

### The Editor's Dental Parlors:

The halcyon days of free issues of ALN are, I am saddened to report, swiftly tilting toward darkness. The issue you are reading right now, in fact, is the final free issue I'll be able to distribute. Like McTeague extracting a molar with a brutish yank of thumb and forefinger, I will soon have to perform a small financial extraction from your billfold, purse, or children's piggy bank in order to keep our collective enterprise up and running. And, rest assured, I am committed to keeping ALN going.

As you may or may not know, for its first two years of existence (four complete issues in two volumes) ALN has been fully funded through the generosity of North Georgia College & State University. This funding has allowed us to develop, print, and distribute approximately five hundred copies of ALN for each of four issues. It hasn't been cheap.

My institution has not withdrawn its support—and none of us wish for ALN to come to a glorious conclusion with this issue—but my dean can no longer guarantee full funding each year. Henceforth, ALN will be only partially, rather than fully, funded by NGCSU. The rest of us will have to pick up the slack through philanthropic donations (anyone feeling philanthropic about literary naturalism?) and through a modest subscription fee.

Send no money now, please. I simply cannot accept any money right now. Not yet.

This summer I will draft a letter that I will send out via e-mail to the distribution lists of all of our related societies. That e-mail will have all of the information you will need in order to set up a subscription (and/or make donations) to ALN. All you need to do right now is take about fifteen dollars and put it into a sealed envelope marked "For ALN"—then, stash that envelope in a safe and secure place till this summer. That way, you'll have no excuse for not subscribing when the time arrives.

My deepest thanks to all of the contributors to this issue. If I may say so, I think we have a very fine issue on our hands. Meanwhile, your humble narrator is headed to Ukraine for five weeks to teach American literature, but I'll be back in time for the ALA in May. I hope to see you there...

Naturally,  
Eric Carl Link

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## Teaching Realism and Naturalism in Leipzig, Germany

Chuck Johanningsmeier

When I first started thinking about writing this essay in the fall of 2006, I had just begun my year as a Fulbright Senior Scholar in Germany at the University of Leipzig's Institute for American Studies. Unbeknownst to me then, future issues of *ALN: The American Literary Naturalism Newsletter* would feature excellent articles about "Teaching Literary Naturalism in Poland" (Larry Hussman) and "Crossing Cultures New and Old: Teaching Naturalism as a Fulbright Professor in Greece" (Jeