depends upon his gender, his class, and, profoundly, his surroundings.

I.

On the evening of the Elks Club benefit program, Hurstwood is "acknowledged," even lionized. However, he is acknowledged not for himself, but for "reflecting in his personality the ambitions of those who greeted him." In fact, as all this is happening, Hurstwood is barely able to tolerate the crush of the community he has summoned to surround himself and Carrie on this night. During intermission, he must pull himself together to maintain "his standard of good fellowship, though his thoughts and desires were with the girl behind the scenes" (188).

Hurstwood's affair with Carrie is far more than a pleasure episode to buffet the ego of a forty-year old man. Instead, he sees his increasing passion for Carrie as a means to self-realization through transformation. "'If you were to meet all day with people who care absolutely nothing about you,'" Hurstwood complains to Carrie,

"--if you went day after day to a place where there was nothing but show and indifference, if there was not one person in all those you knew whom you could appeal to for sympathy or talk to with pleasure--perhaps you would be unhappy too...."

"I could be content...if I had you to love me. If I had you to go to, you for a companion. As it is I simply move about from place to place without any

satisfaction. Time hangs heavily on my hands" (129).

As he says all this "Hurstwood really imagined that his state was pitiful." Hurstwood's own eloquence not only has a powerful effect on those in his presence, but expression becomes the means to his own self-realization.

Hurstwood talks himself into believing that he can somehow combine intimacy with Carrie and the show of his home life: "things might go as they would at his house," but with Carrie "outside of it" (143). Indeed, Carrie is the outsider whose existence within the community must remain concealed by discretion within the space of male desire. However, as Hurstwood's home situation becomes more pressing, and more depressing, he becomes increasingly consumed by his "new dream of pleasure" and less concerned by his "present fixed conditions," including his standards of good fellowship.

He got back in fancy to the old Hurstwood who was neither married nor fixed in a solid position for life. He remembered the lightsome spirit in which he once looked after the girls--how he had danced, escorted them home, hung over their gates. He almost wished he was back there again--here in this pleasant scene he felt as if he were wholly free (147).

But in talking himself back in time, Hurstwood stretches the boundaries of the acceptable space of desire which can be concealed within the male community. To be wholly free to realize and transform himself, he conceives a nostalgic "state," entirely separate from concern over the fixed conditions and discourses of his community. The time that hangs heavily on his hands is, in fact, his aging. "He drew near to this young lady as a thirsty traveler draws nigh to a fountain. He felt as fresh in her presence as one who is taken out of the flash of summer to the first cool breath of spring" (123). Indeed, by this point, Hurstwood is already a traveler on his own private junket.

Hurstwood's male "circle" is directed toward both resisting and accommodating the constraints of community. But the performed liminality that seems to signal freedom from social pressures is never a genuine rebellion; highly constrained by forces of social life, communal and commercial, it is never seriously out of balance with community. The liminal, a rite of passage which always signifies some distance from the common life, is, for the men of the resort and Elks Club, only masking its resemblance to common life. For the gentlemen Elks of Hurstwood's circle, rebellion is therefore merely an expression of the stress resulting from accommodation. But for Hurstwood, on the other hand, purchasing some distance from the common life promises a new self-image in the

liberated setting of an ageless place of romance. As a result, Hurstwood's rebellion strains the male group's separateness beyond what can be accommodated.

Normally circumspect in his relations, with Carrie Hurstwood becomes strangely effusive, writing her letters daily. This writing eventually has the effect of placing more distance between Hurstwood's world and what seems under control as an experimental fantasy of youth and intimacy. Writing, in other words, initially fashions Hurstwood's desires for remaking himself. He is not "literary," but "a style" shapes the outflow of his growing affection. Writing in his office upon colored, scented, monogrammed paper, his friends and the bartenders wonder at the "cleric and very official-looking nature of his position," viewing with respect "duties which could call a man to so much desk work and penmanship." Thus, he makes himself incongruous with the image others have of him. "With every expression came increased conception." As he does when he speaks with her, by the act of writing to Carrie, Hurstwood invents himself and Carrie and their relations. Surrounded on every side by a community of friends who are impressed with his official look, Hurstwood imagines that "he has all the ends of his passion"--meaning that he is holding them, controlling them. Here, in this invented space, he imagines that he is a man "who can lead, master and destroy." But in fact, the narrator argues, he himself is "drawn and controlled by

these very thoughts." He is "drawn"--that is, unconsciously reconstructed--by the influence and power of his own creations (144).

Hurstwood puts into writing a truth of himself as a man of passion. At the same time, he deepens the ambiguity of his social status; by communicating with Carrie through the mail (and by meeting with her only in parks), he keeps her apart from the public knowledge that he is married. But while the writing may begin as a manipulation of objective signs, it soon becomes a force in itself, fashioning a new subjectivity, a strong and passionate, less circumspect "self" which compromises the secrecy that had originally required manipulation. "In the first place," Simmel wrote, "writing is opposed to all secrecy" (352).

Hurstwood's seemingly intimate space apart from community is further conceived through another kind of discourse, the dialogue of popular melodrama, beginning the night of Carrie's debut in the Avery Theater. In a moment also reminiscent of The Scarlet Letter, instead of the words Carrie speaks from the stage, something in the music of Carrie's voice appeals directly to Hurstwood's liminal sensibility. "He was, by a combination of feelings and entanglements, almost deluded by that quality of voice and manner, which, like a pathetic strain of music, seems ever a personal and intimate thing" (189). So that, "under the fascinating make-believe of the moment," he rises to her "in

spirit" to ease her of her misery (190).

In Victorian melodrama, the breaks with society caused by sexual intensity could achieve sanctioned closure through devices such as death or happier moral resolution and communal re-affirmation. For example, in Augustin Daly's Under the Gaslight, the character Carrie plays, Laura, is raised in the slums, adopted by a wealthy woman, then ostracized as a social impurity within the aristocracy. However, when the sexual yearning of her aristocratic lover becomes more intense in being denied her, Laura is revealed to be a genuine member of the aristocracy, and they are able to marry. In Sister Carrie, Dreiser meaningfully omits the last act of the play from his novel, in which Laura is revealed to be truly high born. Donald Pizer has suggested that this clipping of Daly's melodrama was done to emphasize the contrast between Laura's identification with a "selfless idealism born of love and superior to all social distinctions" and the "'real' sentiments embodied in the themes and actions of the novel" (Novels 41). Indeed, in the drama of the novel, Hurstwood loses his ability to see the contrast between ideal and real sentiments. The melodramatic idealism which is superior to, which exists above, as it were, all social distinctions, and which is only comprehensible within the conventions of melodrama, becomes, in the liminal consciousness of Carrie's most important audience member, "almost" real. Hurstwood's

passion, we are told, is "no longer colored by reason." By omitting the final act, Dreiser omits the closure which would render the melodrama less yielding to Hurstwood's passionate appropriation, given his present fixed conditions. Left open and unresolved, the circumstances presented on stage thus remain superior to all social distinctions, perpetuating Hurstwood's own superiority within his imagined plot of self-transformation and anticipating the non-closure and indeterminacy of Hurstwood's future.

When Hurstwood sees Carrie in Jefferson Park the next afternoon, the scene he plays seems to take its shape from the melodramatic stage. The park itself is a kind of stage. In the nineteenth-century city, public parks were "places where fashionable men and women of the day went to see and be seen" (Sennett, Families 14). Thus, the park was anything but a private space in the city. Hurstwood and Carrie go to Jefferson Park--already, in the late 1880s, one of Chicago's oldest and finest--not because it is a private space but because it is fashionable one. At one point, they are viewed by a "young Irishman" passing by as a "foine couple" who "must be rich" (151). Although they may be out of the way of Drouet during these meetings, they are on stage for anyone else to see. Although they meet in the afternoon when men like Drouet are at work, initially, Hurstwood "could not help feeling nervous over the publicity

of it," though he consoled himself "with the thought that at this time of day most merchants would be in their offices, and with the additional thought that in most cases he was not known to their wives and children" (126). Later, Hurstwood loses his way of life in part because he is seen with Carrie in what was called then a "driving park" by someone, a man not in his office, who makes a chance remark to Hurstwood's wife.¹

But on the morning after the play, having retreated in considerable anxiety into an imagined space and incognizant of the open, public space of the park, Hurstwood and Carrie become for themselves the only audience dwelling in a created atmosphere. "No longer youthful in spirit," Hurstwood must nevertheless find the lines and gestures of youthful passion to make his "try for Paradise" in direct discourse with this young, "lightsome," "radiant" girl. The narrator suggests that Hurstwood's behavior in Jefferson Park is a mix of sincerity based in the emotions which have him gripped, and the studied deception of an actor-- schooled, from frequent attendance, in the conventions of melodrama. Carrie is still unaware, at this point, of the actor's motivation for deceiving her--his marriage--and she is distressed over his request that she abandon her show of marriage with Drouet to come away with him. But Carrie was already "dwelling in the atmosphere which this man created for her" (204). Hurstwood's "intense affection" is

expressed here without words, but with melodramatic gestures.

"He took his lower lip between his teeth for a moment and let it go. He stopped by the walk side and kicked the grass with his toe. He searched her face with a tender, appealing glance" (205).

When she remains hesitant to ease his "torment," he "turned on her such a storm of soul feeling that she was overwhelmed." But then he plays coy again, clamming up until she begs him to tell her his thoughts (207). When he thinks he has persuaded her he begins "straining at her with all his reserve affection and feeling." Can she come away with him on Saturday? he asks, "breathing a world of feeling into his tones." But while his own present fixed conditions seem not to bother Hurstwood, for Carrie, momentarily harkening back to "community," "the problem of her marriage affected her. She troubled again to secure her rights as a good woman." When Carrie asks when they will be married, Hurstwood stays in character, giving his best performance so far.

The manager started, hit as he was by a problem which was more difficult than hers. He gave no sign of the thoughts that flashed like messages to his mind.

"Any time you say," he said with ease, refusing to discolor his present delight with this miserable problem (209).

In the atmosphere which Hurstwood has created there can be no "little barriers" such as those "cold truth thrust upon him."

He would make a try for Paradise, whatever might be the result. He would be happy, by the Lord, if it cost all honesty of statement, all abandonment of truth (210).

Hurstwood is "elated beyond words" by her acquiescence. But elevated thus to a state superior to social distinctions, responsibility to his ordinary social sphere nevertheless continues to circumscribe his actions as he suddenly becomes aware of the passage of time: "so exacting is the world" (210).²

In a narrative written when more and more urban families were splintering, Carrie might be comprehended in terms of the morals of melodrama and of some contemporary fiction as the "other," the anti-coherence figure who challenges a narrative of fixed ethical community to re-authorize itself. She disturbs the stability, though not willingly, of an important member of the community by inspiring in him an effeminizing sexual intensity. She

represents a threat, then, to the intact family and to male friendship and domination. But in Dreiser's novel, Carrie is not positioned to trigger a conventional reaffirmation of community. As I have said, through Carrie, Dreiser appears to be testing out various conventional narratives of social togetherness in order to discover whether or not "something better" might be possible; in this regard, Carrie's liminality, to distinguish it from male liminality in the novel, her otherness that is, is charged with a hope for liberation from, rather than affirmation of, conventional community. At the same time, in the position of stable member of the conventional community, Hurstwood is inadequate to the task of anchoring ideals of the genteel. His "ethics" of community are all show, all modulation, and from the beginning he marginalizes his family, the basic social unit of gentility. Gentility and community become, instead of grounds for narrative resolution of excessive passion and a denouement of re-socialization, "exacting," hostile notions to the imagined space Hurstwood creates, a space finally elevated from all "cost." Hurstwood, too, then becomes another kind of "other."

When a member finds himself at the limits of the community's ability to accommodate strains upon its acceptable plot ideas for managing a crisis, one saving recourse may be through legal fictions of coherence. Hurstwood is offered a conventional resolution of his crisis

of non-conformity in the form of another genre of discourse, "letters" from his wife's lawyers. The divorce suit threatens his economic potency because it connotes scandal of a sort intolerable for a good resort like Hannah and Hogg's. But it is also, to use the lawyer's word, a compromise. An acceptance of the suit against him, even deciding to fight it, offers some possibility for renewed socialization; he would be reclaiming some small part of his possessions and privileges, on which he might rebuild. The legal letter conceives for Hurstwood a kind of justice.

Hurstwood's quandary at this point is serious. He knows that he has already risked severe segregation from his friends. He may survive in Chicago, but no longer as a defining figure of the men's circle. That circle has created Hurstwood from a bartender, and he can still become, theoretically, an isolated, middle-class bartender. As a hint of his future chronic indecision, here he decides nothing at all. "'I don't know what I'm going to do,'" he repeats to himself (244). To relieve his mind, he forgets "the letters." Unaware that he has already lost Carrie, that the secret of his marital status has been spilled,

He thought of the morrow and the suit. He had done nothing and here was the afternoon slipping away. It was not a quarter of four. At five the attorneys would have gone home. He still had the morrow until noon.

Even as he thought, the last fifteen minutes passed away and it was five. Then he abandoned the thought of seeing them any more that day and turned to Carrie.

It is a singular thing to note that his thoughts were all the more ardent, for a temporary lapse of the other problem....He could only think of Carrie and the fact that he would probably find refuge in her company entirely. If his home were to be broken up this way, to whom else would he turn? They could not lead a lovely, quiet life together (262).

Indeed, it is a singular thing. Though he finds himself in the stranglehold of communal constraint, by forgetting, by neither deciding nor acting, and by imagining that paradise is inevitable, Hurstwood remains with Carrie in a refuge superior to social distinctions, still dreaming versions of reconstruction. The indecisiveness which characterizes Hurstwood's state of mind as, shortly after this, he sits before the open safe in his office, merely prolongs his existence in the atmosphere of indecisiveness he has already created as a refuge for himself and Carrie. Within what Hurstwood's eloquence has conceived as a liminal space beyond the threshold of communal constraint, there are no serious decisions to make. Analogously, in Dreiser's version of Daly's melodrama, by omission of the final act and thus of closure and communal reaffirmation, decision is

forever deferred for the perpetuation of a hovering ideal. At this point, as the community makes its insistence felt, it becomes Hurstwood's dream to close the melodrama of his own situation by inventing a kind of paradise beyond his home, beyond community, indeed beyond Chicago. Once he is on a train out of Chicago, he will begin to persuade Carrie, and thereby himself, of the viability of this new fiction, "restoration".

Hurstwood might be seen as a kind of hero, in Richard Lehan's sense, who, in a manner different from Carrie's, acts to change his social conditions. Though he yearns toward a kind of selfish Paradise rather than toward a transformed community, and though he fails, the point is that Hurstwood maneuvers whereas his fellow Elks, most women, and all those excluded from the male circle, have no room, nor do they make room, to maneuver. As such, Hurstwood is an ambiguous sort of tragic American character, anticipating figures like Jay Gatsby or, closer to home, Clyde Griffiths. Like Gatsby, Hurstwood has worked his way up from a low servile position; he is a figure who has changed his history by his qualified emergence from one class into another. In 1900, Dreiser represented that social transformation as an accumulation of property as well as a repertoire of postures and locutions. We may ask, then, are Hurstwood's efforts to change his conditions through Carrie merely a continuation of the same pattern of

accumulation? Carrie, after all, evokes nostalgia. In winning Carrie, Hurstwood can reclaim his youth. The "prize" of Carrie is analogous in some ways to the glass decanter collection in Hurstwood's home, intended to signify Hurstwood's youth, his prosperity, but, also finally, like all of Hurstwood's property, the emptiness of ownership. To repeat something I quoted in an earlier chapter, consumption is driven by "an appetite for the unreal" (Culver 117). Carrie, the little peach, Drouet's little shopgirl, is the thing Hurstwood needs to fill the lack which the other things he owns do not fill. Without her, he is not and can never be himself. But with Carrie added to his identity, he believes he can finally maneuver toward being himself. In the end, he has to rob a safe and, essentially, kidnap Carrie, in order to have her and protect his fantasy of transplantation.

II.

Finally, questions arise as to the adequacy of "liminality" as a way to think about the narrative changes Dreiser represents. Victor Turner's notion of "social drama" is an attempt to explain "regularizing process" of social and historical change. Social drama is broken down into four phases: "breach, crisis, redress, and either

reintegration or recognition of schism" ("Social Dramas" 145). Social dramas occur within groups of persons with shared "values and interests and who have a real or alleged common history," because someone in the group with "a high value priority" in some way has broken with those values. Actual cultural performance such as storytelling or play-staging has a relationship with social drama which is interdependent and dialectical. Informing each other, both social drama and cultural performance enact endeavors to control the "indeterminacy" which "terrifies" in a breach and crisis. "Indeterminacy", in this case, refers to an existence outside of all processes or structures or systems or, for that matter, the common sense, which, perceptually at least, has been responsible for regularized notions of society.

Turner notes that gossip, which is "plugged into social drama," is "one of the perennial sources of cultural genres" (145). Dreiser's own impulse to create Hurstwood began with the gossip he had heard among his own family members about his sister Emma's husband, L.A. Hopkins, the older lover who had been caught by his wife's detectives in bed with Emma and who later fled with Emma from Chicago after he had robbed his employer's safe. In Dreiser's cultural performance, the character Hurstwood's sense of community is exposed and re-oriented on the train to Canada when he understands that he has caused a scandal about which people

will gossip, given his relatively high social position. But Hurstwood's developing split from community is apparent even earlier when he begins to be concerned about what the people of the enclosed group might be saying to each other about him. Later, when Hurstwood is in New York, the paradigm to which he once belonged, a collection of analogous types who speak the same language, becomes unbearable when he imagines the familiar language, an unrelenting gossip and condescension, which now determines his identity among his old friends. Hurstwood's strategy for re-incorporation into the community then will be to devise a new performance which necessarily suppresses the fact that any social drama has occurred.

Apropos of "social drama", Turner makes an important distinction between community and communitas, which he links to a distinction between "structure" and "anti-structure." Citing G.A. Hillery's 1955 survey of ninety-plus definitions of the term "community," Turner argues that "there is no complete agreement as to the nature of community" (Hillery qtd. Ritual Process 126). Nevertheless, Turner's sense of dichotomy at least implies that community is associated with "social structure." What he calls communitas, on the other hand, is "opposed to the norm-governed, institutionalized, abstract nature of social structure" (127). "The bonds of communitas are....non-rational, existential..." Recalling how political relations are structured and

maintained among successful men in Dreiser's novel, "communitas differs from comraderie found often in everyday life, which, though informal and egalitarian, still falls within the domain of structure." Communitas

tends to ignore, reverse, cut across, or occur outside of structural relationships.... structure, or all that which holds people apart, defines their differences, and constrains their actions, is one pole in a charge field, for which the opposite pole is communitas, or anti-structure.... representing the desire for a total, unmediated relationship between person and person.... Communitas does not merge identities; it liberates them from conformity to general norms, though this is necessarily a transient condition if society is to continue to operate in an orderly fashion (Dramas 274).

Signifying its transience, liminality is often represented among cultures Turner has studied as a journey away from community and toward communitas (285). If common sense governs the norms of community life, then what Turner calls "uncommon sense" informs the part of a social drama in which the actor is between cultures and conditions. However, this is not to say that liminality "is totally unconstrained, for insofar as it represents a definite stage in the passage of an initiand from status A to status B in a

ritual belonging to a traditional system or sequence of rituals, liminality must bear some traces of its antecedent and subsequent stages" (1985,160).

The idea of community is brought into the drama of Sister Carrie when, among other episodes, Hurstwood is introduced as being already slightly alienated from himself and from his world; his characterization then leaves traces of his passage from community to communitas. But finally, communitas, the space of liberation, collapses into a kind of seemingly unregularized, though finally naturalistic or deterministic, wilderness. For as Dreiser's narrator occasionally reminds us in essayistic paragraphs, "untutored man" is "blind" to "forces which sweep and play throughout the universe" (73,487). Put differently, what looks like Hurstwood's "social drama" initially bears the traces of his antecedent state, the male ethos of discreet sexual transgression; as a successful, upper-class male, Hurstwood (and other men presumably) believes he may aspire to become himself without forfeiting all the signifiers of his urban success. But once Hurstwood fails to arrive at closure within the traditional system, he yields control to the apparent indeterminacy of his "liberated" state. Finally, then, liminality and the notion of an enclosed--and closed--social drama are important concepts for exploring superficial changes of identity within the structured male circle--in Chicago and afterwards in New York--but their

applicability is strained for defining the real and profound historical change experienced by the central characters of Dreiser's novel, the little shopgirl Carrie and the manager George Hurstwood. For Carrie and Hurstwood, as for Dreiser, the greater "drama" of history is dominated not by a narrative structure of orderly return to reformed community but by the exposed terrors of disorder and indeterminacy in a world which is, in any event, determined by forces beyond human comprehension.

But in conclusion, Dreiser's ironic view of social history, while always in conflict with his view of natural history, nevertheless informs an invention of characters which are, in the most general sense of the term, liminal figures--that is, figures who are and who remain between cultures. Liminality is, finally, a valuable concept for making cultural sense from Sister Carrie because the novel's discreet worlds are often imagined as separate from its centralized figures. Culture and one of its signifiers, community, are expressed in reference to the characters Carrie and Hurstwood as an antecedent fantasy or nostalgia, as an alienating other, as a seductive fantasy of the future into which character dreams of being absorbed, and, inevitably, as a suffocating circumscription of references and relations from which character dreams of escape.

Chapter Six

The Performing Invalid of Thirteenth Street:
Hurstwood's Neurasthenic Plot of Restoration

The tremendous and complicated development of our material civilization, the multiplicity, and variety of our social forms, the depth, subtlety, and sophistry of our imaginative impressions, gathered, remultiplied, and disseminated by such agencies as the railroad, the express and the post office, the telephone, the telegraph, the newspaper, and, in short, the whole machinery of social intercourse--these elements of existence combine to produce what may be termed a kaleidoscopic glitter, a dazzling and confusing phantasmagoria of life that wearies and stultifies the mental and moral nature. It induces a sort of intellectual fatigue through which we see the ranks of the victims of insomnia, melancholia, and insanity constantly recruited.

Jennie Gerhardt (116)

He was given to thinking, thinking, thinking.

Sister Carrie (339)

I.

The implications of the criminal act he has just committed in the back room of Hannah and Hogg's resort, the unwarranted removal of several thousand dollars from his employer's safe, begin to rock Hurstwood's thoughts and to toll on his body as he tries, unsuccessfully, to sleep on a train bound for Canada. Hurstwood's "train of thought," the reader is told, "was a burden to carry."

It rocked his brain and dampened his brow. It made his

head ache and caused him to be nervous and fearful. He was in a subdued mood and yet staringly clear. He could not sleep, could not feel good enough to stay awake. In short he was wretched and waited with dogged patience until he could get into Canada. Maybe, over there, he would feel better (283, 84).

Speeding away from the south shores of Lake Michigan, toward another city in another country, Hurstwood's burden is his own imagination. Alone, in the quiet of the sleeper, in his mind he hears news boys crying out his theft along "the down town streets," sees "Hannah's frown and Hogg's wrath," the bartenders' amusement, the cashier's stare--he sees his wife being notified. "What a blow to her social ambitions," he thinks (283). In a kind of litany he will repeat and reformulate again and again during the following years, Hurstwood tells himself now, for the first time, the true meaning of his actions.

Ah, his fine position, his elegant office; how he had cut himself off from that....Oh, the fineness of the thing from which he had cut himself--his friends, his standing. Yes, the wrath of his wife--her lawyers' letter--he knew all about that, but what was it after all? Certainly no excuse for such a crazy, idiotic, horrible thing like this he had fallen into. He could

have gotten out all right. He could have acceded to his wife's demands; he could have given in and straightened it out with her. Why had he not done so-- oh, why had he not done so? What would he do now, far off in Canada, without anyone he knew....The ills he had borne: how much easier it would have been to have borne them than to fly thus to these he knew not of (283).

Sleepless, he rises at 5:30, is consoled by looking at Carrie; his "vitality" is "restored" by eating. Later in the day, he imagines a more far-reaching restoration. Though he "was shut out from Chicago," and his "easy comfortable state," and though he has "robbed himself" of dignity, merry meetings, pleasant evenings, he is able to conceive of trying "to restore himself to his own state," by returning his thievings and by explaining. "Perhaps," he imagines, "they will forgive him and let him come back" (287). Once more, the sensation of his thinking is deeply physical.

Nostalgia [sic] began to affect his vitals. That dread yearning for the fixed, the stable, the accustomed which seizes those who reflect an atmosphere in their blood, began to make its way in him. He longed for Chicago, for his old ways and pleasant places (288).

In Montreal--"cold, different, un-American"--Hurstwood has the first of several unbearable chance meetings with "old-time friends." Seeing a man named "Kenny" calls up for Hurstwood "a thousand memories. He represented everything he had left, Chicago, his wife, the elegant resort" (294). Almost immediately finding himself the object of a detective's scrutiny, Hurstwood feels revulsion over "being pursued as a thief," and begins to understand the nature of "that social injustice which sees but one side, often but a single point in a long, cumulative tragedy." The newspapers would only report his taking the money, and no one would ever understand the "complications which led up to it." He decides to return "the major portion" of the money and writes to Hannah and Hogg, meaning to explain "all." But as he broods over the letter, he realizes that he cannot tell all, about his wife, about Carrie. He appeals to them as reasonable men: he had been "light-headed from entertaining friends, had found the safe open and having gone so far as to take money out, had accidentally closed it. This act he regretted so much. He was sorry he had put them to so much trouble....Was there any possibility of his being restored?" (299).

The "very construction of this letter," the reader is told, reveals what in his troubled state Hurstwood has forgotten: that he has "severed himself from the past as by a sword." Indeed, in this state, "He was always forgetting

something" (300). But the reply from his employers several days later reminds him what, through constant thinking, brooding and "self-absorption," he has already come to accept: "There was no hope" of being restored in Chicago. Retaining \$1,300 of the stolen money and having now taken marriage vows with Carrie before a Baptist minister, Hurstwood turns his anxious hopes for restoration upon New York. There, he hoped to go into the saloon business again--"to buy into some resort and build it up as he had the Chicago house. He would again be manager, have a nice little home and Carrie." Though "slightly depressed" over sending back the money, he "eventually restored himself" for the train trip southward to New York (302).

Because "the true ethics of the situation never once occurred to him" (270), Hurstwood crosses a line that can never be recrossed back into the community imagined by the Chicago figures in Dreiser's novel. No longer surrounded by the fixed, the stable, the accustomed, his refuge for imagined self-reconstruction ceases to exist, and he finds himself anxiously crossing real borders, dreaming of restoration.

This inability to return to the community is what structures the remainder of Hurstwood's story. He remarries, but without being legally divorced. In New York, he returns to the saloon business, investing his stolen funds in an out of the way place without regular "friends,"

a place outside any community except the one which may be said to form around Tammany Hall, from which he is excluded. As he fades further and further from the possibility of restoration, he sits in hotel lobbies, occasionally carrying out conversation in the old style with men of his former class, even of his former community. Down to his last dollars, he presents himself, thus, as a man of leisure, but not as a man of action; he is a loungeur, a chair-warmer. Indeed, as his final delusional strategy for restoration, he becomes inert.

In New York, Hurstwood enacts two plots for restoring himself to his own state. The first forms around the invention of a conventional middle-class life; the second is built around a performance of leisure signifying class membership and a restoration of narcissistic identification within a community. Hurstwood's inability to succeed in either of these scenarios, apart from signifying the impossibility of restoring himself, suggests Dreiser's sense of the differences between two American cities, Chicago and New York. The contrast between Hurstwood's memory of himself "in his own state," and Hurstwood as "an inconspicuous drop in an ocean like New York" may, in some ways, be read as a dialogue on the history of a type of community in American cities at the end of the last century. In narrating ideas of community in these two differently-constructed cities, Dreiser invents an original dialogue on

"national community."

In "his own state," Hurstwood is always in view of people who knew him. He is, as Dreiser says, "a well-positioned man," of moderate means, though conspicuous. But in the real present of New York, a man such as Hurstwood, is made invisible by celebrities--"money kings," theatrical geniuses, literary kings, political barons; "Whatever a man like Hurstwood could be in Chicago, it is very evident that he would be but an inconspicuous drop in an ocean like New York" (305). Conspicuity and "show" determine affiliation within a small inner circle in the large, heterogeneous city of Chicago. Because he is so visible, Hurstwood is at first well-positioned, though later he will be oppressed by the small-town like gaze of his circle. Indeed, for all its rapid expansion and fragmentation at the end of the century, Chicago, as it is imagined by Dreiser and by his characters, is sometimes offered to the reader as a small, middle-American town, reminiscent of the towns of Dreiser's youth. In New York, on the other hand, a "sea already full of whales," a "common fish must needs disappear wholly from view, remain unseen." There, growth has created a different atmosphere, one which "reacts badly upon the small" like Hurstwood (304). Increasingly distressed, distantly exiled from the conspicuity he understands to be necessary for seeing himself reflected in a community, Hurstwood is doomed to remain alienated and invisible. As we shall see, in

achieving her celebrity status Carrie comes to reflect a novel image of connectedness in the modern city of New York. But homeless and wandering, friendless, Hurstwood finally comes to symbolize the invisibility of community in the alienating industrial-commercial city.

His hope, nevertheless, when he arrives in New York, is to construct a conventional middle-class life, to become well-positioned, not as the reader understands that upper-class notion of Chicago, but as he newly imagines himself under the conditions of his diminishment. Indeed, during this initial plot of restoration, Hurstwood's images of community are altered. Formerly picturing himself within a certain circle marked by recognizable objects, in New York he is lowered into the middle-class; as a result, friendly circles have, at least temporarily, dropped out of his thinking. In the dialogue on community between Chicago and New York, the two cities are in striking agreement concerning the isolation of the middle class. Carrie's and Hurstwood's first years in New York recall the specter of the Hansons, the novel's archetypal middle-class family, as Hurstwood at first chooses to remain isolated from neighbors, does not make friends, indeed, remains at home when he is not working. His relations with Carrie in their Upper West Side apartment become his sole medium for intimate connection with the world. But this way of thinking about his connection to the world does not last for

long, as desire for male company begins to cloud--in fact, contradict--the economic realities of his common, bourgeois circumstances.

For a short while, nonetheless, cliches of domestic complacency drift through prose of anxiety and doubt. Recalling, too, Hurstwood's home in Chicago, the idea of settled domesticity seems here like so much strained playacting. The new furniture "makes an excellent showing," as long as they forget it isn't owned. Living in this theater of gentility one tries to forget the cares of the street.

Troubled as he was, he never exposed his difficulties to her. He carried himself with the same self-important air, took his new state with easy familiarity and rejoiced in Carrie's household proclivities and successes. Each evening he arrived promptly to dinner and found the little dining room a most inviting spectacle.....Once in the circle of its influence, he forgot his old situation and habits and would assure himself that he was better off for being out of it all (314).

Like descriptions of life in Hurstwood's other home, these scenes comment upon a premise of contemporary domestic realism: the home, while composed of the market's bounty, is

a refuge from the economic life of the city. These particular performances of domestic comfort never lose an anxious edge of self-consciousness, and the difference between home and market is never made persuasive.

Hurstwood's unconvincing middle-class persona begins and ends over three years, but only briefly in the scope of the narrative. To Carrie, contradictions are immediately apparent when they first set up house in New York, and her husband is not "the easy Hurstwood of Chicago--not the liberal, opulent Hurstwood she had known." Hurstwood must "make a great fight" to curb his desires to spend--"a miserable way to be compelled to think and it hurt him exceedingly" (311). For this fight he tries to convince himself that "He had Carrie. His furniture was being paid off. He was maintaining his position" (312). He has "scraped up a few acquaintances." His investment regularly pays him the one-hundred and fifty dollars per month he had anticipated, a small amount by former standards, but enough, he tells himself, as long as he "curbed tendencies to dress well" (314,315). The Warren Street saloon is another point of reference difficult to justify with Hurstwood's own state. "By judicious management and improvement, it might be made to pay." Hurstwood "confided to Carrie that he thought he had made an excellent arrangement." However, he conceals from her how much "the business varied," and how incompatible it was with that to which he was accustomed.

It had

nothing like the class of patronage which he had enjoyed in Chicago. Moreover, he found that it would take a long time to make friends. These people hurried in and out, without seeking the pleasures of friendship. It was no gathering or lounging place. Whole days and weeks passed without one such hearty greeting as he had been wont to enjoy everyday in Chicago....It was too much out of the way (309).

In the beginning it is "a delight" to seek refuge from the loneliness of the saloon with Carrie at night." But finally Hurstwood's longing for the society of male company" (310) induces him to revise his narrative of domestic satisfaction. Although his home-life is "precious", he "could occasionally stay away from dinner" (315). Hurstwood's invented world pictures Carrie being "of the thoroughly domestic type of mind" and thus content to remain at home alone. He supplies her with certain necessities: "the furniture, the decorations, the food and the necessary clothing." Remembering himself as a man of leisure, he feels attracted to the "outer world" of theaters and other night life." Though he knows he is less "imposing" than he once was, he begins "to look again into the eyes of women, and to take cognizance of the pleasures of the tenderloin"

(316). "Blossoming" in the outer world, he "forgot the lessons of adversity" (317)--in the process, quietly forgetting Carrie and their isolated intimacy. In some respects, Carrie is content with her circumstances, but he has seriously misread the degree of her complacency. She is not going to repeat her sister Minnie's social death-in-life.

During their third year in New York, Hurstwood's ability to keep up an even show of economic mediocrity has diminished. Here, Dreiser characterizes him as victim of a natural chemical imbalance caused by aging but accelerated by his abrupt departure from Chicago. As Dreiser theorizes, in the curve of his life a man first grows stronger, healthier, wiser, then weaker older, less incisive mentally. The middle-aged man--Hurstwood is now forty-three--though in perfect balance, tends "toward decay." Like his fortune, a man's bodily strength is also dependent upon youthful "accretion," then upon balancing decay to hold off "toppling." Such a balance is achieved through collaboration, as it were.

A fortune, like a man, is an organism, which draws to itself other minds and other strength than that inherent in the founder. Besides the young minds drawn to it by salaries, it becomes allied with young forces which make for its existence, even when the strength

and wisdom of the founder are fading. It may be conserved by the growth of a community, or of a state. It may be involved in providing something for which there is a growing demand (338).

Implied in the analogy between fortune and the physical being is that the process of decay in a man is slowed by relations with others: the young, a son to take over familial responsibility, and by continued relevancy to the "community."

Hurstwood's state in the third year of his life in New York, at the stage between accretion and decay, is still "well-balanced." But without the lost points of reference--fortune, family, class, status, community--he cannot maintain that balance for long. Indeed, "constant comparison between his old state and his new" produces "depression," which produces "certain poisons in the blood, called katastates," which "inveigh against the system" to produce "marked physical deterioration." Ellen Moers explains that Dreiser became interested in the work of a physiologist/psychologist named Elmer Gates during a problematic moment in the composition of Sister Carrie. Facing the task of accounting for the effects of false, depressing, and evil emotions on Hurstwood's mental and physical decline, he made "metaphorical use" of Gates's idiosyncratic discoveries. Moers quotes from a Gates study,

shown to Dreiser in manuscript: "My experiments show that irascible, malevolent, and depressing emotions generate in the system injurious compounds, some of which are extremely poisonous." These extremely poisonous compounds Gates called "katastates," since they were responsible for causing catabolism, or katabolism, i.e., a breakdown of metabolism" (Moers 160, 66).

In the course of time, these poisons "told upon" Hurstwood's "temper".

His eye no longer possessed that buoyant, searching shrewdness which had characterized it in Adams Street. His step was not as sharp and firm. He was given to thinking, thinking, thinking. The new friends he made were not celebrities. They were of a cheaper, a slightly more sensual and cruder grade. He could not possibly take the pleasure in their company that he had in that of those fine frequenters of the Chicago resort. He was left to brood (339).

The "disease of brooding" leads to his indifference to the Warren Street saloon, and subsequently to the loss of his investment. Finally, it also leads to his indifference to the outer world and to the desire "to be alone and to be allowed to think" (343). Increasingly, his precious nostalgic fiction, the "realm he had left" comes to seem

like an unassailable wall. Now that he was out of it,

He began to see it as one sees a city with a wall about it. Men were posted at the gates. You could not get in. Those inside did not care to come out to see who you were. They were so merry inside there that all those outside were forgotten, and he was on the outside (339).

There is a strong evocation here of Carrie's initial alienation in Chicago. Hurstwood appears to be duplicating that "state" of being always between cultures, of not ever having arrived.

Thus, the first plot of restoration finally breaks down when plans are made to put up a modern office building on the site of the saloon Hurstwood has used as a base for imagining new communal ties. The symbolic new, a skyscraper, actually replaces a nostalgic projection of Hurstwood's old "state," a nineteenth-century saloon. Chicago communal agreement concerning circles forming in small buildings is displaced by the dehumanizing, emasculating gigantism of New York, and Hurstwood's "bluff" with Carrie and with himself about money and investment is "all up."

In effect, however, the bluff is revised and extended. Hurstwood's second act in New York is to present himself, and to think of himself as a picture of his old state--even while he is running out of money and becoming less and less able, physically and mentally, to get up from his rocking chair. As it is in so many texts of the 1890s, including Roosevelt's discourses on American nationalism, to be active in Sister Carrie is a virtue. Thus, for Carrie, the city of Chicago is initially represented in the active personality of Charles Drouet; Drouet makes things happen for Carrie, though not always as she would have wished them to happen. The days prior to the Elks Club benefit, more than any other sequence, shows Hurstwood in action and is the apex of his reputation in the community. On the other hand, inaction and indecisiveness in this Dreiser narrative among others, as well as in some of the political discourse of the era, is seen as unproductive and therefore negative. For Dreiser's central figures, it is always important to be productive. Generally, what one must produce is wealth. But wealth is subordinated to productivity itself. To be motionless, inactive, is represented literally and figuratively as imprisonment. The ubiquitous rocking chair of Sister Carrie has some particular significance as a sort of machine of transition in a dream of productivity. To prepare herself to take action in the city the night of her arrival in Chicago, Carrie sits at the window, in the rocker, "looking

out upon the night and the streets in silent wonder" (15). The window, at which the rocking chair is always positioned, distances the city understood to signify struggle, while offering a safe view of the city as a kind of mental geography upon which action can be planned. At the same time, the rocking chair's movement rehearses the movement of the city outside; it sets the sitter in motion, that is, for genuine action.

Displaying a great deal of interesting variation, the rocking chair is explained in nearly every essay, long or short, written about Sister Carrie. Since the 1960s, more effort has been made to employ Dreiser's rocking chair as a central and organic metaphor which encompasses the narrative and its contemporaneous world. Depending upon how one reads history, one reads the rocker. The rocker is "simultaneous stasis and incessant motion" in an age of high economic productivity and reduced individual power (Jay Martin 257). But amid cultural perceptions of life as deterministic, it also affirms the quest for power by communicating the paradoxical "nature and intensity" of Carrie's attempts to go somewhere (Pizer Novels 68). Amy Kaplan sees the rocker and its motion as mediating. The rocker as a metaphor, thus, convincingly bolsters an argument in her chapter on how Sister Carrie works within and against consumer-driven sentimental conventions. "The rocking chair mediates not only between motion and stasis in a mechanized society, or

between private and public space, as Philip Fisher has shown, but between sentimentalism and realism, as the chair magically resurfaces...in each rented room, from the Hansons' apartment to the Waldorf Astoria. The rocking chair is the place where characters do not just observe the world outside their windows, but where they dream their sentimental fantasies of escape" (Social Construction 144). I join this dialogue agreeing with all these notions that rocking is a motion of mediation and that the chair is a place where characters variously deal with the problems of the world outside the window. However, I disagree with the interpretation that dreaming done in the rocker is escapist. Anticipating and hoping for change in her social situations, Carrie's rhythm in the chair--adjacent with yet ostensibly separated from the rhythm of the city outside--marks sporadic moments of recognition that the world outside, namely the city, is in a kind of social and economic flux. The rocker can be viewed as a place for Carrie to rest, to observe and to adjust herself to the flux while she momentarily catches her breath after relentless movement and flight. It safely and mildly repeats the flux, thus demonstrating that one is never fully out of the world. Rocking is a kind of private rehearsal for reality, in other words, rather than a separation from it. For Hurstwood, rocking is indeed a kind of stasis within the motion of economic forces, though his rest is a very tenuous one. But

rocking for Hurstwood is also a motion of desperate mediation between communal isolation and connection, which is to say between being and non-being. Like Carrie, Hurstwood sits in the rocker to rest from the struggle and to contemplate his next move--to think. But his actions never materialize; he gets up to initiate action and social connection in the outer world, but ends up sitting idly in a hotel lobby, a strategy for social connection but also a way to kill time before he returns to the rocker. Hurstwood rests in the rocking chair, but he also rehearses a transition that is never carried out. As the rocker itself rehearses the motion of the city, it seems, thus, to mock Hurstwood for his unproductive motionlessness.

II.

During the course of Hurstwood's second plot of restoration, thinking, inaction, motion without progress mock or undermine a hollow performance of success. For that performance, Hurstwood imitates himself in "his own state," a self-impersonation which dissolves, now that all the aspects of his class identity have dissolved, including income, into self-mockery. And as he nervously performs the intention to act, as well as the leisure of a comfortable man, the toll of katastatic poisons--of having neither money nor community to complement his pretense--is increasing depression, morbidity, apathy, mania, and physiological

illness.

Hurstwood's days and nights during the year he is out of work, but before he is out of home, are informed by a language of mental and physical deterioration and by an irony of appearances. As every day passes, Hurstwood becomes less and less himself. He begins "the road downward" with seven hundred dollars in his pocket and the delusional idea that he can reinvest a portion of that in a small business. But the squalid bars advertising for partners give him "the blues." With winter approaching, and the newspapers filled with items about failing businesses, starving families, men dying in the streets from starvation--80,000 out of work in New York, the winter of the 1893 depression--Hurstwood's own depression is magnified. Trying to shake off his blues, "to forget them and brace up," he walks about in the cold visiting potential investments. With one proprietor he talks "around about investments" until he learns that the price is far outside of his range. "He tried to put on an air of deliberation, as one who might really buy, but his eyes showed gloom" (348). Walking back, then, to their smaller, less expensive flat on Thirteenth Street, he feels "wholly depressed." At his age and "comfortably built," walking is not easy.

"Distinguished and affluent-looking," he "strains painfully at the thought" of having to ask for "something to do." Strolling about on another day, "thinking," he decides

to escape the "weariness of the streets" by sitting in the lobby of "one of the most important hotels in the city," knowing that any "decent-looking individual was welcome to a chair." But this rest is little relief to his dark thoughts; to be a lounge, a chair-warmer, has always seemed "a cheap and miserable thing to do" (354). Later at home, he falls into the rocker, to find relief from "walking and thinking" by burying himself in his newspapers. On this occasion, he reads, not of depression, but of a social world with which he is familiar: a young, handsome woman suing a rich, fat, candy-making husband for divorce, a famous actress opening at the Fifth Avenue, Daly producing King Lear, the departure for the season of the Vanderbilt party for Florida (354). The days hang "heavy on his hands," but his difficulties vanish "in the items he so well loved to read" (358).

Thus, the newspapers have a contradictory effect on him, both depression and relief from depression. Ultimately, they offer only relief from the real difficulties of his situation, once he becomes wholly isolated from others and the papers are Hurstwood's only remaining point of reference to the city behind walls. Hurstwood's sense of his relation to the newspaper is difficult to interpret. He finds pleasure in being indoors, reading in a warm place. Generally, he is not bothered by envy as he reads about the upper classes. His fascination

and pleasure may, in some sense, be vicarious, though Dreiser gives no direct evidence of that. We do see that when he is in his ease reading about ease, Hurstwood increasingly desires nothing but ease. It is as if reading newspapers becomes a restoration in itself. Along with letter-writing and melodrama, this is another instance in the novel of a genre of public expression fashioning and perpetuating a view of reality.

Tales of a leisure class appear to "react upon" Hurstwood's actual enactment of leisure as he tries to turn his intensive consciousness off from his losses and difficulties. Hurstwood's reading, an activity of leisure, is seen in the novel from several positions. From Carrie's point of view, while he is in the inner world of the apartment, instead of outside looking for something to do, he seems "too well satisfied" in his domestic "comfort." But Hurstwood himself finds lounging "miserable." At first, his leisure has the purpose of helping him to forget his difficulties. In the beginning, he does not set out expressly to be perceived as "affluent-looking" when weary from walking, he rests in a hotel lobby. However, as long as he maintains the appearance of affluence, he can easily enter the forum of his former class, the hotel lobby. There, he perpetuates an appearance of affluence by reading the papers, having a shave, and, in one instance, when he is seen by an "old-time friend" from Chicago, by seeming to be

waiting for "an appointment." Others, including men in poker rooms, naturally take Hurstwood for a member of a particular class. In one poker room, seeing "a few acquaintances" and exchanging "a few friendly commonplaces," he extends the impression of his leisured affluence, in part through absorbing significant losses. The need to put on airs thus breeds more pretention.

So, what starts out to be a relief from difficulty--leisure hours spent sitting in hotel chairs, reading at home about leisure--is transformed into a kind of strategy for restored social identity. The poker games Hurstwood plays, and which he loses, become symbolic of the gamble he takes on a strategy based solely on a bluff of leisure, associated with class membership. But I do not mean to suggest that Hurstwood is all that deliberate in his gambles. In fact, in performing, he hardly acts at all. For Dreiser, Hurstwood is an interesting "case" because of the psychological and physical complications of circumstances over which he has no control. In one scene, after fighting with Carrie over his increasing lack of attention to his appearance when he is in the apartment, he cleans up and goes to a fine hotel to read and have dinner. By now, he is "addicted to his ease," and has a "craving for comfort." Addiction is a key idea in Sister Carrie, for all behavior in the novel might be characterized as addictive; characters crave what they desire, and their craving is never fully

satisfied. With "no thoughts for the morrow," he sits "reading and posing, everyone imagining him to be some well-to-do, comfortable merchant, and he lulling himself by it all" (373). Reading is posing here, and being seen reading he lulls himself into imagining his own affluence. Girded by his egoistic transformation, he buys a cigar, stands outside "where other individuals were lounging--brokers, racing people, thespians--his own flesh and blood." "He was as nearly like the old Hurstwood as he would ever be again." He hunts up a poker room, deluded into believing that he can bluff his way back into genuine affluence. Sometime after one in the morning he returns to the apartment "sick at heart," and poorer of purse.

Indeed, Hurstwood is characterized throughout this period of shamming affluence as being sick. The association of affluence and illness is important. "A splendid paper," the narrator explains, "might be prepared" on the contradictions inherent in Hurstwood's condition. Suffering from what Dreiser calls "mental apathy," in another instance "mania," he is a "fit case for scientific investigation." The skill and wit of the middle-aged mind--one used to "peace and plenty"--for "shifting and doing," has become "atrophied." He is in a dilemma because he "appears to be something and lo, the poor brain argues that it must live up to that something, else it is disgraced." Hurstwood's apathy arises from what appears to be a complicated quandary

with pathological implications, brought on by the loss of all that signified his authority and manhood, by chronic thinking, by delusions of what he appears to be, by disgrace and humiliation. The brain of a man in such a pathological quandary, paralyzed as Hurstwood's seems to be, "can scarcely change itself sufficiently to do as the thing requires"--meaning here, the desire to be restored to its former condition, to fortune, to intimacy with others (407). Here, when he has given up trying to become identified with the conventional middle class, and when he no longer has the means nor the ability to increase his "fortune," Hurstwood's notions of renewed identification with an imagined upper class circle become increasingly estranged from reality. At this point in the novel, to articulate Hurstwood's strategies for restoration, using terms like "atrophied" and "depression," Dreiser crosses a language of class affiliation with his era's medical rhetoric surrounding the descriptions and origins of mental illness. Indeed, the "splendid paper that might have been prepared" on Hurstwood's complex state of mind had already been written before 1900, in various treatises and books on that subject.

In scholarship on the history of medicine there is an extensive literature examining the correlation of illness with other facts of society. One of the most resonant meditations available is Susan Sontag's well-known Illness

as Metaphor (1977). Focusing her attention particularly on the semiotics of cancer and tuberculosis (some years later, she wrote a similar essay on AIDS), Sontag remarks that no illness is free from metaphor. For example, she writes that as "consumption" was actually taking their lives, the Romantics "invented invalidism" as "a way of retiring from the world without having to take responsibility for the decision" (33). All illness, in fact, becomes associated with metaphors of exile. In many ways parallel with tuberculosis, the metaphors of cure generated by "insanity" form around the idea of confinement away from the sufferer's daily routine (35). Indeed, the daily routine has often been seen in the history of how illness is imagined as having a potentially toxic affect on the body. Not surprisingly, then, in the last century (as now), doctors were able to demonstrate a "high correlation" between cancer and complaints concerning the texture of common life.

Physicians found the causes or predisposing factors of their patients' cancers in grief, in worry (noted as most acute among businessmen and the mothers of large families), in straitened economic circumstances and sudden reversals of fortune, and in overwork--or, if the patients were successful writers or politicians, in grief, rage, intellectual overexertion, the anxiety that accompanies ambition, and the stress of public

life....Nineteenth-century cancer patients were thought to get the disease as the result of hyperactivity and hyperintensity. They seemed full of emotions that had to be damped down (51,52).

Diseases with murky origins like cancer, tuberculosis, insanity, or AIDS tend to be "awash in significance," and tend to "have the widest possibilities as metaphors for what is felt to be socially or morally wrong." The modern metaphors of illness often "suggest a profound disequilibrium between individual and society, with society conceived as the individual's adversary" (58,61,73). In the case of AIDS and other contagious diseases, society evades the label of adversary by throwing it back at the sufferer.

I have found Sontag's meditations especially valuable for understanding a fictional narrative such as Sister Carrie in which an important character experiences a kind of disequilibrium with society concurrent with a range of physical symptoms. Hurstwood's condition, if I may call it that, is expressed as somewhat clouded in mystery, though we do know that it results from conditions of the aging body acted upon chemically by circumstances in the social environment. Hurstwood is clearly out of balance with the world he desires to re-enter, the upper-class circle behind its high walls, as well as with the less coherent worlds closing in around him. Though he may complain to himself

about the unfairness of his circumstances, for the most part he represses emotions through a frequently repeated expression like, "What's the use." Disease, Sontag writes, is often understood as "the will speaking through the body....a form of self-expression....the vehicle of excess feeling" (45). Hurstwood's physical disabilities become expressive of his mental repressions. They also result in a type of exile. For long periods, sometimes due to symptoms of an apparent respiratory illness, Hurstwood disappears from view to the social world of the street, the hotels, the poker rooms. But even when he is supposedly "well" again, he remains barely able to rise, burdened, exhausted, depressed, preferring to exile himself through reading. He may tell himself that he does not intend to dismiss his obligations to Carrie, to himself, to the society he wishes to be part of, but his condition effectively accomplishes that. Indeed, it accomplishes a kind of affluent-seeming leisure which ultimately makes his return from exile impossible. Only when he becomes homeless is his "bluff" truly up. At that point, the illness metaphors of exile and return, from and to an imagined community break down.¹

The vast discussion in the late nineteenth-century of "nervous disease" or neurasthenia offers many correlations with Dreiser's descriptions of Hurstwood's condition. Dreiser himself became neurasthenic shortly after the publication of Sister Carrie; this lost period of

"nervousness" has often been blamed on emotional scars resulting from the poor sales of his first novel. Dreiser wrote directly about his neurasthenia in The "Genius" (1915), in the unfinished novel An Amateur Laborer (1983), in Twelve Men (1919), and in his journals from 1902-03. The headnote to this chapter from Dreiser's second novel, Jennie Gerhardt (1911), might have been lifted out of any number of texts in the period which sought to explain the contemporaneous nature of mental "fatigue." I wish to show that some of that material has retrospective value for interpreting Sister Carrie. Surprisingly, Hurstwood's chronic inertia has never been adequately analyzed in terms of Dreiser's other writings on neurasthenia. I believe this aspect of Hurstwood's characterization might be read as a kind of rehearsal for Dreiser's own experience with neurasthenia, a physical experience, but one which also resonates throughout so much of his writing after Sister Carrie. I am able to make this point because neurasthenia was also, as more than one observer has noted, a sign of its times. When Dreiser represents the mental and physical deterioration of a character and correlates that deterioration with social conditions of his time, he unavoidably draws ideas and images from a ubiquitous contemporary discussion surrounding nervousness. Even Elmer Gates's theories on the workings of poisons in the blood owe their inspiration and phrasing to the contemporary discourse

of nervousness and depression. In a narrative which the shaping of human experience by natural forces, Dreiser makes use of the scientific language of katastates and anastates to account for symptoms which altogether appear to profile a historical construct, the neurasthenic "successful" man.

If certain images in advertising can be said to express the cultural preoccupations of a particular moment, then the back page ads from an 1897 edition of The Arena reveal a culture preoccupied about its health. The verso of the two facing back pages of the February issue of a journal containing essays on social issues and arts criticism, is blocked out with ads for deafness treatments, a cancer sanatorium, a toothpaste, and a bicycle--built for "Comfort, Pleasure, Exercise and Health."

The recto is a full-page advertisement, with visuals and text, for "Pabst Milwaukee, New Amsterdam" malt extract, a brand of beer. I wish to quote this last ad's copy in order to illustrate how, in addition to from what may be studied in an extensive medical literature, turn-of-the-century allusions to nervous disease were widespread. Pictured in the advertisement is a "dutchman," smoking a long pipe and holding a lidded stein of Pabst Milwaukee beer. "Milwaukee Beer is Famous," the bold copy reads, "Pabst has made it so." We know that when Coca Cola was invented in the late nineteenth-century, its originator had intended to provide his customer with a lift generated by a combination of small

amounts of cocaine and caffeine. Today, beer companies implicitly sell strength, manliness, or conviviality with their product. Here the connection of beer with health and potency is explicit and detailed. The long column of copy begins with the words, "The Invalid,"

Those who lack vitality--the languid, those suffering from some accident which has made them almost hopeless of recovery, those with debilitating ailments, those with an unaccountable weakness and lack of physical force, those with health impaired, or those slowly recovering from disease or fever, are invalids.

No gift of modern science is to them a greater blessing than PABST MALT EXTRACT, THE "BEST" TONIC. It lifts, strengthens, builds, is vivifying, life-giving, gives vim and bounce--it braces. It takes a subtle hold on disease, wrestles with it, eradicates it, fills the system with warm, pulsating blood, and gives the power to do and dare. For the invalid, therefore, be it father, mother, sister, brother, there is nothing to be compared with Pabst Malt Extract, The "Best" Tonic.

The first paragraph of the copy might serve as a paraphrase of Dreiser's portrayal of Hurstwood when he is out of work, languid, hopeless of recovery, unaccountably weak--invalidated as a provider. Clearly, this advertising

copy is plugged into the discourse on nervousness, an idea generated in part by metaphors touching upon the inexplicable, a lack of "force," and the battle for wellness. But Hurstwood's case is different from many in the late nineteenth century who suffered from mysterious conditions, in that he is unemployed and nearly broke. The Arena's readers, on the other hand, were in general not among the eighty-thousand out of work about whom Hurstwood reads in The World. Presumably, they were an educated readership productively employed by the busy commercial society. They were also the segment of the population, fathers and brothers as well as mothers and sisters, most likely to value words like "vim and bounce" and most likely to be seeking to recover the power to do and dare.

The depth of penetration of nervous disease into the general culture has recently been made more apparent with the publication of Tom Lutz's American Nervousness, 1903: An Anecdotal History (1991). Lutz's title is taken from George Miller Beard's seminal text, American Nervousness (1881), in which the term neurasthenia is first used. Lutz presents the history of neurasthenia analogously to the way Beard introduced it as a clinical category; that is neurasthenia was a "clarification" of diverse complaints about the modern world. But while for Beard, nervous disease was to be read primarily in terms of a variety of delineated physical manifestations, Lutz, looking at a wide range of materials,

presents neurasthenia as "a nearly universal trope for the individual's relation to cultural modernization" (20).

In fact, during the period known as the Gilded Age and into the first years of the twentieth century, while the exact nature of "neurasthenia" was widely disputed, it became a catch-all diagnosis; for mental hygienists, one historian writes, it was the paradigmatic illness of the age (Sicherman 894).

Apropos of my own discussion, Lutz makes the suggestion that neurasthenia be "considered as a liminal rite" (21). Indeed, the recuperating neurasthenic spent transitional time, not altogether separated, but on the threshold of normal social life. In the texts written about it, comprehension of neurasthenia may be said to imagine community. Neurasthenic liminality always has its eye on return to a particular community. Indeed, to have neurasthenia was to be identified with particular social circles, defined by class, gender, race, and, commonly, occupation. Coinciding with its reliance upon metaphors of capitalistic growth, the language of neurasthenia is also imbued with strong hierarchical implications. In fact, the same group that nineteenth-century physicians thought most likely to suffer from cancer--busy, successful people--were almost exclusively subject to nervousness. And for members of the age's commercial and professional classes--men and women--whose immersion into the tumult of modernity,

particularly urban modernity, was thought to be most intense, neurasthenia even served as a kind of status symbol.

Many of the representative neurasthenics focused on by Lutz left a great deal of written material behind. These include Theodore Roosevelt, Frederick Taylor, Thorstein Veblen, William and Henry James, Hamlin Garland, Frank Norris, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Edith Wharton, and W.E.B. Du Bois. Lutz's first chapter after his introduction is devoted to Theodore Dreiser. But before looking more closely at Dreiser's case, it would be helpful to turn our attention briefly to the doctors.

As described by George Miller Beard in 1881, "nervousness" was a "deficiency or lack of nerve-force," prevalent "among the in-door living and brain-working classes," caused by the effects on the body and mind of technological advancement and changes in the organization of society, specified often in the relations between men and women (Beard vi,97). American neurology's other major theorist, Silas Weir Mitchell, in a book published the year Dreiser was born, attributes "nervousness" to overwork, especially work involving intellectual exertion (Wear and Tear, or, Hints for the Overworked 1871). For Mitchell, men and women must maintain a balance between brain use and physical action; in the modern age, women, for whom affluence has created too much leisure and introspection,

are especially susceptible to "nervous temperament" (32). But men--especially those "at the turning-point of life, when the brain has attained its fullest power"--must also be cautious not to abuse the "organ of thought," lest it become fatigued (13, 65). Both Beard and Mitchell viewed nervous disease as an inevitable phenomenon of progress, and though they also both saw the problems associated with neurasthenia as a critique of progress, they also saw neurasthenia as a positive sign of progress. While Beard prescribed a regimen of physical activity to counteract overexertion of the brain, Mitchell advocated "utter idleness" as the cure for distress associated with too much intellectual labor. That either cure was designed to return the neurasthenic back from exile to a life of continued productivity indicates that neither man sought to critique society itself. In fact, their writings are generally blind to the presence in society of groups other than the successful; those affluent enough to be able to imagine themselves members of a community vulnerable to neurasthenia define the high level of progress which, for Beard and Mitchell, civilization has attained. Rather than to critique social disparity, at the most Mitchell is concerned about the quality of life in "the crowded portions of the country, of our great towns, and especially of their upper classes," when he writes that Chicago

is a place to-day to excite wonder, and pity, and fear. All the tides of its life move with bustling swiftness. Nowhere else are the streets more full, and nowhere else are the faces so expressive of preoccupation, of anxiety, of excitement. It is making money fast and accumulating a physiological debt of which that bitter creditor, the future, will one day demand payment (29,30).

Thus, the implication that neurasthenia itself constituted a critique of society may be confined to its critique of habits of excess among a certain circle.

For the potential neurasthenic, besides generating or spending money, one activity which was thought to exact a profound physiological debt when taken to excess was sex. In an age of Victorian prudishness, ministers and athletes, capitalists and neurologists warned Americans that to indulge excessively in sexual activity could drain their nerve force and accelerate nervous illness (Lutz 47). A historian of professional mental health practices, Barbara Sicherman notes that the doctor's own point of view often accounts for his understanding of disease. Like other Victorians, "physicians had an ingrained fear of fantasy and introspection (with their implications of sexual indulgence), of eccentricity and lack of control" (896).² Contrarily, while many American and European physicians

cried out against indulging sexual desires, Sigmund Freud's theory was that "nervous" behavior resulted from repression. In "'Civilized' Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness" (Complete Works v. 9), Freud reviews the literature on nervous illness and pronounces it incorrect. Finding fault with these various morally sanctioned proclamations--including Beard's--of a connection between nervous illness and modern civilized life, Freud offers his own moral reading of the "psychoneuroses" associated with neurasthenia, one which is intended ultimately to contest the malevolent effects of Victorian sexual morality. "If we disregard the vaguer ways of being 'nervous,'" he writes, "and consider the specific forms of nervous illness, we shall find that the injurious influence of civilization reduces itself in the main to the harmful suppression of the sexual life of civilized peoples (or classes) through the 'civilized' sexual morality prevalent in them" (183,84). That Freud's thinking was out of step with his era's is indicated by the prevalence in his time of a belief that overindulgence of sexual desire, especially in conjunction with excessive intellectual labor, threatened to deplete one's supply of energy.³

A variation of this discussion occurred when Victorian morals were crossed with late nineteenth-century ideals of manliness. This was the notion that excessive sexual activity posed a threat to manliness itself. Even more than

most other condemned activities, sex, and masturbation as well, drained the vital forces a man needed to fulfill the project of active physical and moral power (Lutz 47). Lutz describes Theodore Roosevelt's ideology of strenuosity as having originated with an imagined narrative of energy management proceeding from a period of nervous illness. "Not only was Roosevelt's political philosophy significantly influenced by the experience of neurasthenic symptoms, but his decisions," Lutz asserts, "about himself and his culture, too, followed the logic of neurasthenic cure" (79). Lutz's reading of Roosevelt's public life is both engaging, and somewhat too far-reaching.⁴ He does draw useful attention, however, to certain dichotomies in Roosevelt's thinking surrounding action and indecisiveness. To be neurasthenic was for Roosevelt "to run against the nationalist project." Roosevelt's nationalist, imperialist project, informed by a decidedly nostalgic view of history, concerned the cultivation of a strong and manly American civilization and a strenuous foreign policy, while avoiding what he read as "grave signs of deterioration in English-speaking peoples," as illustrated by the British military's "lack of fighting edge" in the Boer War (Roosevelt quoted 81,82). Echoing contradictions surrounding sexuality and power for the male neurasthenic, in his own words Lutz notes that during Roosevelt's political career, he

equated American indecisiveness about becoming a great military and economic world power with cowardice and with the moral laxity and flaccid overcivilized inactivity of leisured elites, and he offered a single answer to both problems: replace morbid self-reflection with action, preferably military action (94).

In Lutz's translation of the period's discourse on action, a man might remain flaccid to control the overindulgence of his sexual desire but he must maintain a high level of engorgement in regard to other physical actions, especially martialistic ones. As we have already seen, reactions by male writers and readers to the increasing social power of women was, not surprisingly, rife with contradictions arising from fears of change. The existence of independent women was recorded characteristically by Roosevelt with a warning against "race suicide" to which the Anglo-Saxon was vulnerable, should chaste "American" women not fulfill their calling to become strong mothers. Like the uncivilized savage in the new lands of the growing American empire, the fecund female was to remain vulnerable and under the protection of the new martial, jingoistic, Rooseveltian man. Betraying a particularly male bias, another historian, Jackson Lears, echoes neurasthenic nostalgia when he comments that the self-reflective, feminized, overcivilized, sexually

enervated neurasthenic, "tortured by indecision and doubt," seemed to himself and to others in his time to be "a pathetic descendent of the iron-willed Americans who had cleared forests, drained swamps, and subdued a continent" (49,50).

At the risk of generalizing too much history, I mainly wish to set out some terms for understanding how Dreiser participated in this discussion. These same dichotomies of action and inaction, maleness and femaleness, health and sickness, past and present, inform the characterization of George Hurstwood during his period of almost utter idleness. Moreover, pertaining to notions of how a healthy life encompasses passion, we may add one more set of opposing terms to the paradigm of Hurstwood's (and neurasthenia's) liminal dynamic: self-control and manipulation. In some sense, neurasthenia is also the paradigmatic disease of literary naturalism. Indeed, like the discourse of literary naturalism, the discourse of neurasthenia was formed in reaction to what Sicherman calls "the dangers of a competitive culture," embodied so uncritically in figures as far apart as Herbert Spencer and Horatio Alger (845). Although Lutz argues that narratives surrounding neurasthenia embedded an essentially optimistic outlook, the evidence also suggests that expressions of optimism for a healthy return often hover in ambiguity at the threshold of return, colored by the doubt which accompanies neurasthenic

depression. Thus, while the social position of the average neurasthenic may never have been in doubt, it is important to emphasize that the individual sufferer often saw himself as a victim of environment, as manipulated by the powerful forces of competitive culture, or by the primitivism operating under its surface. Therefore, the act of curing one's neurasthenia, like becoming active in reform politics, was to challenge and defeat a prevailing sense of the determinism in modern life.

By the measures of his age, Dreiser's own cure seems to have been generally successful. After about a year of fallow productivity, in 1903 he once more took control of his floundering career, returning initially to editorial work, ultimately to writing novels. The first ten years of the twentieth century, including the period of his crisis, seem to have mirrored for Dreiser the last ten years of the nineteenth, in that he worked himself up again from being a journalist to being a novelist. But after his illness, Dreiser's success seems also to have included the elevation in social status he had failed to attain in publishing Sister Carrie. Moreover, by 1911 he had gained a measure of celebrity.

From the 1890s, when he discovered Herbert Spencer, until he stopped writing, tensions of control and manipulation informed Dreiser's thinking and his work. The writing generated by Dreiser's neurasthenia is also engaged

by the dichotomy of action and manliness articulated by Roosevelt and others. In reading Dreiser's diaries in particular, one is struck by the images, at times poignant, of someone laboring to assert control over his habits, feelings, and physical well-being.⁵ That he has the illness is largely, he believes, his own fault, but its grip upon his mind and body imbues it with a life force of its own, against which Dreiser "works." At the same time that excessive intellectual labor--an elitist's idea of productivity--has caused the condition, the mind must "work" in a literal sense, with one's hands, to throw it off. Though Dreiser's "incapacity for working out my novel [is] as great as ever," he must will himself to stop trying to write as well as to stop engaging in overstimulating conversation. In their place, he must take up as therapy physical activity; influencing this thinking is the doctor who prescribes "labor" and "driving." The analogue for writing and mental work is sexual activity, too much of which "delays my mental recovery." For these lapses, Dreiser commonly berates himself.

To manipulate the monster which is manipulating him, Dreiser must alter his sedentary, inactive writing life to include active male labor, and he must forsake his active sexual desire for abstention and control. In his depression, he appears to be mired in doubt, though he retains some belief that should he achieve a proper balance

of bodily and mental activity he can negate his ill health. At the time of these particular entries, Dreiser is out of the fray of New York and its publishing industry and living in Philadelphia. Later, he will exile his wife to Missouri and return to New York, no better for his efforts so far. For some time, he is alone and dropping precipitously into poverty, until he is rescued, as he says, by his brother Paul. Paul sends him with a recommendation to Muldoon's sanatorium in Westchester County. There, for six hundred dollars, men of the upper classes, most of them avowed neurasthenics, buy six weeks of the strenuous life through the drilling of an ex-wrestler and boxing trainer.

Dreiser's writing about Muldoon, after the fact of his neurasthenia, is filled with humor and irony. Muldoon has contempt for weakness, for softness in men (Laborer), and for Dreiser; in a bemused manner, Dreiser is equally contemptuous of Muldoon--or as he calls him in Twelve Men, "Culhane, the Solid Man"--and of his "cure." In "Culhane" and in An Amateur Laborer, the experience with Muldoon has been turned into different types of fiction, though the nature of the descriptions correlate in many ways. In these writings, we are given glimpses of Dreiser trying to convince Muldoon that life was determined by uncontrollable forces, and of Muldoon, whose livelihood relied upon putting men back into shape to lead powerful lives, replying that a man decides for himself what kind of life he will have

(Laborer 88). We can imagine the incongruity of the awkward, thin-framed Dreiser in this bastion of Rooseveltian male values, constantly exercising, riding horses, listening to speeches on manliness ("Culhane").

But we also hear Dreiser emphasizing his congruity with the other men here, all of whom are uncomfortable with the Muldoon/Culhane regimen of strong male indoctrination and all of whom are also very well off. "In the main they were of that order or condition of mind which springs from (1), too much wealth too easily acquired or inherited; or (2), from a blazing material success, the cause of which was their own savage self-interested viewpoint" ("Culhane" 161). This child of a poor family, representing himself here as a condescending observer, at no time suggests that he doesn't belong. In fact, this part of Dreiser's neurasthenic narrative along with what follows, his brief stint working as a laborer for the New York Central Railroad, demonstrate, on the one hand, Dreiser's ridicule of certain cultural ideals of the strenuous male, and, on the other hand, that having neurasthenia identifies him with success and elevated social status. Thus, when he asks a railroad executive for work, Dreiser represents himself as a writer and neurasthenic, looking for a means to improved health (Laborer). Ultimately Dreiser's shortlived career with the railroad work gang leads him to see himself as unsuited for manual labor and for its social connotations. No doubt, the

ill-suitedness he felt was emphasized by time spent among heirs and barons of industry at Muldoon's.

Later, he will report on the colorful personalities he meets with the railroad, men such as "The Mighty Rourke," whose philosophy of manhood is simple and clear: "'What kind av a man is it that'll let himself be waalked on? There's no sinse in it. It's naht natchral. It's naht intinded that it should be so'" (Twelve Men 314). But despite the charm of strong men like Rourke, for the recovering neurasthenic Dreiser, manual labor and its illusions of male potency quickly become "offensive" (Laborer 105).

#

How might Dreiser's representation of his own neurasthenia episode after 1900 inform our reading of George Hurstwood's decline? First of all, the association of neurasthenia with sexual indiscretion provides a deeper understanding of how sexual activity figures into Hurstwood's decline. The single interpretive comment Tom Lutz makes about Sister Carrie is that Hurstwood commits his "fatal mistake" in separating love and economics (52). This comment appears within Lutz's reading of Dreiser's The "Genius", and is meant to support a discussion about "sexual and financial moralities" in that novel. I agree. Indeed, I have said as much in chapter five to explain how Hurstwood overdetermines male liminality and marginalizes the

conventional economic thinking which both generates and constrains the imagination of community. But the bearing upon his later psychological condition of Hurstwood's mental life in Chicago beyond the threshold of community has yet to be fully explored. I wish to suggest, first of all, that Dreiser's thinking about the reason for Hurstwood's deterioration is informed by conventions of Victorian thinking about sexuality which hold that excessive passion is both morally and physically detrimental to the individual. It is possible to argue that Hurstwood never "recovers" from the effects of the excessive, uneconomical, romanticism which develops into his physical relationship with Carrie. The reader is told more than once that passion is somehow beyond Hurstwood's physical capacity, and that he must strain himself to play the passionate swain. When his feelings for Carrie are at their peak, the evening of the Elks event, Hurstwood loses his power over her. That night, she was the "admired, the sought-for"; the tables had turned and "she was looking down, rather than up, to her lover" (193). After this reversal, Hurstwood never actually recovers his power. Indeed, this moment of heightened passion commences a progressive loss of power--social, intellectual, and physical.

The word "power" is nearly ubiquitous in the novel, becoming, in fact, a matrix word for marking narrative change. In the first part of the novel, often from Carrie's

point of view, "power" is used to define relations--for Carrie, the unfamiliar relations of the city. Shortly after meeting Hurstwood, Carrie senses that he is "in power" over her; she is also "mindful of the power of his eyes" when he looks at her steadily (120, 138). Whenever Hurstwood becomes the novel's center of attention (in Chicago), "power" refers to something about him which is visible and conspicuous; it also refers to his ability to perform for others. Hurstwood's power--like Carrie's on the stage--becomes especially conspicuous the night of the Elks Club benefit. But at this time, when his passion for Carrie has peaked, he is also beginning to strain at expressing and maintaining his power, notably, his "power to be attentive" to his wife--who is at this point frequently attributed much strategic power--his power generally in the family, and his "lack" of youthful power. He is now like "a vessel, powerful and dangerous, but rolling and floundering without sail" (210, 243, 222, 221). Out of control, "power," then, becomes attached to instincts, as Hurstwood begins to live, somewhat desperately, by his. Sitting before the open safe, Hurstwood's "sense of right is proportionate in power and strength to his evil tendency" when he is "drawn by desire toward evil" (269). In New York, once all passion is spent, although Carrie for a time continues to be fascinated by his "daring and power," power, now seen with deeper irony, becomes something Hurstwood must work hardest to effect.

The conspicuous power Hurstwood has easily exuded in his own state, which has given him the power to conceive of himself as part of a community, dissolves in the modern ocean of New York; he is unable to make a "show" of power in New York. Eventually, he completely loses the "power to shift" for himself (305,306,407). Simultaneously, however, Carrie is attributed more power, especially after she becomes the sole breadwinner of their relationship. The curve of Carrie's life in New York elevates her from having "little power of initiative" (321) to a level of conspicuity accompanying the "place and power" she had once fantasized watching "The Mikado."

As a result of his excessive passion for Carrie, Hurstwood, called a "lover of power," sacrifices what he loves, initially in the context of his family. Then, because the male community's image of itself cannot accommodate the conspicuity of "scandal," he loses control of his power as well as his conspicuity. But more importantly, as a direct result of that passion, Hurstwood loses his power to shift and do, and he never recovers it. Here "power" signifies energy and self-governance. Ultimately, he is unable to shift from his rocker except to run household errands with the allowance given him by Carrie. Well after his indiscrete sexual behavior has set him in disequilibrium with the community and depleted his vital male power, the power of Carrie, a bold modern woman

out of necessity, shifting and doing for herself, finally undermines Hurstwood's creation of himself as a man.

Repeating the narratives and motifs surrounding neurasthenia in the late nineteenth-century, Hurstwood's physical and psychological condition may be said to have three main causes. First, excessive passion drains him of his potency during what Silas Weir Mitchell called "the turning point of life, when the brain has attained its fullest power"--and what Dreiser's narrator calls the "period between the cessation of youthful accretion and the setting in, in the case of the middle-aged man, of the tendency toward decay" (338). Second, in New York, Hurstwood becomes subject and then victim to the dangers of a competitive culture; his strenuous "overwork" to make the Warren Street business a success leads finally to failure. Indeed, Hurstwood sees himself as a victim of a competitive environment represented by Tammany Hall, "an all-controlling power." Finally, and this is one of the reasons for his business failure, Hurstwood takes to abusing his organ of thought: as both a cause and symptom of his condition, he is given to thinking, thinking, thinking. Although reading the newspaper becomes an opportunity for relief from the difficulties of restoring himself, reading is also a dangerous immersion into the business of the city. Indeed, Mitchell had worried over the overworked man, who "does not ride, or shoot, or fish, or play any game but euchre," and

for whom "the newspaper is his sole literature" (74).⁶

But Hurstwood's condition is perhaps more interesting for the ways it does not fit the profile of the neurasthenic. For one thing, the overworked man who only plays at cards and only reads the newspaper, who abuses his brain, is characteristically successful. When Hurstwood is "sick," he has already fallen out of the community capable of conceiving itself as neurasthenic. Later, of course, Dreiser himself would become neurasthenic, subsequent to, if not caused by, what he perceived as the failure of Sister Carrie. Neurasthenia for Dreiser may have compensated for his lack of conspicuous success by lending him identification with the neurasthenic community. Dimly anticipating Dreiser's future, an inertia copying neurasthenia and masking as leisure characterizes Hurstwood's strategy for identifying his diminished self as a semblance of himself in his former successful community.

The neurasthenia narrative is optimistic; as a machine can be repaired, so can a human being. Some time passes before Hurstwood loses hope, before he says, though not yet for the final time, "What's the use." For a long time, he tells himself that eventually he will work again. As long as his own prospects and the general economic conditions of the city are poor, he waits for his moment, exiled from the male working world, idling, but imagining the possibilities for healthy reinvestment of his energy and for his return.

This becomes his signature delusion, the major lie he tells to himself, but also to Carrie. To keep himself alive with her support he tells her that he is waiting for a friend from Chicago to open a hotel in New York. Before this lie needs to be told, however, Hurstwood's prospects for any kind of restoration are, at most, doubtful. Still, he anticipates getting up, finding something to do, restoring himself to his own state, though he remains indecisive and deepens his desperation. In all ways, he is the outcast to Roosevelt's nationalist project to replace morbid self-reflection with action. The city walls out of which Hurstwood has been cast are the ones raised by the rhetoric of an American-style success plugged into late nineteenth-century nationalistic fervor. They are the walls of an imagined community of strong men and women, a community which rhetorically represents itself as the nation. Nevertheless, as an implicit critique of that community's assertions about history, Hurstwood's own project for restoration is also based upon nostalgia, a fantasy of the world as it never was.

Finally, Hurstwood does decide to act. After "several hours" of arguing pro and con with himself, and "feeling no need to act at once" (411), he answers an advertisement to work as a strikebreaker in Brooklyn. Given Hurstwood's background, this particular strategy to restore the perception that he has the power to shift and do, outdoor,

physical work on the streetcar line, is absurd. Indeed, this once "very acceptable individual of our great American upper class" cannot successfully enact the role of manual worker. Having never worked out of doors, it never occurs to him, for example, to bring warm clothing. By now for the most part silent always, Hurstwood makes little effort to fit himself into the banter or phraseology of his fellow scabs. When rebuffed by silence, a man who has tried to be "genial" imagines that Hurstwood "was out of sorts." When the striking Irish workers throw stones at him, followed by bullets, Hurstwood says "vaguely--'this is too much for me.'"

He walked homeward in a blinding snowstorm....Then [at home] he looked for something to eat, and finally, his hunger gone, sat down in his comfortable rocking chair. It was a wonderful relief....Then he turned and saw the papers. With a half sigh, he picked up the "World" (419,429).

This pun, playing upon both the burden of reading news and the reader's satisfying illusions that by reading he restores his links to the world, also signifies the unbearable, inescapable, and debilitating burden of Hurstwood's thoughts. For the life story Dreiser told about himself nearly thirty years after his arrival in New York

City (A Book About Myself, 1922), the World, that is Joseph Pulitzer's New York World, becomes a centripetal force for the young writer's creative and intellectual development. Dreiser's impressions of the world around him are critically revised during his employment as a "spaceman" on the World in 1894. At the time, his health was suffering from the effects of the social descent he experienced in moving to New York. Paid by the inch of column space, he is the most marginal of newspaper writers. Nevertheless, he is repeatedly in "awe" of the city he reports on, particularly of its contrasts between wealth and poverty, "more sharply emphasized than anywhere else in America." His term with the World will be brief; "the grinding and almost disgusting forces of life itself which I found in Spencer and Huxley and Balzac and which now persistently haunted me, and....a depressed physical condition at this time," made it impossible for him to work with any "zest" (487). "The air of ruthlessness and indifference and disillusion that everywhere prevailed," the "brutality which underlay the social structure of the city," is manifest to Dreiser (as the next chapter shows) by the corruption uncovered by the Lexow investigations of Tammany Hall.

The World itself, along with its "semi-neurasthenic" publisher, "overawed me." Pulitzer, "a brilliant and eccentric Magyar Jew....semi-dyspeptic and half-blind, having almost wrecked himself physically...in a long and

grueling struggle to ascend to prominence in the American newspaper world," has "so little faith in his fellow-man, and especially such of his fellow-men as were so unfortunate as to have to work for him, that he played off one against another as might have the council of the Secret Ten in Venice, or as did the devils who ruled in the Vatican in the Middle Ages" (468,69). In the context of his beat, nightly observing the "cruelty and brutality" of the city, Dreiser is also being blown, "intellectually, to bits" reading Spencer's First Principles. In place of his feeling that he could "get somewhere," he forms at this time the "definite conviction" that "Man was a mechanism, undevised and uncreated, and a badly and carelessly driven one at that" (458).

One cold December day, as he sits in City Hall Park among a "large company of bums, loafers, tramps, idlers, the flotsam and jetsam of the great city's whirl and strife," the idea for Hurstwood is born (464). When the character Hurstwood returns from a strike scene in Brooklyn, perhaps like the Brooklyn streetcar strike scene Dreiser had reported on for the World (Lingeman Gates 155), the World he picks up conceals much about the weight of Dreiser's world on the day in the 1890s when Hurstwood was born.

Ironically, two years after he described these scenes, Dreiser himself sought work with a railroad as an antidote to his ill health, to restore his powers to pick up the

world. Identifying himself as a writer and neurasthenic, Dreiser was convinced that time spent outdoors, working with his body among strong men, would propel him back into the progress of his career. But, like his character Hurstwood, Dreiser would never define himself in terms of that male community. The working Irish and Italian men of Mount Vernon, New York (Twelve Men 319), like the Irish streetcar workers in Brooklyn, were subjects for Dreiser, which figured into his continued self-conception as a successful, powerful, worker of the literary community.

Chapter Seven

"An all-controlling power": Tammany Hall,
the Machine of Community

Get everything you can seems to be the motto of American officials and politicians. The great levy upon the less great, and they in turn demand money from the small fry, who, determined to make something for themselves, beat the beggars and starve the insane. That is horrible, even though it be politics--and we have a Thansgiving Day every November.

Theodore Dreiser (Ev'ry Month, January 1896)¹

Between university ethics and business ethics, between Good Government and Tammany, between academic pedantry and pavement slang, there is no community, no genial middle ground.

Van Wyck Brooks (America's Coming-of Age, 1915)

Among the many contemporary names and allusions Theodore Dreiser deleted as he prepared the first published edition of Sister Carrie were several references to Tammany Hall, pertaining to Hurstwood's experience of New York City. That Dreiser deleted these references is evidence that publishing one's ideas about what Tammany Hall represented for turn-of-the-century New Yorkers was a matter requiring some consideration. Indeed, historical evidence indicates that these particular references to New York's notorious political machine would have drawn the attention of readers in 1900 to Dreiser's positions in terms of an extensive contemporary dialogue on urban politics and society.

Certain biographical information on Dreiser can

contribute to our understanding of how significantly Tammany figures into the last months and days of George Hurstwood. Dreiser's autobiographical reconstruction of his first arrival in New York in the summer of 1894 is infused by some of the wonder characteristic of Carrie's first visions of Chicago. But looking back from 1922, as he told the story in A Book About Myself, Dreiser also recalls the repulsion he felt during his first days in New York. Smiling, sweet-faced, with an enormous girth marking his success, brother Paul escorted him across the city to sister Emma's shabby apartment, where, for the first time, Dreiser met the eventual prototype for Hurstwood, the infamous L.A. Hopkins: "a dark and shrewd and hawklike person who seemed to be always following me with his eyes." Of course, Dreiser, too, was watching. "H____," he tells us, has recently lost an "inspectorship of some kind" because the state senate's Lexow Committee has exposed Tammany Hall's predatory practices. Tammany Hall, "the head and center of all graft and robbery and vice and crime protection, had been delivered a stunning blow by a reform wave which had temporarily ousted it and placed reform officials over the city." And yet "the grip of that organization had not relaxed" (Book About Myself 434-39).²

Dreiser's well-documented conflicts in his relations with Paul may have stemmed in part from problems reconciling moral sensibilities, like those suggested here, with Paul's

way of life and social circle. Broadway character Paul Dresser, after all, was celebrated enough to be able, when necessary, to "reach" the Tammany leader, Richard Croker (Twelve Men 83). The Lexow Committee's "sickening" revelations about Croker's insidious influence upon the ordinary life of the city apparently informed many of Dreiser's early perceptions of New York as well as columns he wrote in the 1890s on political corruption. Again, in A Book About Myself, Dreiser recalls the invasive presence of Tammany functionaries.

To the door of every house of prostitution and transient rooming-house the station police captain's man, the roundsman, came as regularly as the rent or the gas man, and took more away. "Squealers" had been murdered in cold blood for their squealing....Not far from the region in which my sister lived, although it was respectable enough in its way, tramped countless girls by night and by day looking for men, the great business of New York, and all preyed upon by the police. On several occasions, coming home from work after midnight, I found men lying hatless, coatless, trousers pockets pulled out, possibly their skulls fractured, so inadequate or indifferent or conniving was the so-called police protection....When I went into Wall Street, the Tenderloin, the Fifth Avenue district,

the East and West sides, I seemed everywhere to sense either a terrifying desire for lust or pleasure or wealth, accompanied by a heartlessness which was freezing to the soul, or a dogged resignation to deprivation and misery....And never anywhere had I seen so much show and luxury (Book About Myself 479-80).

After 1894, "reform" leaders like Theodore Roosevelt briefly displaced the "roundsmen," the predatory policemen, and the Hopkinses of city government. No longer enjoying the "protection" of his own show and luxury by Tammany officials, Hopkins now spent much time at home with Emma and their children. From his reading of the holograph of Newspaper Days (the alternate title for A Book About Myself), Dreiser biographer Richard Lingeman fashions his picture of Hopkins with Hurstwood in mind.

Hopkins spent most of his days lounging dispiritedly around the house, "waiting for something to turn up," and Theodore watched him (seeing him through Em's eyes) progressively going to seed, not shaving, wearing old clothes, refusing to take the odd jobs his political cronies offered him out of charity. "He had turned fifty and he came to feel life was over for him," Dreiser later wrote....[Dreiser] had developed a strong antipathy for Hopkins (Gates 153-54).

Dreiser eventually reconciled his repulsion from Hopkins, according to Lingeman, when he realized that he and the old corrupt sponger shared the same fear: "the same terror of life or New York," quotes Lingeman from the holograph (154). Life or New York, Dreiser wrote, meaning that the two were possibly interchangeable. And for the moment, at least, as Dreiser recalled it, they were. Dreiser's sympathy for his character Hurstwood as he goes to seed is something which every reader feels at the end of the novel. Perhaps, years later when he was writing the story of his life, in recalling his walks in the city after midnight and his period of boarding with Emma, Dreiser was also fashioning Hopkins with Hurstwood in mind. By then, Dreiser's Hopkins wavered between being an agent of his own decline and a victim of the corrupt city, of middle age, and of the "show" he had once so ostentatiously performed. Tammany, described in surges of moral indignation, deprives, encompasses, terrifies, and sickens, and Hopkins, its crony, still caught in the grip of its tenacious power, still waiting, miserable, has given up.

Two book-length histories of Tammany Hall, both published in 1901, outline the terms of the public dialogue which Dreiser entered in the late 1890s and recalled in the 1920s. Each appears to be responding to the other as well as to the Mazet Committee's 1900 investigations. One, a text highly critical of Tammany-style politics, was reissued

by Dreiser's publisher, Boni and Liveright, in 1917 and continued for many years to serve as a standard history of Tammany; the other was published "under the direction of...[the] editor of The Tammany Times." The latter, E. Vale Blake's laudatory record, presents the history of Tammany as a narrative of a local social club, affectionately recording the details of social activities while emphasizing the democratic ideals which account for the club's enduring unity. Included are photographs of local members as well as records of attendance and transcripts of speeches given at testimonial dinners. After one such dinner held in honor of Richard Croker, during which he preaches faith in "the doctrines of true democracy" (168), Croker sails for England for a prolonged stay on his estate there until the political fortunes of Tammany can recover from the latest senate investigation. In response to accusations of corruption made throughout the period of Reverend Charles Parkhurst's and the "notorious" Lexow committee's crusades against Tammany, the author summarily wonders whether a "commission of inquiry" should be immediately instituted to investigate the "sanity" of one of Parkhurst's collaborators; at the end of the paragraph this man is dismissed as a lapsed Christian. In effect, these large-scale disputes, covered daily in newspapers across the city, the region, and the nation, pertaining to the politics of state and federal governments, are reduced in Blake's

narrative to squabbles of a small town variety.

This affectionate history of the "society" was written, in fact, both to glorify and to diminish Tammany's importance. To influence the late eighteenth-century dialogue over what kind of government the newly independent states should form, Blake tells the reader, a group of officers who had fought under Washington, and who were dedicated to preserving the "union," formed a "society of friends," initially calling themselves the Society of Cincinnati, "after Lucius Quintius Cincinnatus, to follow his example of citizenship" (9). These friends also pledged to render "permanent the cordial affection subsisting among the officers: the spirit will dictate brotherly kindness in all things, and particularly extend to the most substantial acts of beneficence, according to the ability of the Society, toward those officers and their families who unfortunately may be under the necessity of receiving it" (9). They chose as their emblem the bald eagle, and service to the state became their creed. It was not until the political work of insuring "a good constitution for their beloved country" had ended that out of the original group the Society of Tammany or Columbian Order was established in 1789; its motto was "Freedom Our Rock." The defining images it appropriated this time were "American" rather than European. The legendary Chief Tammenend, friend to the white settler, was known "as a skillful hunter and brave

warrior." The exotic appeal of a Europeanized, ennobled and mythical native American inspired the Tammany society to establish hierarchical titles such as Sagamore, Warrior, Hunter, and Sachem for its officers; the club meeting place was referred to as a wigwam (Blake 11-13).

The meaning of the word wigwam, as is very generally supposed, is not a tent, but a communal house, such as many of the stationary tribes of our North American Indians built for the common home, and which were usually large enough to accommodate from forty to sixty families (11).

The charter of incorporation drawn up on February 24, 1807, establishes the Tammany Society's purpose "of affording relief to the indigent and distressed members of the said association, their widows and orphans, and others who may be found proper objects of their charity" (18). Emphasizing the perpetuation of Tammany's original ideals, Blake makes an important distinction. Now over one hundred and ten years old, the Society of Tammany, he says, "is nominally, and by terms of its incorporation, a social, patriotic, and charitable association, and is practically and really a distinct body from the General Committee of the Democratic party, generally understood by the term 'Tammany'" (11).

There is a tension ever-present in Tammany's presentation of itself, concerning what Tammany is: a local "secret society," analogous to the Jolly Corks and dedicated to preserving democratic community, or a political machine and "corporate entity," to use Sister Carrie's term for New York City. If the other history published in 1901 is accurate, by 1890, Tammany's assimilation of new members into the democratic system, mostly immigrants from Ireland, Italy, and Eastern Europe, also served to feed an insatiable corporate center. Ultimately, the power given to poor immigrants, to the police, or to officials at Hopkins's level was returned to the center as payment or tribute. In his History of Tammany Hall (1901), Gustavus Myers does not concur with very many of Blake's accounts. After noting that "from nearly the beginning of its active political career," the records show "a succession of prominent Tammany leaders...involved in some theft or swindle, public and private," Myers emphasizes "the absurdity of the pretense that any vital distinction exists between the Tammany society and the Tammany Hall political organization. Tammany members industriously propagate this pretense, but it has neither a history nor an actual basis" (preface).³

More akin to the socially influential Elks than to largely invisible Jolly Corks, the Tammany Society performed rituals for installing its Sachems which were known only to a circle of members, but protected most industriously the

secret of its political power and vitality. That vitality was partly a function of the tensions between the visible and the concealed, the community of the wigwam and the organized network of the Hall. One of the more interesting documents out of Tammany history is a collection of "Very Plain Talks on Very Practical Politics, Delivered by Ex-senator George Washington Plunkitt, the Tammany Philosopher, From His Rostrum--the New York County Court-House Bootblack Stand." Dating like these other texts from the first years of the new century, Plunkitt's talk, the editor (in 1948) tells us, "is a commentary on the kind of urban civilization we had developed by 1900, and even more faithfully on the way of life achieved in New York City at the turn of the century" (v). Reconstructed here, in a historian's comments, is the turn-of-the-century dichotomy between the two Tammanies, one a construct of an abstract and universal "urban civilization" and the other of the local city. The politics Plunkitt says he is "playing...all the time," are decidedly confined to his district. His office, after all, is a boot-black stand in the county court-house. In his ironically mocking "Strenuous Life of the District Leader," Plunkitt explains a basic element of the public's continuing affection for his organization: as a district leader, first and foremost he "seeks direct contact with the people, does them good turns when he can, and relies on their not forgetting him on election day." The district leader's

"heart is always in his work, too," Plunkitt wryly continues, "for his subsistence depends on its results" (122-23). This reciprocal arrangement creates a small circle of obligation and, as such, the image of a somewhat conventional community. The other Strenuous Life, a collection of addresses by a politician with national ambitions, is oriented not to any particular community but to the nation. In fact, in addresses such as "Fellow-Feeling as a Political Factor," delivered in January of 1900, Roosevelt writes against the idea of segregated "districts" in a rhetorical invocation of urban togetherness. For the genial philosopher Plunkitt, the imagined community of his district is a setting for grass roots political action. But Plunkitt's district is also a guise for disavowing, while concealing, interest in the national and the corporate. Indeed, his mocking title seems to make such a transition obvious. Ironically, the political rhetoric of both Roosevelt and Plunkitt express and conceal the significance of the word "reform," a highly contested term in both local and national political contests in 1900. For reformers like Roosevelt, "reform" meant the elimination of corruption and invoked a vision of the nation as a coherent, undifferentiated community. Appropriated by Tammany, the meaning of reform became considerably vaguer. By insinuating itself into the diverse social texture of a society which was already being re-formed by relentless

economic and social growth, Tammany was attempting, through mechanisms of assimilation, to continue exploiting and protecting the diversity which created segregated districts varying in ethnic, racial, and economic composition.

But as a "Society" separated by charter, rituals, and hierarchies from the general society, Tammany's "incorporation" was never meant to include everyone under the wigwam. In 1807, when they signed a charter of incorporation, they vowed to afford "relief" not only to indigent members, but to "others who may be found proper objects of their charity" (Blake 18, emphasis mine). As Dreiser might have interpreted that document, the meaning of the words "other" and "proper" were intended to allow for selection. His autobiographical writings reveal that Dreiser was obviously more attuned in the early 1920s to Myers's history of Tammany Hall than to Blake's of the Tammany fraternal order. But the surprise of the manuscript Dreiser was working on in 1900 is how insidious "Tammany Hall" becomes with respect to the decline and demise of Hurstwood. Deleted from the Doubleday Carrie was this dramatic assertion of what Tammany was: "Tammany Hall was an all-controlling power. The gaudy pleasures of the surging metropolis were taxed then, as they are today, to make that organization rich and strong" (304). Dreiser's fiction looks back at the period just before Lexow, from the point of view of the moment the Mazet Committee was revealing in

1900 in New York newspapers that little had changed. By the time he was imagining Hurstwood's deterioration, L.A. Hopkins's power as a Tammany official had apparently been wholly subsumed in Dreiser's mind by the all-controlling power of the organization itself. Hopkins/Hurstwood becomes, on the one hand, a direct victim of Tammany's centripetal power, and, on the other hand, an outsider, invisible to Tammany's influential discretion to define a proper "other."

While Dreiser's interest in men's social clubs had waned after Sister Carrie, conspiracies of powerful men and, particularly, political machines were important aspects of Dreiser's conception of the circulation of urban power in the Cowperwood novels, especially The Titan (1914). The references which turn up in the manuscript of Sister Carrie demonstrate a far more muted attempt to imagine a modern industrial society defined by partially visible mechanisms of local political power. But the juxtaposition of Hurstwood and Tammany nonetheless confirms Dreiser's earlier interest in a charged contest to define and manage urban social and political relations. When he arrives in New York, Hurstwood is apparently no stranger to corrupt government. During the evening of the Chicago Elks Club benefit, a fellow Elk had winked "shrewdly" in telling Hurstwood how he has defeated "Hennesy" for the nomination of alderman (179). But Dreiser's references to Tammany Hall

seem intended to indicate that Chicago and New York are much different cities with much different kinds of social relations. The seriousness attached to Hurstwood's own corruption when he robs his employer's safe might be seen as ironic in the city of New York, where widely organized theft, in the form of "taxing," occurs so "regularly." Dreiser's narrator tells us that to succeed in a small business in the "corporate entity" of New York City, one had to "stand in" with local ward leaders. As Hurstwood searches for a business opportunity in the city, "some flourishing downtown bar," he gains considerable knowledge about "the influence of Tammany Hall and the value of standing in with the police." "The most profitable and flourishing places he found to be those which conducted anything but a legitimate business such as that controlled by Hannah and Hogg" (307,308).

Moreover, he found that it would take a long time to make friends. These people hurried in and out, without seeking the pleasures of friendship...Whole days and weeks passed without one such hearty greeting as he had been wont to enjoy everyday in Chicago (309).

After Hurstwood's business venture fails, strangely, he continues to be dogged by Tammany. Soon after he loses the place on Warren Street, he is beaten out of a third of his

remaining stash of money while playing poker against "a political hanger-on of the Tammany district" in which the game is being held (369). Later in the novel, when Hurstwood is now the unassimilable "other," his suicide is precipitated by the refusal of a man he passes on the street to respond to his panhandling. This man, the narrator mentions incidently, is "a small official....under Tammany." "You're no good," is the official's judgement. Discretionary in his charity, he tells Hurstwood: "I'll give you nawthin" (492).

The business success of Hurstwood in Chicago is finally not about payoffs to ward politicians, but about being friendly and conspicuous within the confines of communal conventions. Business there is conducted not through the purchased protection of police, but through the protection afforded by men, "gentlemen Elks," assembled to smoke cigars, drink fine brandies, and tell stories. In contrast to New York, then, Chicago is a city of quaint, communal sociability, a city of visible circles of affluence and subtle assertions of individual power; and Hurstwood, whose power in Chicago is always somewhat dubious, is nevertheless "of" this "respectable" old-world surface. New York is a city with no such segregated genial middle ground. New York, an enveloping sea, forces Hurstwood "out of the way," then makes him "disappear." In this modern city of men too busy for conversation within the context of a society of

friends, pervasive, deterministic power is concealed and asserted through the rhetorically communal mechanisms of an all-controlling "machine."

CHAPTER EIGHT

Robert Ames's Sermon of the Many

A young friend of mine who came daily to Hull-House consulted me in regard to going into the paper warehouse belonging to her father that she might there sort rags with the Polish girls; another young girl took a place in a sweatshop for a month, doing her work so simply and thoroughly that the proprietor had no notion that she had not been driven there by need; still two others worked in a shoe factory;--and all this happened before such adventures were undertaken in order to provide literary material.

Doubtless it is much easier to see "what to do" in rural Russia, where all the conditions tend to make the contrast as broad as possible between peasant labor and noble idleness, than it is to see "what to do" in the interdependencies of the modern industrial city.

--from "Tolstoyism", Chapter Twelve
of Twenty Years at Hull-House, by
Jane Addams

Twice, the character Robert Ames briefly appears in Sister Carrie in order to introduce a well-known late nineteenth-century argument concerning the connection of art and social "idealism." By insinuating Ames's "lectures" to Carrie into the novel's dialogue on social inclusion and exclusion, Dreiser ultimately contests Ames's ephemeral assertions. Dreiser's contestation of nineteenth-century idealism reveals ways that Sister Carrie significantly departs from conventions of social realism as well as from expectations by contemporary readers of what a novel could accomplish toward social reform.

I.

In 1903, Lewis Strang's Players and Plays of the Last Quarter Century characterized theater as a "sociological document of inestimable value, a document on which is indelibly inscribed the ruling thought of a decade, a generation, a century" (15). For Strang, however, in inscribing the thought of his own decade,

[s]uch ideals as the theater of to-day has are almost without exception sordid and commonplace. Pecuniary profit is universally regarded as a sufficient excuse for any abuse, while a sense of responsibility to the community on the part of the theater is shockingly absent (12).

We may infer from its use here that the word "community" might be interchanged with "audience"; moreover, Strang appears to imply that theatrical endeavor requires an act of imagining an audience or community which is unified and coherent--theatrical endeavor is, indeed, "universally regarded." Ideal theater creates its audience through a sense of responsibility to the hearts and minds of the whole, undifferentiated "community."

Strang's complaint that the economics of theater had led to a decline in the quality of its productions was commonly articulated in the era. Theodore Dreiser's own

1897 lament over the decline of "excellent stock companies"--and that "many plays of fine, enduring quality" were missing from cultural life--emerges in part from overall concerns about big business and the disintegration of cultural life in the 1890s (Uncollected Prose 100). Despite Dreiser's sense in 1897 that the stage world had become "disordered and disintegrated," it had, in fact, become systematically integrated as a business, whereby the decentralized "stock" system declined in importance as production and distribution were "combined" under the centralized control of corporations and syndicates.¹ The idea that cultural endurance is in conflict with profit motives also informs Strang's historical record. Strang remarks that ephemerality has been made a profitable commodity in an age obsessed with novelty. In today's theater, he writes, "the permanent dramatic literature of four centuries of accumulation is microscopically minute" (12). Moreover, "the contrast between the up of to-day and the down of to-morrow is indeed startling" (13). Strang's own sociological document tries to interpret the present both historically and prophetically. His nostalgia is apparent, though it does not register as explicitly as Dreiser's in the 1897 column; in fact, Strang feels that present civilization has progressed beyond tragedy, certainly the most enduring theatrical form. He is more expressly oriented toward the future, believing that theater

will soon be producing a new type of enduring art. For the time being, however, in conflict with his notion of endurance is "the blinding glare of the tinsel and the deafening blare of the trumpets" (12)--in other words, publicity and the fascination for celebrities. The trumpeted actor "flutters in the dazzling brilliancy of the limelight during his butterfly day and then disappears." Under the glare of publicity, the actor, like the acted play itself, is only a "fleeting shadow" (13).

Reading Strang today, one is struck by his belief in theater's ability to transform not only itself in troubled times, but the community to which it is responsible, a community weighted down, to use Strang's metaphor, by what he calls "materiality." On the one hand, modern theatrical success stories document the triumph of novelty and materialism over art. On the other hand, Strang asserts, the modern theater audience's "unquenchable spirit of modern optimism" will finally reshape theatrical forms (24). Strang sees the unified community at the turn of the century pushing its popular entertainment in the direction of "idealism," and away from the everyday burdens of material existence. Strang never actually describes the generic characteristics of his transcendental idealism. He defines idealism essentially as what tragedy and realism, i.e. the theater of "materiality," are not. The present theater "mirrors the thought of a people that is seeing materiality

gradually subdued, that has seen space mocked at and the finger of time turned against itself. With each new day telling the story of fresh victories in the realm of the one-time impossible, there is no patience with the wailings of the dark tragedy of defeat" (25). The abandonment of materiality thus signals an apotheosis of sorts through the audience's promotion and anticipation of "the only enduring thing,--absolute idealism" (24).

These themes--endurance, materialism (in the dual sense of things which make a profit and things which can be transcended or subdued), and the universalized will and desire of a unified community--turn up six years earlier in two articles appearing in one 1897 issue of The Arena, a magazine concerned with contemporary cultural and intellectual activity. For these writers, realism itself is capable of producing an idealism which has the effect of either transcending the real or demonstrating the transcendence of the real itself. In "Art for Truth's Sake," James Hearne argues that theater should perpetuate "the everyday life of the time." With William Dean Howells somewhere in the shadows, Hearne writes that realism "develops the latent beauty of the so-called commonplaces of life, because it dignifies labor and reveals the divinity of the common man." Realistic drama, then, its purpose being not to amuse but "to interest and instruct," in revealing the divinity of the common man, propels its audience into

the realm of the ideal. Theatrical art, he thus implies, by representing man as divine, helps the spectator to become his divine self. At the same time, this idealism serves as a force of social coherence. "Truth in drama," Hearne says, "sets forth clearly that the concern of one is the concern of all" (369,370).

But Annie Nathan Meyer warns (in "The Problem of the Novel") that if "Americans continue to worship a false realism, if we give up the great problems of life and accept the small teasings of everyday living in their stead, it seems to be that we are making a fatal mistake." The novelist of today, she asserts,

in order to strike down to the heart of life....in order to awaken the sympathies of the world, in order to reveal our real life to us

must keep before him the "three great sources of his power: the power to hold our attention, the power to reach us through our emotions, and the power to make us see others as we are accustomed to see ourselves" (458,455).

Importantly, Meyer speaks for all of us. Genuine, enduring, ideal realism (and Tolstoy would be her exemplary realist), on stage or between the covers of a novel, has the effect of bringing "us" together, showing us that "we" have in common a single concern--indeed, that others lives are

just like "our" lives. Hearne goes so far as to identify our common concern as "the individual liberty of the human race." For Meyer, it is an awakening in "ourselves"--"the world"--of "sympathies"; the word "sympathies" presumably connotes deep, "universally regarded," connections. For Strang, whose idealism has wholly displaced realism, the world is ready today for an artist with a "really comprehensive view of life to elucidate." In the hands of "such a dramatist," nothing less than life might be totalized, made wholly intelligible for all (224).

Both Strang and Meyer concur that to help us contest the small teasings of everyday existence, art must "reach us" by offering us power. Meyer says that great art must take its audience beyond the ordinary, and for Strang realism and tragedy are waning forms because they preach "insistently on the theme of man impotent." Tragedy and realism cannot endure, Strang says, because they declare man "overweighted" by materiality, and because they "continually proclaimed man's inevitable destruction" (24). On the other hand, Strang's anticipated "idealism" projects a potent audience and community--called "man"--liberated from weight.

Although it may be clear that Hearne stands slightly apart from Strang and Meyer with his christianized aesthetic of everyday life, I am obviously blurring several distinctions between three differing points of view. But,

again, one cannot help being struck by analogous concerns about what art can and should accomplish. Art for the sake of truth goes against all notions of determinism. Art fulfills a universal need, it unifies its spectators; and by fulfilling these unspecified needs and unifying the "all," art becomes liberating, making plural "man" powerful. This linking of unification with power and liberation demands closer examination. Both secular and religious rhetoric of the 1890s frequently worried over a society enervated by conflicts of differentiation, in terms of class, gender, ethnicity, nationality, work, and political identification. From the point of view of the immigrant who was being exploited as a subject by the Progressive and Reformist rhetoric of universal community and by the naturalism of writers like Norris, Dreiser, and Upton Sinclair; or of those who reacted negatively to perceived strangers in their midsts through identification with segregated communities grounded in nostalgia for individual and communal power; the way of life in crowded, stratified cities was in serious conflict with various individual and social freedoms of a democratic society. What Strang, Hearne, and Meyer all have in common is a classical, ritualistic notion of the drama (or novel) as an experience which clarified commonality and social power; great literary performance--which one writer refers to as a "sociological document"--makes all spectators into one; obliterating hierarchical difference, it joins the

whole community in feasting upon the sacrificed goat. Hearne is particularly clear in his view of theater as ritual intended to liberate the individual and the community by exposing an essential divinity in all. We may effectively read these constructions of liberation and universality, then, beside tensions that were being expressed, particularly in the cities, between differentiated and undifferentiated images of community, between communal restraint and self-interest, between contemporary expressions of impotence and desires for power, and between ideas of inclusion and exclusion.

Georg Simmel's thoughts on "collective behavior," circa 1900, provide some terms for characterizing the conflicts implicitly addressed by turn-of-the-century observers of American cultural life. Simmel frames an important category of urban complaint, the determinism which results from collectivity, as a problem of maintaining order. In "The Negative Character of Collective Behavior" he asserts that the larger the group is, "the more prohibitive and restrictive the kinds of conduct which it must demand of its participants in order to maintain itself." In large groups, then,

the variety of persons, interests, events becomes too large to be regulated by a center; the center is left only with a prohibitive function, with the

determination of what must not be done under any circumstances, with the restriction of freedom, rather than its direction" (397,98).

Although the three promoters of artistic culture I have been quoting clearly worked from different notions of society than Simmel's, they all understood the reception of art sociologically. Plays and novels affected society, but a society defined without differentiation, a society neither measured nor measurable. Literature itself was an agent of un-differentiation. It lightened and lifted the weight of the group's negative character. Profound identification with all others, through watching plays or reading, was an antidote to impotency and, it would seem, alienation and difference as well. Theater and the novel were offered as replacements for the life-enhancing, freedom-enhancing "center," lost when the community became too large, too various, and too complex. Through theater itself, collective life could be re-transformed from being prohibitive of "freedom" to being directive of an all-inclusive, undifferentiated freedom.

In Sister Carrie, Robert Ames participates in this same contemporary dialogue on the connections between art and social idealism. Indeed, Ames's mind is "idealistic," and when he speaks with Carrie, he is thrown into "contemplation of the ideal" (481,484). Even when poverty threatens "to

seize her entirely" and to remove her from symbols of the affluent world represented by the Vances, "the ideal brought into her life by Ames remained."

He had gone, but here was his word that riches were not everything, that there was a great deal more in the world than she knew...(346).

But, significantly, Ames's idealism always comes to Carrie as a "surprise," as, for example, when he initially reflects with her upon the "shame" of ostentatious spending (333). His theories of art and society continue to be surprising for Carrie, I believe, because, like Strang's, Ames's idealism remains generically inspecific, as does his concept of audience. In view of this lack of definition, I wish to examine closely the incongruity of Ames's abstract idealism and Carrie's own view of acting and social relations, particularly as their differing views articulate conflicts of collective behavior in the late nineteenth-century city. At the close of the novel, Carrie is left rocking, though not at all complacently, between Amesian idealism and the realities of the theater business which create a particular kind of social inclusivity--between Ames's ideals of the artist creating an empowered, coherent, and satisfied "many," and mechanisms of consumption and publicity which proscribe a prohibiting social determinism.²

II.

Raymond Williams observed that the "keyword" community, "unlike all other terms of social organization (state, nation, society, etc.)...seems never to be used unfavorably, and never to be given any positive opposing or distinguishing term" (Keywords 76). The warmth of the term "community" is reaffirmed in a description of the way Carrie presumably affects her "audience," recently published by Amy Kaplan. Reflecting upon "the loneliness of the individual in the city crowd," Kaplan notes how urban isolation

is transformed in the theater into an ephemeral intimacy between the actress and the audience. The performance forges a momentary community of projected desire out of the isolated members of the audience, who share a common sense of personal intimacy with the actress. If in the theater Carrie can turn isolation in the city into intimacy, she similarly transforms anonymity into identity (158).

The intimate, ephemeral collectivity forged by the audience's projected desire, as Kaplan suggests, is a profitable experience for Carrie, an accidental result of the way she guards and prolongs her loneliness; indeed, Carrie's "loneliness on stage powerfully affects the

audience as intimacy" (Kaplan 158). But this triangulated intimacy between the individual audience members and the actress is, I believe, more penetrating for Carrie than Kaplan allows, and more threatening to her in her position at the center of momentary community. Community, whether she is on the inside or on the outside, is a source of conflict for Carrie throughout the novel. As an idea evoking deep or ephemeral commonality, community, as Kaplan uses it here, has a "negative character" which is in opposition to Carrie's nebulous, though self-defining, notions of power.

Carrie's own desire, her anticipation of satisfaction, and her enigmatic dissatisfaction, are often framed as feelings she has about her position with reference to others. Importantly, Carrie's and Hurstwood's highly intuitive minds frequently comprehend social "position" spatially, by way of prepositions such as "of," "in," and "out." Against such a concrete and reductive social grammar, it is no wonder that Robert Ames's non-spatial, non-differentiated, abstract syntax of connectedness is both surprising and, finally, incomprehensible. The first time Carrie travels by streetcar out of her marginal uptown neighborhood and walks into the center of New York--Broadway from 14th Street to 34th Street--she is quickly able to perceive the signs of inclusiveness and to construe relatively her own social/spatial position. Reminiscent of

the scene outside Chicago's Avery Hall the night of the Elks Club benefit, here a street scene prior to a theatrical performance becomes an occasion for the narrator to describe, and for a character to imagine, the ritualized commonality and coherence of a large crowd. The marks of homogeneity are the same as marked the "circle" of gentlemen Elks in Chicago, objects and clothing to be regarded. There are also agreed upon communal customs proscribing rights of belonging; these have even given rise to a song, popular in the music halls of the city, entitled "What Right Has He On Broadway?" Pained by her self-consciousness of being an outsider as she finds herself "ogled," Carrie, nonetheless, longs "to be of it," though she feels "that she was not of it" (325,324). The word "it" refers to the visible "showy parade"--the "riches and show"--as well as the apartments, fantasized by Carrie, in which "these lovely creatures" were "housed." But within this passage, "it" also refers to the "charming conditions upon the stage" during the matinee: gilded surroundings, the charm of showing suffering under ideal conditions. The difference is that while the street makes her feel excluded, the stage scene has the effect of reducing Carrie's fantastical sense of this lovely "world" to a setting which seems accessible. Soon, she is "lost in the world it represented and wished that she might never return." But "going out," "the same Broadway taught her a sharper lesson" about her outsidersness (325) (emphasis

mine). While the play invites, the street excludes--and, indeed, it also becomes the primary setting for the chronic exclusion of Hurstwood as, homeless, he walks its pavements days and nights.

A sense of community as a "body of individuals" is being invoked here (OED). The narrator's word "of" connotes the deepest possible connection. Carrie wishes she were wholly absorbed into the "body" of both scenes, on stage and on Broadway. Shortly after this initial lesson in New York exclusivity, she finds herself in the crowd at Sherry's with the Vances and Robert Ames. Again, although "she was really in it," when she contrasts herself to Mrs. Vance and the others, she is not of the shining chamber. Dreiser crowds the scene with material significance, creating the impression of a secret and exclusive world of knowledge and ritual, enclosed in "a broad circle of light." Once more, the world of affluence is embodied as a circle, its very shape suggesting, to a naive observer, continuity, wholeness, and insularity unaffected by struggle or adversity. Every object, every gesture adds to "an air of exclusiveness." As had the scene on stage during the matinee, the mirrored chamber mirrors for Carrie "all society": "every fine lady must be in the crowd on Broadway in the afternoon, in the theater at the matinee, in the coaches and dining halls at night. It must be glow and shine everywhere, with coaches waiting, and footmen

attendant, and she was out of it all" (332,333).

Prepositions of distance, proximity, embodiment, and inclusiveness create the spatial dynamic of Carrie's initial relations with Ames and, typically in this novel, a "world" he represents. The appeal of Sherry's becomes confusing for Carrie when she feels "reproof" from Ames, this man who "was far ahead of her." Because she is a reader of pulp fiction, and admires the things and practices of "wealthy Americans," Carrie senses unhappily that Ames's interest in her is "far-off." Ames brushing by her this first time leaves Carrie's view of her position in "a fog of longing and conflicting desires" (337). "The atmosphere that went with this youth impressed itself upon Carrie without words. There was something in him, or the world he moved in, which appealed to her." Once again, the narrator invokes the muted physical--and in this case, sensual--element of Carrie's sense of connection to others in remarking that "She was not in his life or any of the things that touched his life" (332-335).

Sometime later, after she and Hurstwood have had to move into a smaller, cheaper apartment "in" 13th Street--here, too, the preposition has enormous implications concerning social/spatial position in Dreiser's hierarchical New York--Carrie recalls that Ames had given his "approval" to theater and to being "a fine actress." Repelled by Hurstwood's grim discouragement and the poverty

she is being "dragged into," Carrie pictures herself "appearing in some fine performance on Broadway, going every evening to her dressing room and making up." "If she were only once in, getting a decent salary, wearing the kind of clothes she liked, having the money to do with and going here and there as she pleased--how delightful it would all be" (378) (emphasis mine). But she is hardly able to get in to see the theatrical agents, let alone the producers. Exclusive offices marked "Private" are closed to her; secretaries cause her "to feel her insignificant and utterly inconsequential position" (381,385). Nevertheless, after several weeks she does succeed to get "a place," and when she enters the theater on her first morning for work, the wonder of the playhouse "awed and delighted her."

Blessed be its wondrous reality. How hard she would try to be worthy 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 (389).

In coming in from the street, in being of a center--a circle of light and mirth, but also a material circle with a wondrous reality--and in effectively excluding Hurstwood and the mirthless reality of the streets he walks with an

increasingly lighter pocket, Carrie has, for the moment, achieved her own "ideal."

Carrie's continued rise above the mass and above insignificance is then remarkably rapid. This is repeatedly witnessed in the novel through Hurstwood, who, now neglected and idle in their apartment, tells himself that he is "out of it" (404). Carrie now enters into the body of a community, becoming "wise in theatrical lore, hearing the gossip" (442). "Absorbed" by her new "profession," Carrie is soon impatient to rise above the chorus and to achieve the "acknowledgement of power" she had fantasized years earlier while rehearsing for an amateur production before her mirror (158). She dreams of being "renowned" like those theatrical celebrities she reads of in the newspapers and magazines. As soon as she does receive a notice, she joyfully believes "the world was taking note of her." Another play on "world" may have been intended here: "world" as the unspecified population of newspaper readers, but also the World, Pulitzer's daily newspaper, which Dreiser had briefly written for and which Hurstwood is always reading. The double meaning further builds Dreiser's case made earlier in the novel that power in New York comes from acknowledgement, from conspicuity; in Carrie's mind, power comes from being photographed and gossiped about in the World. Carrie's photograph soon does appear in one of the weeklies. By now she is arriving at the theater in finery and carriages and

strolling along Broadway--rightfully. "She was getting in the metropolitan whirl of pleasure." But here the narrator begins to qualify her success: Carrie is still relatively unknown and is not satisfied. Once more, she interprets her social position spatially. "The world of wealth and distinction was quite as far away as ever." But then "Carrie's blues" accidentally win her an important role in the comedy revue as the frowning little Quakeress. Although she experiences momentary guilt about having to do so little while earning so much more than "poor homely-clad girls working in long lines at clattering machines," within her new one hundred and fifty dollar per week salary, lies "a world of possibilities" (457,449). At this point, Hurstwood once more becomes the witness of her accomplishments. Sitting in the lobby of "a dingy, moth-eaten hotel," he reads the notices of Carrie's success:

Ah, she was in the walled city now. Its splendid gates had opened, admitting her from a cold, dreary outside. She seemed a creature afar off--like every other celebrity he had known (449).

Carrie's physical/spatial relationship to the walled city is now realized literally through her new association with the city's buildings. By the old stock system, whose decline Dreiser lamented, an actress was connected to a

theater building housing a stable performing company. But as an actress working under the combination system, Carrie's independence, her ability to move from production to production, seem to give her a certain amount of control over her career. Attached to the shoe factory and to its "line" of relentless machines, and to communal identification with the mechanized body of the line, Carrie nearly perished in dark interior spaces. Attached to Hurstwood in their cramped 13th Street apartment, and to the ethnographic characteristics of the confining 13th Street community, she was being dragged into poverty and depression. For Carrie, the job of actress seems ideal because it allows her to make a lot of money and to be part "of" a material surface, apparently without compelling her confinement within a single structure or long-term business, or social, arrangement.

However, even though Carrie's work does not tie her to a building or to any kind of permanence, she does, in fact, become connected to buildings. As a visible star, she is invited to associate herself with a luxury hotel, to become its advertising image. "'A well-known actress, like yourself,'" one hotel manager tells her, "'draws attention to the hotel, and, although you may not believe it, patrons....The common run of individuals will go where the celebrities are'" (451). Thus, she seems to mitigate the satisfying mobility of her career and the ephemerality of

non-attachment to a company or theater by associating herself with a solid ediface of social respectability, the Wellington. The distance she has come since leaving Columbia City, Wisconsin might be marked here by recalling Carrie's awe when Charlie Drouet presented her with his embossed business card, pointing to the picture of the "house" he traveled for, feeling that "it was something to be connected with such a place," and making "her feel that way" (9). But we soon find out that Carrie's connections are not that stabilizing; she moves into another hotel, and then another--her last known address is the Waldorf. Carrie's existence as a star within the walled city expresses trends in real estate development as she sells the enviable image of her celebrity to the common run of individuals for better, more novel, more up-to-date accommodations. Her transience as a celebrity, and throughout the novel, expresses Carrie's continual effort to defy physical attachment and the negative character of communal connection.³

When another transient character, Mrs. Vance--"You know I can't stay six months in one place. I just have to move'" (454)--suddenly reappears to seek entrance into Carrie's dressing room and life, her first reaction is incredulity: "'How in the world did this happen?'" (453). Carrie laughs, and the narrator remarks that there "was no trace of embarrassment in her friend's manner," as if "the

long separation had come about accidentally." Past images forgotten, Mrs. Vance is clearly impressed with Carrie's new conspicuousness, recognizing that Carrie is now of her own world. "'I saw your picture in the Sunday paper....All the papers are talking about you,'" she says. Intimating the wall which separates the star from her audience, Mrs. Vance tells Carrie that she "was almost afraid to come back here this afternoon" (453,454). For Carrie, all this "Adulation....pleased her." However, the narrator once more makes use of qualifying language. That celebrity and wealth could offer Carrie such varied social contacts, suddenly making her so interesting to men, "incited her to coolness and indifference." The wall projected by Mrs. Vance's hesitancy to visit Carrie backstage is apparently not real enough. As abruptly as her celebrity has come, Carrie retreats into isolation, unwilling to have any interest in anyone who, as Lola tells her, "would give their ears" to be in her shoes. Carrie, who is always moving and who once longed to be "of" the dynamic nightlife of the city, now "won't go anywhere." "'That's what's the matter with you,'" Lola complains (458). Now fully "of" the circle, indeed being the most sought-after light it gives off, Carrie tries to hide. Ironically, in spite of her reclusiveness, just as her sad expression accidentally brings her fame, her fame operates under its own momentum: Carrie's "lonely, self-withdrawing temper" makes her "an interesting figure in the

public eye" (478).

As Carrie withdraws from the embrace of her admirers, ironically she remains Hurstwood's only personal link to the city. His relationship with her is perpetuated through the World, and as, unclean, unhealthy, and in ragged clothing, he walks past theaters where her name is displayed-- buildings to which Carrie is momentarily connected. Once, after trying and failing to get close to her, he confronts her near the stagedoor, the threshold of her glimmering world. After asking her for money, he tells her, "'Better go on in,'" then shuffles off. The reader is told that while she is standing on the sidewalk talking with him, Carrie feels "the strain of publicity" (477).

Carrie is now residing in a suite at the Waldorf. Walled off from, and high above, the street, feeling the strain of publicity, lonely, and seldom going out of the hotel she represents, except to work in an industry which has by now profited greatly from the accident of her popularity, when she meets Robert Ames for the second time, Carrie seems to be searching for a solution to her chronic unhappiness--or, as it might be put, her chronic liminality. Ames is now a "star" inventor; they have both been made subjects for public fascination. Carrie, in particular, is acknowledged and appropriated by an audience of spectators who do not know each other but who are linked by their common knowledge of Carrie's image, of her face, her roles,

and her activities, reported as news or as gossip. This audience extends beyond the upper class circle, represented by the Vances, which now encloses Carrie. It is made up of everyone with enough money to afford Carrie's ubiquitous image. Absorbed into the body of a "world," Carrie's physical self has been reduced to a highly visible commodity. Now the light she gives off costs as much as a daily or a weekly; for those who can afford the leisure, she costs as much as a matinee or a dinner in the Waldorf where, as everyone knows, she is currently "stopping." Adored, groped for, the subject of fantasies of intimacy, yet anonymous, Carrie remains deeply conflicted over her highly circumscribed position in relation to the social and economic body of New York.

#

In this context, then, Robert Ames's vision of Carrie and audience comes into the novel from another world. Surprised to find her taking him so seriously, Ames is thrown into a "speculative contemplation of the ideal--the something better," for which he believes Carrie is searching (484). But his speculation that her "sympathetic look" suggests she should "go into comedy-drama," a more artistic form, seems to disturb her overriding need for comfort. Because she has become inured to self-interest as the guiding principle of all relationships, his urging her to

"labor for others," rather than for money or applause, leaves her without words for responding. And because she has been making an effort to hide from her audience, the implications of Ames's notion that she become a "medium" serving "the many" is ultimately incomprehensible.

Carrie is silent throughout his "lecture" except once, when he pauses, and she asks sincerely: "'What must I do?'" Apropos of the question, Ellen Moers reminded Sister Carrie's readers of the popularity of Tolstoy's 1880s tract called What to do?, which Dreiser read while attending Indiana University in 1890 (Moers 48, Dawn 409,411). In the published 1900 edition of Sister Carrie, Carrie's question was edited down to an inarticulate "What?" Perhaps that is why Moers does not, in fact, make a direct connection between Carrie's question and Tolstoyan idealism. However, because of Moers emphasis upon the importance of Tolstoy for the young Dreiser, Donald Pizer would later remark that Ames reflects the "Tolstoyan idea" in his "idealism" (Novels 65). Moers credits What to do? with having given form to American urban realism, in part through the promotional efforts of William Dean Howells. In What to do?, Tolstoy describes the wretched conditions caused by poverty in Moscow. Troubling over the seemingly unbridgable abyss which separated the poor from the well-off like himself, Tolstoy then outlines the neo-Christian humanitarian beliefs that would generate a cultish following among European and American idealists

searching for personal salvation through the transcendence of social distinctions. In 1888, writing in Harper's about the work's effect upon his sense of the realist's subject matter, Howells announced the death of humanitarian realism in the manner of Victor Hugo, a realism which relied upon sentimental conventions to present the poor as "impossibly virtuous and beautiful" (qtd. in Moers 55). "Truth, which has succeeded to the highest mission of romance," wrote Howells, "paints these victims as they are, and bids the world consider them not because they are beautiful and virtuous, but because they are ugly and vicious, cruel, filthy, and only not altogether loathsome because the divine can never wholly die out of the human." Continuing, Howells asserts that realism identifies all social strata, rich as well as poor, as human. The truth, he says, once more substituting the word for those who express "truth," does not find life's "victims among the poor alone, among the hungry, the houseless, the ragged; but it also finds them among the rich, cursed with aimlessness, the satiety, the despair of wealth, wasting their lives in a fool's paradise of shows and semblances, with nothing real but the misery that comes of insincerity and selfishness" (qtd. in Moers 55). For Howells's true realist--and democrat--finally, e pluribus unum.

In the context of imagining a changing city, Howells, nonetheless, dramatizes, discusses, and demonstrates the

problem of bridging gaps between class, gender, and ethnic divisions. Basil and Isabel March, as depicted in the novel Howells's wrote under Tolstoy's sway, A Hazard of New Fortunes (1890), "liked to play the romantic, from the safe vantage-ground of their real practicality, and to divine the poetry of the commonplace" (22). March

congratulated himself upon the democratic instincts which enabled him to do this; and neither he nor his wife supposed that they were selfish persons. On the contrary, they were very sympathetic; there was no good cause that they did not wish well; they had a generous scorn of all kinds of narrow-heartedness; if it had ever come into their way to sacrifice themselves for others, they thought they would have done so, but they never asked why it had not come their way (24).

Sacrifice does come March's way in the form of witnessing someone else's sacrifice, the death of Conrad Dryfoos, an action the merits of which are left rather uncertain. The troubled son of March's wealthy and self-centered publisher, Conrad drifts into a strikers' riot, impelled forward by an attractive woman's momentary "helplessness" that from her comfortable social perch, and as a woman, she herself "could not do something" to save the heroic, oppressed streetcar workers; but as her agent,

Conrad immediately walks into a policeman's bullet. Afterwards, when Isabel March insists to her husband that neither he nor Conrad had any business being near the riot, for himself he responds that he was there "in the cause of literary curiosity."

"But Conrad--yes, he had some business there; it was his business to suffer there for the sins of others. Isabel, we can't throw aside that old doctrine of Atonement yet." (393)

But this response turns out to be disingenuous. For in the next moment, they have returned to their comfortable glibness and a discussion about hats. Howells's true realism and social idealism, I would think, has to be somewhere between March's glib, remote literary curiosity, and Conrad's accidental martyrdom. But in the narrative Howells wrote partly under the influence of Tolstoy, it remains questionable whether middle-class values do not finally register as a superior medium for social reform than political or aesthetic idealism.

A far different articulation of what was perceived during the 1890s as a crisis of social differentiation and the possibility of doing something for others, can be found in the "work" of Jane Addams. Addams's communitarian idea for bridging the various social gaps of industrial society

was to bring uptowners downtown, as it were, to reside in a "settlement house" where they might cast off their class-constructed selves while living among poor immigrants. In fact, the "residents" did not altogether abandon what they brought from their cultured lives. Through this class intercourse, Addams also meant, figuratively, to bring the immigrants "uptown," through presenting them with music, art, and literature, with the "culture" of a potentially unifying, imagined dominant culture. The settlement house, she writes in her remarkable memoir Twenty Years at Hull-House (1910), was to be "an outlet for [the] sentiment of universal brotherhood," a kind of unrequited altruism felt largely by the educated children of well-off families (100,91).

The settlement, then, is an experimental effort to aid in the solution of the social and industrial problems which are engendered by the modern conditions of life in a great city. It insists that these problems are not confined to any one portion of the city. It is an attempt to relieve, at the same time, the overaccumulation at one end of society and the destitution at the other (98).

"Residents" must be "emptied of all conceit of opinion and all self-assertion."

They must be content to live quietly side by side with their neighbors, until they grow into a sense of relationship and mutual interests. Their neighbors are held apart by differences of race and language which the residents can more easily overcome (98).

To characterize the ideal depth of sacrifice, Addams uses the "weak illustration" of a chorus, in which "the differences of training and cultivation between [the leading voices] and the voices of the chorus, are lost in the unity of purpose and in the fact that they are all human voices lifted by a high motive." In exchange "for the music of isolated voices," the settlement house receives "the volume and strength of the chorus" (97). The individual voices of the culturally superior residents from the high end of the city are thus absorbed into a neighborhood at the low end for the work of joining and uplifting all "neighbors," immigrants isolated from each other by their differences and "residents," resulting in a truly democratic society.⁴

Addams was also greatly influenced by Tolstoy's tract What to do?, and even made a pilgrimage to Yasnaya Polyana; "never," she writes, "did a disciple journey toward his master with more enthusiasm" (191). But by the time she returns home to Chicago, Addams has discovered that Count Tolstoy's efforts to bridge the social abyss by working with his hands, by living and dressing as a peasant, is "more

logical than life warrants." "Could the wrongs of life," she asks, "be reduced to the terms of unrequited labor and all be made right if each person performed the amount necessary to satisfy his own wants? Was it not always easy to put a strong case if one took the naturalistic view of life? But what about the historic view, the inevitable shadings and modifications which life itself brings to its own interpretation?" (195,196). For Addams, that history begins with true democracy where the life of early American pioneers "had made social distinctions impossible" (42) and it continues through the challenges to democracy posed by "the interdependencies of the modern industrial city" (187). The settlement must therefore be flexible and adaptive to succeed in its active "protest against...overdifferentiation" (100,91). As it was also for Theodore Roosevelt, an admirer, and for reform novelists of the era such as Robert Grant and Robert Herrick, urban environment is a persistent problem of Addams's optimistic, pragmatic, anti-naturalistic conception of democratic "progress". According to Addams, Williams Dean Howells was one of many in the country who were critical of her work: he had said "that we are all so besotted with our novel reading that we have lost the power of seeing certain aspects of life with any sense of reality because we are continually looking for the possible romance" (Hull-House 216,217, no citation given). In her defence, Addams's 1910

text offers twenty years and more of adopting and later questioning romantic views of society's problems and solutions. Sacrifice, for Addams, made through the service of fostering cultural intercourse, ideally produces a limited sort of community. Indeed, Addams seems more aware of the limits of her imagined community than do the primarily theoretical artists and critics whose writing we have also seen. Whereas her idealism is enscribed within a neighborhood, the other writers do not specifically identify communal boundaries. Together, however, all these figures testify to the accessibility in the era of a neo-christian dialogue on art and society, responding to the division, the differentiation, the social and industrial problems engendered by the modern conditions of life in a great city. In Dawn, when Dreiser recalls listening in the mid-1880s to Sunday morning lectures by clerics without formal congregations in which "literature, art, music, and a freer, gayer, public life" are suggested as substitutes for the isolation and layering of urban experience (see chapter one), he offers his memory of the vocabulary to which all these figures contributed (Dawn 585).

If he ever read it, perhaps one reason Howells kept silent on the subject of Sister Carrie (Moers 172) was that when he encountered Robert Ames, he felt that Dreiser was either too mocking or that he did not understand the social and aesthetic ideals put forth by Tolstoy and himself. As

Alan Trachtenberg sees the conflict, Dreiser's first novel abandoned "the entire apparatus of reconciliation that lay at the heart of Howells's enterprise" (Incorporation). Hull-House itself might be read as a criticism of Robert Ames's "logic" of reconciliation for being inflexible and, as such, un-American. Echoing Addams as well as Dreiser's Sunday morning lecturers, Robert Ames piously asserts that society has great musicians, great painters, great writers and actors for expressing "the thing which the world wants portrayed"; and Carrie, "a mere expression of something," having the "power to act," is obligated to "do something with it" (485). But Donald Pizer feels that Ames's articulation of Tolstoyan/Howellsian ideals "fails to convince because, unlike Drouet and Hurstwood, who are fully realized dramatic figures, he is almost entirely a spokesman." "It is a nice question whether a spokesman of what is essentially a neo-Platonic idealism could be believably developed in the character of an Indiana engineer advising a young New York actress at dinner parties" (Novels 69,70). Indeed, for all the dialogue and physical intimacy built up in the manuscript edition between Carrie and Ames, Ames comes across as otherworldly, as a disembodied voice from another text, from Tolstoy's or from the contemporary discourse on art's benefits for humanity. But the fact that Ames is never fully realized is important for interpreting his important role in this novel of realism. As for the

question of whether Ames's voice succeeds at being convincing, I agree with Pizer that clearly it does not. But to determine why that is so, at least as Ames is presented in the holograph, we must further interrogate how Ames's neo-Platonic, neo-Emersonian translation of Tolstoyan neo-Christianity and the dialogue it stirred is contested within the novel.

As if in response to Howells's encouragement, Dreiser's realism both emphasizes and blurs social distinctions. Hurstwood, fallen into ugly poverty, and Carrie, risen to a fool's paradise of shows and semblance, are both depicted to some extent as "victims" of society. "As Hurstwood has been doomed to failure," wrote Robert Penn Warren, "so Carrie has been doomed to success" (29). And when Ames, as a semi-clerical spokesman for universality, speaks about "the world" and "the many," he presents a picture of "audience" as undifferentiated community, as an all-inclusive, all-struggling, yet abstract, humanity. But Ames's extreme retreat from social difference must be viewed together with the physical and psychological emphasis placed upon difference throughout the novel, from Carrie's arrival in Chicago's closed world to male insularity to Hurstwood's severe ostracizing. When placed beside Carrie's physical grammar of being in, or of, or out of, a "circle" marking the "walls" of a conspicuously embodied exclusive social group, Ames's body-less language of undifferentiated

community indeed seems ephemeral. Something in Ames's lecture appeals to Carrie because, for the present, her alignment with others is all wrong; all the tangible signs of inclusiveness have turned out to be unsatisfying. On the other hand, her relations so far with an undifferentiated audience, an audience upon which her image has conferred commonality, have proven to be constraining. With her self transformed into an image visible throughout the city, Carrie is already a medium, commodified for the self-interest of an imagined groping many. Being of a social body, Carrie's own body is now the object of the imagined community's desire.

At the moment Ames finishes lecturing Carrie, significantly they are intruded upon by Mrs. Vance, who asks, whether they are "nearly done arguing." The question is unexpected: why, when they have not been arguing, has she construed them as doing so? Ames responds that they were not arguing. "'Were we?'" he asks Carrie. "'Not in the least,'" said Carrie solemnly. 'Well do let Carrie talk with me now,'" Mrs. Vance replies, suggesting she may have had a more selfish motive for her question (484). The moment reveals some of the importance Mrs. Vance has as a character. She represents a force competing for Carrie's attention. Carrie is indeed "sympathetic," and both "cousins" fantasize a narcissistic intimacy with her to shape her, to make her the medium of their own self-

interest.

Speaking from his reform pulpit, Ames has been trying to convince Carrie that the serious actress who projects pathos to her audience liberates the audience, the unified, universalized many, from the weight of everyday struggle, and from their impotence. But Carrie's actual audience--a "momentary" though circumscribing community--represented by Mrs. Vance, cannot "see so much" in the sad, though apparently uplifting, novels of Thomas Hardy recommended by Ames; Mrs. Vance, whose world is constructed around the materially rich atmosphere of Broadway that Carrie carries with her, cannot "feel the pathetic side of life." When Carrie's audience reads a book, like Mrs. Vance it reads the popular fiction of E.P. Roe, who for Ames "doesn't amount to much," and "Dora Thorne," who is "bad" (335). When it goes to the theater it prefers comic revues, burlesque; or, like Carrie, it prefers to partake vicariously of the "materiality" of opulent melodrama. By this point, however, it appears that the friendship of Carrie and Mrs. Vance has become tense and somewhat competitive. Carrie is apparently no longer satisfied to have Mrs. Vance and the other readers of "Dora Thorne" as her controlling audience--nor as the social type which determines her own identity. Influenced now by Ames, Carrie is now influenced as well by Pere Goriot and The Mayor of Casterbridge. Ames, from his high perch, also does not look favorably upon the Vances nor

upon the community which encloses, embodies, and burdens Carrie.

Indeed, the "world" projected by Ames in revising Carrie's audience apparently excludes the Vances. So who is left to define the "many"? Can Ames mean to include the Charlie Drouets who come to the theater boasting of their high salaries and send mash-notes to the actresses? Can he mean to include Carrie's relatives the Hansons, who never go to the theater and always stay at home, isolated from their neighbors? Or can he mean to include the homeless George Hurstwoods who, even if he had a few dollars, would be barred from crossing the threshold of a Broadway theater? The answer, I think, is none of the above. As an alternative to Mrs. Vance, the effete Ames is indeed far from convincing. Instead, the incongruity of his lofty social theorizing underscores what some early reviewers of Sister Carrie felt to be the unrelenting grimness of Dreiser's "picture of conditions." Recalling Jane Addams's critique of Tolstoy, Ames's social aesthetics fails to account realistically for the historical "materiality" which separates group from group, individual from individual--materiality which has so profoundly stratified the contemporary American city. Ames's disembodied idealism cannot finally resolve the concrete world's "negative character,"--its diversity, incoherence, and determinism, problems for which he seems to be offering a solution.

Finally, as Ames abruptly disappears from the novel, Carrie remains "desireful" and unsatisfied. A door closes on him, and the ideal of sacrificing separateness in order to awaken sympathetic oneness fades out.

But in contrast to the Doubleday first edition in which the final chapters were essentially transposed, in the manuscript edition of Sister Carrie the irony of Ames's discourse continues to resonate. For in that text, his ideal is gradually crushed by the weight of an ever-thickening burden of hunger, cold, isolation, exclusion, and lack of sympathy under which Hurstwood shuffles toward suicide. Indeed, Ames's "many" can finally be read as walling out, not only the aimless rich under their shameful burden of conspicuous objects, but also the armies of idle homeless men marched to flophouses by "the Captain," whose faces also express, because of accidents over which they have had no control, the pathetic side of life. Amesian idealism can be associated with the cultural desire for what Lewis Strang called "a really comprehensive view"--a master fiction of community, imagined not only by literary critics, but by Progressives as well as conservatives, by Elks and by the Sachems of urban political machines. But like the imagined circle of gentlemen Elks which Hurstwood was once "of," or the fictitiously "democratic" Tammany Society which drains him of his last vestiges of power, Ames's undifferentiated community of humanity has no real knowledge

of certain types of adversity--Howells's hungry, houseless, and ragged.

In producing his first long contribution to realism, Dreiser works through a contemporary conflict over social difference, urban stratification, and community. As a spokesman for unexamined idealism, Ames becomes, perhaps unwittingly, a critic of realism, naturalism, and of the "modern," notably as they all evoke fragmentation. Against a social order conceived physically and spatially in terms of inclusion and exclusion, this ephemeral character argues that categories pertaining to inclusion have no meaning in an idealized all-inclusive world struggling to express universalized hopes and sorrows. But as long as the medium for that expression has to be a certain genre of literature, namely European novels and comedy-dramas, only an unspecified few who desire, and who can afford, to feel the pathetic side of life mediated through literature, are able to exist in that imagined "world."

Finally, Carrie's fascination with Ames is not at all surprising. Ames is, after all, offering Carrie a vision of what she has always vaguely desired: "something better," a better kind of "contact." Through Ames, Carrie is able to test out yet another idea of connection, a far more radical and interesting idea than she has so far considered and one well-removed from the unhealthy social world embodied by an unhealthy Hurstwood. Through Ames's fantasies of what art

might accomplish, Dreiser, too, tests out a new apparatus of reconciliation. Though finally, he is with Carrie, I think, in sensing Ames's inaccessibility.

In view of his own desire, presumably, to give a voice to many through his writing, Dreiser seems to have experimented with the idea that his pictures of conditions, as he called them, could do something to change those conditions. But Sister Carrie's early reviewers, uncomfortable with the novel's lack of idealism and its failure to offer a more hopeful view of social problems, and with its ambiguous efforts to articulate a liberation from contemporary burdens, were, I think, more confident than the author in holding this view of art as redemptive and unifying.

Introduction Notes

1. The 1900 Doubleday edition of Sister Carrie, the one received by the early reviewers, and the slightly altered 1907 B.W. Dodge edition, both prepared by Dreiser, remained the standards for all subsequent editions, many approved by the author. In 1981, the University of Pennsylvania Press published an edition which was based upon Dreiser's original manuscript, prior to the author's massive deletions of 1900; this text was subsequently issued as a Penguin paperback. For this study, I refer almost exclusively to the MS. edition. Although there are few significant differences in terms of the subject I emphasize, the general picture of social connectedness, the manuscript is a far richer social history. Its language and allusions offer today's reader many more opportunities than the edited first edition for tracking down contextual meaning which may have been obvious to early readers and reviewers. Indeed, because I rely so extensively upon specific historical information which was deleted from 1900, in some cases out of concern about litigation, I am grateful to have the Sister Carrie manuscript so readily accessible in a Penguin paperback. For a discussion of the various arguments for and against the textual authority of the MS. edition, see the introduction by Donald Pizer to New Essays on "Sister Carrie" (Cambridge, 1991); Pizer himself argues for the authority of the 1900 Doubleday along the lines of the standard premise that Dreiser never wished to make any changes during his lifetime. I acknowledge that my own argument for using the MS. seems to defy Dreiser's efforts to de-emphasize history by deleting some of its factual evidence.

2. All review quotes are taken from Theodore Dreiser: The Critical Reception, Jack Salzman, ed. (New York: David Lewis, 1972), pt.1. In most cases the reviews were published unsigned. Salzman's introduction offers the most comprehensive account available of Sister Carrie's early publication history. Prior to Salzman, Alfred Kazin was the first recent critic to contradict the myths of a uniformly poor reception. "Sister Carrie did not have a bad press; it had a frightened press, with many of the reviewers plainly impressed, but startled by the concentrated truthfulness of the book" ("Introduction" to Stature 5).

3. In an essay she published in the summer of 1927 ("The Great American Novel", Yale Review 16), Edith Wharton credited Robert Grant with having pioneered the "Main Street" novel that Sinclair Lewis was later to develop. Interest in Grant's writing, and particularly the best-selling Unleavened Bread, has increased in recent years. Among the inquires and critiques, see Frank Berryman, Robert Grant (Boston: Twayne, 1982); Amy Kaplan, "'The Knowledge of the Line': Realism and the City in Howells's A Hazard of New Fortunes" (PMLA 101,

1986); Christopher Wilson, "Unleavened Bread: The Representation of Robert Grant" (American Literary Realism 22, Spring 1990); and Ellen Dupree, "Jamming the Machinery: Mimesis in The Custom of the Country" (American Literary Realism 22, Winter 1990). Wilson Kaplan, and Dupree are concerned primarily with situating Grant within and against the prevailing political discourse of his period. As a feminist, Dupree reads Edith Wharton's novel against the dominant liberal Progressivism of men such as Grant. R.W.B. Lewis reports that Wharton "particularly admired Unleavened Bread with its naturalistic vision....which perceived no escape from the entanglements of experience except for the brutally insensitive and the ruthlessly grasping." Indeed Wharton felt that Unleavened Bread "anticipated the best work of Theodore Dreiser" (Lewis, Biography, after a Wharton letter, 148). But for Dupree, Wharton's admiration contained the tension of a desire "to express her frustration with having to write within what today would be called the patriarchal discourse" (10). Brooks Adams's misogynistic encomium may be evidence of the discourse with which Wharton may not have had an easy time concurring.

4. For a sense of the late twentieth-century argument about whether Dreiser was a dedicated naturalist, one can begin with two books published in the 1950s, the collection of writings edited by Alfred Kazin and Charles Shapiro entitled The Stature of Theodore Dreiser (Bloomington, 1955) and Charles Child Walcutt's American Literary Naturalism: A Divided Stream (Minneapolis, 1956). Throughout much of the early criticism of Dreiser after his death in 1945, his value and continued pertinence, notably to various political positions, seems to have depended upon questions of free will and determinism in his work. The argument continued through subsequent decades. The trend of thinking which moves away from engagement with this argument begins with greater attention being paid to history, to viewing naturalism among other historical circumstances and ideas; the goal of many recent studies has been to break Dreiser's work out of the somewhat constraining frameworks of earlier eras in order to see how it participates in the varied dialogues of its day. See works listed in my bibliography by Ellen Moers, Walter Benn Michaels, June Howard, Amy Kaplan, Ronald Martin, and Philip Fisher, as examples. Nevertheless, no reader would deny that Sister Carrie insistently focuses the reader's attention upon questions of free will and determinism, upon affirmation and negation of human prerogative. The issue in my own case is whether Dreiser, in Richard Poirier's words, composed society "of personal relationships extended into historical and communal ones," or "of forces to which these relationships are irrelevant" (235). (I take up Poirier's argument later in this introduction.) I am using a range of historical materials to demonstrate that personal, historical, and communal relationships do indeed have relevance not merely against but also in terms of tensions and tendencies of

determinism.

5. For seeing some of the variations in how community was imagined by turn-of-the-century novelists, I recommend two other novels published in the same year as Sister Carrie and Unleavened Bread. A more earnest effort to represent the problems and solutions of urban stratification, Robert Herrick's The Web of Life delineates more cleanly than Sister Carrie how nostalgic fantasies of community compete for social dominance and what the consequences are of prolonged liminality. A careful reading might be done concerning how Dreiser and Herrick represent the same tumultuous city, Chicago, after the Haymarket riots of 1886 and after the 1893 World Exposition, respectively. Herrick can also be seen as responding in fiction to Roosevelt's call for universal "fellowship" within the contestable terms of a class- and racially-dominated version of social reform. On the other hand, Pauline Hopkins's Contending Forces, with its remarkably resonant title, comes at the problem of community from the point of view of a black woman responding to her own and her race's exclusion from the dominant communities imagined by Herrick and Grant; at the same time, Hopkins responds to the problem of contending forces within a marginalized community of blacks in 1890s Boston, stratified and stigmatized by historical violence and its consequences. To conjure up community, Hopkins emphasizes, on the one hand, a romantic plot, and on the other hand, manners, customs, and institutions in essay-like chapters with titles such as "Ma Smith's Boarding House," "The Sewing Circle," "The Fair," and "The American Colored League." Whereas Hopkins is driven by a strong desire to preserve something fragile which is, and has already been, easily lost, Dreiser is being ironic when he "preserves" the most "typical" habits and poses.

6. While preparing this study I have read and referred to many critics of Dreiser's writing, but I engage in dialogue with only a few writers on the subject of Dreiser as a novelist. These include: Richard Poirier (A World Elsewhere, 1966); Lazar Ziff (The American 1890s, 1966); Richard Lehan (Theodore Dreiser: His World and His Novels, 1969); Ellen Moers (Two Dreisers, 1969)--whose historical study of Sister Carrie is the best available, and has served not only as a valuable source of information, but as a model for my own work; Donald Pizer (The Novels of Theodore Dreiser, 1976); Philip Fisher (Hard Facts: Setting and Form in the American Novel, 1985); Robert Shulman (Social Criticism and Nineteenth-Century American Fictions, 1987); Amy Kaplan (The Social Construction of American Realism, 1988); Thomas Riggio ("Carrie's Blues", 1991); and the biographical/historical studies of Dorothy Dudley (1932), Robert Elias (1949), F.O. Matthiessen (1951), W.A. Swanberg (1965), and Richard Lingeman (1986 & 1990).

7. From David Simpson, "Literary Criticism and the Return to 'History'", Critical Inquiry 14 (1988), 721-747.

Chapter One Notes:

1. Dreiser was reading Thoreau in the 1930s. See "This Was Thoreau," Dreiser's introductory essay for Living Thoughts of Thoreau Presented by Theodore Dreiser (New York, 1939), reprinted in Theodore Dreiser: A Selection of Uncollected Prose. The essay concerns Dreiser's notions of the philosophy of scientific discovery.

2. During the period of Dawn's publication Dreiser was particularly outspoken against Jews. Lingeman reports on anti-Semitic statements Dreiser made in 1933 to The American Spectator, against a "backdrop" of a "rising incidence of attacks on Jews in Germany and Hitler's accession as chancellor." Dawn, Lingeman notes, had been toned down "to say that all Jews were not like" the men Dreiser vilified as Jews in his narrative. Using evidence from Dreiser's letters, Lingeman reports that Dreiser was "convinced that a Jewish state was the best solution for anti-Semitism....[He] regarded Jews as an indigestible remnant, and blamed them for provoking anti-Semitism. He ignored the historical, medieval Christian roots of anti-Semitism. And he assumed Jews were a monolithic 'race'." One of Dreiser's correspondents during this period, Hutchins Hapgood, "compared [accurately, I think] Dreiser's views to those of the Ku Klux Klan" (382-384).

3. The quote is from Oliver Sacks, "The Landscape of His Dreams," The New Yorker (7-27-92): 56-66.

Chapter Two Notes:

1. The association of F.J. Turner's "frontier" with liminality was made for me by Robert Daly in an article entitled "Liminality and Fiction in Cooper, Hawthorne, Cather, and Fitzgerald," which appears in Victor Turner and the Construction of Cultural Criticism, ed. by Kathleen M. Ashley (Bloomington, 1990), p. 73.

2. The quote is from Dreiser's editorial column, "Reflections," Ev'ry Month 3 (October 1896), pp. 6-7, signed "The Prophet." Donald Pizer includes the column under the title "The City" in Theodore Dreiser, A Selection of Uncollected Prose (Detroit 1977), p. 95.

3. I have borrowed the term "traces" as well as other ideas from writings of the late anthropologist Victor Turner, whose work I will discuss in more detail in subsequent chapters. Turner says that "...liminality must bear some traces of its antecedent and subsequent stages." "Process, System, and Symbol: A New Anthropological Synthesis", from On the Edge of the Bush: Anthropology as Experience, edited by Edith L.B. Turner (Tucson, 1985), p. 160.

4. By presumption only, I refer here to newspaper and retail catalogues. The novel tells us that Carrie's "ears" had been full of Chicago while she was growing up in Columbia City. Rachel Bowlby (Just Looking: Consumer Culture in Dreiser, Gissing, and Zola, 1975) reminds us that Chicago, at this time, was "the center of the rapidly expanding mail-order enterprises of Montgomery Ward and Sears, Roebuck: it was through their extensively illustrated catalogues that inhabitants of rural areas like Carrie would see their first images of urban consumer abundance" (n.160).

5. Richard Sennett, "Middle-Class Families and Urban Violence: The Experience of a Chicago Community in the Nineteenth Century." From Anonymous Americans: Exploration in Nineteenth-Century Social History, Tamara K. Hareven, ed., Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971. Sennett's essay first appeared in 1969. It is an early account of the research he presented in his book Families Against the City: Middle Class Homes of Industrial Chicago, 1872-1890 (Cambridge, Mass., 1984).

6. On the linkage of spirituality with higher social aspirations, Michael Katz, writing on school reform in the mid-nineteenth century, quotes the Boston School Committee's philosophy of acculturation: "...taking children at random from a great city, undisciplined, uninstructed, often with inveterate forwardness and obstinacy, and with the inherited stupidity of centuries of ignorant ancestors; forming them

from animals into intellectual beings, and...from intellectual beings into spiritual beings; giving to many their first appreciation of what is wise, what is true, what is lovely and what is pure." (The Irony of Early School Reform: Educational Innovation in Mid-Nineteenth Century Massachusetts (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 120. Quote found in Mike Rose's Lives on the Boundary (New York: Penguin Books, 1989), p. 221.

Chapter Three Notes:

1. Victor Turner, "Process, System and Symbol: A New Anthropological Synthesis." From On the Edge of the Bush: Anthropology as Experience, ed. by Edith L.B. Turner (Tucson, 1985), p. 160.

2. My brief history of the B.P.O.E. comes from Charles Edward Ellis's An Authentic History of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, published in Chicago, by the author, a member of Lodge #4, in 1910. Several other histories of the order exist, but this one is the most inclusive. In addition, a National Elks Journal has been published continuously since the middle of this century.

3. In American cities of the nineteenth century, women were coming daily in great numbers to the center of the city, and the city offered women public pleasure sites, restaurants, drinking houses, parks, and stores, among others; women also frequently indulged clubbing desires. In City People: The Rise of Modern City Culture in Nineteenth-Century America, Gunther Barth argues that although women's salaries and working hours were generally oppressive, new forms of employment in the factory and department store "opened up a major female avenue into the male-dominated urban job market. The total effect was to introduce women as a new social force in city life" (145). On the other hand, Robert Thorne's study, "Places of Refreshment in the Nineteenth-Century City" (1980), emphasizes the point that "men could venture in public where women could not and might, it was supposed, be educated or toughened by contact with the varieties and extremes of urban life. Their freedom of action offered possibilities of either immorality or improvement, where for women they lay only in disgrace" (235).

4. It appeared in The American Journal of Sociology, volume XI, number 4, in January of 1906, translated by Albion W. Small. The translation I use was made in 1950 by Kurt H. Wolff in an edition intended to reacquaint English readers with the scope of Simmel's thinking. The Sociology of Georg Simmel (New York,), pp. 345-376.

5. For background on how actors joined the late nineteenth-century pursuit of professional standing, I have consulted Benjamin McArthur's Actors and American Culture, 1880-1920 (Philadelphia, 1984), p. 86, and generally.

6. The Elks published another description of their origins and purposes after World War II, "Authorized by The Grand Lodge of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the United States of America and published under the supervision of the Elks National Memorial and Publication Commission" (The Elks

National Memorial, title page). The memorial itself is an extraordinary work of stone and metal frieze and allegorical painting, crowding every surface of an opulent neo-classicist building. Filed in the architecture section of the Chicago Public Library, the commemorative volume emphasizes, among photographs of architectural details, a legacy of "community and patriotic service" and of political and gender (rather than racial or ethnic) togetherness. As do the details of the monument itself, the text of the commemoration revises and generalizes Elks history in terms of universal concepts and morals, departing from Ellis's somewhat grittier account by its particular use of euphemism and lack of actual "detail," but at the same it is time bolder in its assertion of Elks nationalism. Here are excerpts from its introduction: "The Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the United States of America was born in the minds and hearts of a small group of devoted friends, whose only selfish desire was for fraternal companionship and whose real aspiration was for an enlarged usefulness to their fellow man. For some time they had been banded together in a local organization of a purely social character. They were men of unusual intelligence, widely traveled, of deep earnestness, and of broad vision. Association in their modest little society had given them a fine conception of the splendid possibilities presented to a new fraternity which would be national in jurisdiction, charitable and benevolent in purpose and essentially American in membership....

"Non-sectarian, non-political, drawing its members from all sections, from all denominations and from all political parties, the Order was naturally a medium through which those of differing creeds and political affiliations and sectional viewpoints would reach a better understanding of each other.

"Organized at a time when the aftermath of the civil war was still apparent in sectional bitterness and prejudice which retarded the healing of old wounds and delayed the restoration of real national accord, the Order of Elks may justly claim a foremost place among the agencies which aided in the final destruction of those barriers and speeded the happy consummation of a truly reunited people....

"The growth of the Order has kept pace with its activities in the fields of fraternalism, benevolence, community and patriotic service....

"Membership in the Order of Elks is a badge of citizenship, for none but an American can be an Elk. 'Love of country, home and friend' are its principle tenets, and our country's flag is draped in silken benediction upon the alter of every Elk home."

Chapter Four Notes:

1. Quote is from John Berger, Ways of Seeing (Harmondsworth, 1972) p. 9.

2. From Ade's Fables in Slang (1899), reprinted in The Best of George Ade, A.L. Lazarus, ed. (Bloomington, 1985). In this same collection is Ade's letter to the editor of the New York Herald Tribune of September 8, 1926, in which he responds--relative to Dreiser's enormous success with An American Tragedy--to the question of the 1900 use of his language. "It warmed me to discover that Mr. Dreiser had found my description suitable for the clothing of one of his characters...Most certainly I do not accuse Mr. Dreiser of plagiarism, even by implication or in the spirit of pleasantry. I have a genuine admiration for him. To me he is a very large and commanding figure in American letters. While some of us have been building chicken coops or, possible, bungalows, Mr. Dreiser has been creating skyscrapers. He makes the old three-decker novel look like a pamphlet. He is the only writer in our list who has the courage and the patience and the painstaking powers of observation to get all of one human career into one story....Theodore Dreiser was born in Indiana and we other Hoosiers are very proud of him..." One wonders, is Ade's encomium an ironic critique of Dreiser's ponderous Tragedy?

In fact, Ade and Dreiser were linked, somewhat to Dreiser's diminishment as a builder of skyscrapers, in the letter Harper and Bros. sent to Dreiser in April of 1900 to reject Sister Carrie. Henry Mills Alden, a friend of Dreiser and editor of Harper's Monthly, noted that the manuscript represented "a superior piece of reportorial realism--of highclass newspaper work, such as might have been done by George Ade." (Quoted from James L.W. West III, A Sister Carrie Portfolio, Charlottesville, 1985).

3. Reference is made in T. Allston Brown's A History of the New York Stage (New York, 1903) to an actor named William J. Scanlan, performing the title role in "Myles Aroon" in New York at the Grand Opera House on March 17, 1890; the one-day performance was a special St. Patrick's Day event. The celebrities appearing or spoken of in the Sister Carrie manuscript edition were in all cases actual figures in the 1890s. In the Doubleday first edition, these names were either changed or deleted, apparently because the publisher had expressed concerns about defamation. Questions pertaining to the ethics of publishers and readers might be raised over why it was necessary to conceal, for a 1900 audience, the fiction of Scanlan or Joseph Jefferson or Nat Goodwin drinking and telling stories among politicians and businessmen in a somewhat elegant resort.

4. This is, among other's, Amy Kaplan's premise in her essay entitled "The Sentimental Revolt of Sister Carrie," chapter six of The Social Construction of American Realism (1988). Posing herself against the critical argument that Dreiser's social realism exposes the failures of domesticity and the messages of domestic realism, Kaplan asserts that although Dreiser "starts by undermining the traditional locus of sentimental value in the virtue of the heroine and the middle-class home as a haven from the market, he does not thereby erase sentimental conventions; rather he reconstitutes marriage and domesticity as subjects of the market" (141). For Kaplan, the entire city is "domesticated" through being re-encoded "into the sentimental language of consumption." Carrie "scales down the vast city to a manageable, unthreatening size by translating its intimidating social structures" into such a language, thus "transforming the city into a showcase for tangible commodities which speak to her" (146). I find Kaplan's reading of the novel tremendously helpful for understanding its historical pertinence in terms of a nineteenth-century consumer culture. At times, however, I feel that she is scaling down the vast novel to the size of constraining economic arguments. The argument that consumption is all that shapes sentimentality in the novel necessarily forfeits other cultural experience, for example the author's life apart from his work as a magazine writer.

5. In this regard, Stuart Culver offers a compelling rebuttal to Jackson Lears's well-known hypothesis (in No Place of Grace) that feelings of "weightlessness," in nineteenth-century American culture, that is a sense of insulation from genuine experience and a sense of having "fallen" from "integral" selfhood and autonomy, drove continuing desires for the "real" through consumerism. Culver proposes, I think correctly, that consumption was driven instead by an "appetite for the unreal, not a dread of it" ("Manikins" 117).

6. Elks Lodge #4 of Chicago--called in the novel the Custer Lodge--held annual benefit theatricals throughout the 1880s and 1890s, but, as I have said the thirteenth annual benefit which was to have been held in the spring of 1890 never came off. This may have been due to the interruption of Horace McVicker's term as Grand Exalted Ruler. While McVicker was a prominent Elk, the benefits were staged in the theater he owned. McVicker's theater is referred to several times in Sister Carrie, but the Elk's benefit is held in Avery Hall, "located not more than a mile from the city limits" and not as elegant as the fashionable McVicker's; Avery Hall is associated in Sister Carrie with cheap amateurism, a significant irony since Dreiser confers such an inflated social status upon the Elks. If Carrie arrives in the city during the autumn of 1889, then the time frame for the novel suggests that 1890 is the year of her Avery Hall debut, the one year in the century when no theatricals were staged by

Chicago #4. As a newspaper reporter in several midwestern cities, including Chicago, Dreiser would have been aware of the attention traditionally given to public activities of the major fraternal orders. In the novel, he refers to a column devoted to this subject in the Times.

7. This is one of the many interesting passages omitted by Dreiser and his editorial helpers for the 1900 Doubleday edition. In fact, 1900 picks up the passage in the sentence following this one, as Dreiser, without Hawthorne's specter, goes ahead to do his own justice to the multi-layered scene.

8. Some of my ideas for writing this chapter were the result of reading an essay by Dominick LaCapra entitled "Bakhtin, Marxism, and the Carnavalesque," appearing in his collection Rethinking Intellectual History: Texts, Contexts, Language (Ithaca, 1983). Carnival-like gatherings serve as a means for evoking not only community, but the male circle's claims of liminality in Sister Carrie. Discussing the writings of M. Bakhtin, LaCapra's review of pertinent features of "carnival in social life and carnivalization in literature" includes this quote from Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics (1929):

Carnival....is an attitude toward the world which liberates from fear, brings the world close to man and man close to his fellow man (all is drawn into the zone of liberated familiar contact) and, with its joy of change and its jolly relativity, counteracts the gloomy, one-sided official seriousness which is born of fear, is dogmatic and inimical to evolution and change, and seeks to absolutize the given conditions of existence and the social order (qtd. 297).

After Victor Turner, I have situated my notion of liminality with what Bakhtin is calling liberation and against absolutized conditions of existence. But as the conclusion of this chapter will show--and in following my discussion of Simmel--that opposition is seldom clear. "When carnival goes the way it should," LaCapra writes, "it would seem that its 'function' in relation to other social structures is itself ambivalent" (305). One expression of that ambivalence, the Bakhtinian notion of "utopia," like my own sense of the conflicted--perhaps "dialogic"--liminality of Dreiser's fictional world, comprises (in LaCapra's words) "not a total social environment" but "a vital dimension of social and cultural life." For LaCapra, among Bakhtin's most significant contributions is this notion of utopia as "experimental fantasy" "that has to some extent been approximated in institutions of the past and that tests and contests existing conditions to open possibilities of historical transformation" (323).

Because the transformation of history is desired but is tragically impossible in Dreiser's world, liminality in his novel merely aspires to the vitality with which Victor Turner

also characterizes the "dimension" of "experimental fantasy." Nevertheless, it is in the context of an ambivalent opposition of the intimate and inimical, of "laughter" and official seriousness, of transformation and absolute order, that community is, as I have said, called into being in Dreiser's novel.

Chapter Five Notes:

1. Feeling not as inconspicuous as he would like, Hurstwood decides to take Carrie driving, and "they soon travelled out of range of either public observation or hearing" (127).

"With the opening [earlier in the century] of the West Side Driving Park," writes Sennett, "the drive through the parks of the West Side [of Chicago] became a very fashionable form of recreation" (Families 16). Moers reports on William Dean Howells's "disgust" watching the Central Park display of nouveau-riche carriages. Her quote from his Impressions and Experiences (N.Y.: Harper, 1986), can help the reader to imagine "little" Carrie riding beside Hurstwood: "In Europe, this sort of tragi-comedy is at least well played, but in America, you always have the feeling that the performance is that of second-rate amateurs....I am moved to laughter....by the sight of a little, lavishly dressed lady, lolling in the corner of a ponderous landau, with the effect of holding fast less she should be shaken out of it, while two powerful horses, in jingling, silver-plated harness....get her majestically over the ground at a slow trot...." (Moers 30) In the manuscript of Newspaper Days (1922), Dreiser, living then in the middle west, mentions hearing of his sister Emma's comfortable existence in New York as the wife of a Tammany official and that she daily joined the fashionable display of carriages in Central Park (Moers 29). Emma and the Tammany official, L.A. Hopkins, were to become models for Carrie and Hurstwood.

2. Among the recent explorations of how Dreiser imagines acting and the part of performance off stage, is Deborah M. Garfield's "Taking a Part: Actor and Audience in Theodore Dreiser's Sister Carrie" (American Literary Realism 1983). Garfield's critical metaphor of theatricality, employed to reconstruct the way Hurstwood imagines and propels his own transformation, is analogous to my notion of liminality in the sense of a "scissure" with the realm of possibility. When Hurstwood "blindly displays the bravado" of Carrie's rescuer, he is "unaware that he is acting. No longer content to remain behind a mask, he merges into it--attempting to bridge the traditional scissure between the actor and the part he plays. It is the unreal enchantment of this....final role in Chicago....which propels him out of the rigidly defined parameters of social respectability and into the animal struggle in the Bowery netherworld where he is destined to fail" (229,230). Garfield also makes the point that Hurstwood, "a virtuoso," is always going to the playhouse.

Chapter Six Notes:

1. In her analysis of Hurstwood, June Howard refers to Sontag's point that "every illness can be considered psychologically" (Sontag 57), in order to argue that naturalism's themes are often more familiar than theoretical. Form and History in American Literary Naturalism (Chapel Hill, 1985) p. 45.

2. A good example of how, in 1900, some doctors filled elevated social positions, and how that hierarchical positioning in communities may have contributed to rhetoric surrounding the social status of certain diseases, is offered by Robert Herrick's The Web of Life, discussed in a note above.

3. Freud quotes at length from several "eminent observers," including W. Erb who writes, in 1893, that the "extraordinary achievements of modern times, the discoveries and inventions in every sphere, the maintenance of progress in the face of increasing competition--these things have only been gained, and can only be held, by great mental effort.....The immense extension of communications which has been brought about by the network of telegraphs and telephones that encircle the world has completely altered the conditions of trade and commerce. All is hurry and agitation; night is used for travel, day for business, even 'holiday' trips have become a strain on the nervous system.....City life is constantly becoming more sophisticated and more restless. The exhausted nerves seek recuperation in increased stimulation and in highly-spiced pleasures, only to become more exhausted than before. Modern literature is concerned with the most questionable problems which stir up all the passions, and which encourage sensuality and a craving for pleasure, and contempt for every fundamental ethical principle and every ideal. It brings before the reader's mind pathological figures and problems concerned with psychopathic sexuality, and revolutionary and other subjects" (183-84). Sicherman's point that the doctor's "ethics" determine the illness is thereby highlighted by the example of Erb. Throughout Beard's and Mitchell's writing, technologies of transportation and communication--travel speed of the body and voice, and the relentless productivity of time--are also credited with creating modern nervousness.

4. Lutz must be praised for his massive effort to express the polysemic nature of history rather than what he calls the generalizable. Nevertheless, he may be criticized for his overdetermination of neurasthenia, that is for rendering neurasthenia "nearly universal." Thus, for example, he can say something as easily mis-readable as the following: "From nervousness and its cure was born the rough-riding ethos Roosevelt would translate into a vigorous and imperialist foreign policy" (80). Lutz's implied criticism of other historical approaches to this period--notably Jackson Lears's

and Alan Trachtenberg's--may protest too much. Leaving these two names out of the main text, he is critical of historians who adopt "large-scale historiographical concepts to gloss over significant differences" (15). This is indeed a valid critique of the work of both these other writers. However, although he is attempting to present an unstructured view of neurasthenia in the Foucauldian sense as "a rich node of intersecting discourse," I cannot see how Lutz's neurasthenia strategy is much different than Lears's overdetermined "therapeutic ethos" or Trachtenberg's "incorporation," except that it focuses upon a single year. Indeed, Lutz's rich node, appropriating a great deal of "unlikely conjuncture" and "widespread contention", constructs its own large-scale historiographical concept. His big book effectively makes neurasthenia into such a concept.

5. My reading of Dreiser's diaries (Theodore Dreiser: The American Diaries, 1902-1926, ed. Thomas P. Riggio, Philadelphia, 1982) focuses upon entries from November of 1902.

6. The context for Mitchell's quote is worth including: "I am very far from conceding that the vehement energy with which we do our work is due altogether to greed. We probably idle less and play less than any other race, and the absence of national habits of sport, especially in the West, leaves the man of business with no inducement to abandon that unceasing labor in which at last he finds his sole pleasure. He does not ride, or shoot, or fish, or play any game but euchre. Business absorbs him utterly, and at last he finds neither time nor desire for books. The newspaper is his sole literature; he has never had time to acquire a taste for any reading save his ledger" (1871, 74). The perception that business was absorbing American men had not died out by November of 1882, when E.L. Godkin, writing in The Nation under the heading of "American Overwork," reported that while visiting the United States Herbert Spencer had "added his corroboration to the immense mass of testimony which has, ever since the introduction of railroads and telegraphs, been convicting Americans of taking too little relaxation" (Godkin 417). Incidentally, Mitchell himself, a prolific novelist, joined the cavalcade of novelists publishing in the year 1900, who hoped that men and women could separate themselves from responsibility long enough to read books. His Dr. North and His Friends included the ubiquitous neurasthenic character, in this case a woman.

Chapter Seven Notes:

1.Quote is included in Theodore Dreiser, a Selection of Uncollected Prose, under the title "Political Corruption," p. 42.

2.The Lexow Report was made in 1894 and published the next year in Albany. That year, resulting from the report's revelations, the Tammany slate was voted out of power in New York City. But by 1898, the Tammany controlled Democrats were able to elect a mayor, and Tammany leader Richard Croker played an influential role in the governor's election, though victory went to the Republican and reform candidate, Theodore Roosevelt. In 1900, a second state senate investigation of New York City government, the report of the Mazet committee, was published in Albany. Nevertheless, in the 1900 presidential election, Croker was able to assure the nomination of Bryan by delivering New York's delegates. Of course McKinley, with Roosevelt as his vice president, won the general election. I am indebted primarily to Connable's Tigers of Tammany (1967) for this overview.

3.A recent New York Times article shows how this conflict of identities operates in another secret organization, the Cosa Nostra. The conflict here is over the way federal authorities describe "clubs" owned by convicted mobster John Gotti. The United States attorney's office wants to seize the clubs because they consider them as sites used for criminal activities. Gotti's attorney responds that "'the government has really gone off the deep end' in trying to seize the....clubs, which he described as 'community social clubs' that have been in their neighborhoods for years" (Times 8/4/92).

Chapter Eight Notes:

1. In his 1932 history of the business of legitimate theater in America, Alfred Bernheim asserts that the "combination" system of organization caused an "industrial revolution in the theater" (32). The combination system brought about a separation of the complimentary businesses of theater ownership and play producing, the latter being done by an entrepreneur whose speciality was booking plays into theaters. What the theater owner controlled now was another piece of real estate. Because of its position already as the pre-eminent center of production in America, New York was the likely place to become the "feeder" of plays to theaters around the country as well as the headquarters for publicity. Local theater owners could no longer compete as producers with the splendid companies arriving from New York City. Plays originating in New York would be booked to travel initially along first small, and later larger, regional "circuits" of theaters. It was the formation of these circuits that changed the theater, according to Bernheim, "from a home industry to 'big business'." As booking offices developed into larger entities, large numbers of independently owned theaters became linked together into "a sort of amorphous super-circuit" (40). In 1896, then, the creation of a Theatrical Syndicate served to consolidate the circuits themselves into one centrally controlled super-circuit.

As a budding professional actress, Carrie shapes herself and her career in the context of these centralized forces of control. Carrie's first applications to work in the theater in Chicago and then later in New York will be to the offices of the Frohman brothers, Charles and Daniel, key figures in the formation of a Theatrical Syndicate. When she moves, it is toward Frohman's headquarters in the center of centers, New York. Thus her contacts with the Frohmans punctuate the early development of her acting career. Carrie's move to New York is toward the center of power in the theater business from a less central place, Chicago, which is not, as she is told in Frohman's Chicago branch office, a good place to get a start. Later, when she decides not to go out on the road with her "hit" comedy-opera in New York, she wisely chooses to stay near the center of power. They'll forget about you if you go out there, her colleague and friend Lola tells her. A company tour into the heartland from which she has already escaped means obscurity, invisibility in a profession in which one must always remain conspicuous. For actresses, the city means visibility. Broadway, with its daily social parades, its theaters, and most importantly its media, was and is the capital of visibility. And by the mid-1890s, the technology of media was sufficiently sophisticated and widespread to make an actress remaining in New York conspicuous enough to achieve celebrity as far away as Chicago or London, where Carrie travels as a star. However perfunctorily Carrie looks back with nostalgia upon her roots in Wisconsin, those roots

themselves, reading their newspapers, are hypothetically looking toward the urban star as a model of cultural behavior.

2. Ames's was given significantly more to say to Carrie at the end of the holograph than in the edited 1900 edition. As I have said, I participate in the argument over textual authority to the extent that I have chosen to interpret a particular text. For my purposes, the holograph edition exposes much concerning Dreiser's dialogue with the thinking of his time. Pertinent to the present discussion, once the author's own 1900 cuts are restored, the relationship between Ames's conversation with Carrie near the end of the novel and the contemporary discourse which presumed an association of audience, community, and humanity, is made much clearer.

3. In this sense Carrie symbolizes the changing city, Chicago and New York. Its shape and image in the 1890s was always in flux: "The cycle of construction, destruction, construction was furious" (Trachtenberg 118). The theater district may serve as an illustration. As the values of properties in certain areas changed, theaters and hotels were torn down and new ones built further and further uptown. In the 1870s and 1880s, Union Square was the center of the theatrical world, but by the 1890s, it was Madison Square--by the early twentieth century, Times Square. Architectural movement extended upwards in another manner: taller buildings replaced or dwarfed older ones. Luxury hotels were some of the earliest tall buildings of the nineteenth century (Tunnard & Reed 208), and by 1894, a celebrity like Carrie could move frequently as newer and larger ones were put up.

4. In 1916, John Dewey recited a basic premise of reformist communitarianism as clearly as anyone when he wrote that "there is more than a verbal tie between the words common, community, and communication. Men live in a community by virtue of things which they have in common; and communication is the way in which they come to possess things in common. What they must have in common in order to form a community or society are aims, beliefs, aspirations, knowledge--a common understanding--like-mindedness as the sociologists say" (Democracy and Education 5). Therefore, the schools have the challenge of bringing all children together in one place to communicate with each other and to be communicated to regarding commonly understood aims, beliefs, aspirations, knowledge.

The nature of this "common" culture was asserted by a more conservative writer than Dewey in 1893, the Evangelical minister and social critic, Josiah Strong. In "The Problem of the City" (The New Era), Strong focuses upon "foreigners." "If the foreigners were scattered among the native population, our language would be a necessity to them, and they would soon become acquainted and assimilated; but segregated they simply live the old country life on our soil. They are like unmasticated food." Strong goes on to state his Anglo-Saxon

cultural bias openly: "I bring no sweeping accusation against foreigners....Still we are compelled to recognize facts, and the facts are that a majority of immigrants believe either in a perverted and superstitious form of Christianity or in none at all," a reference, presumably, to Southern and Eastern European Catholics and Jews (189-191).

I present these quotes to emphasize the hegemonic inclinations which are inherent in the turn-of-the-century ideal of assimilation. It can be pointed out, however, that while Hull-House operated upon similar notions of digestion, Addams and her residents also made efforts to assimilate the cultural heritage of the "foreigners."

One related note: in The Incorporation of America, Alan Trachtenberg discusses the mid-century arguments for creating large city parks. A park like New York's Central Park testified to the need for "commonness" and "intercourse" in the city with its "restraining and confining conditions." Trachtenberg recommends seeing Frederick Law Olmstead's writings in Civilizing American Cities: A Selection of Frederick Law Olmstead's Writing on City Landscapes (Cambridge 1971), S.B. Sutton, editor; and Landscape into Cityscape (Ithaca 1968), Albert Fein, ed.

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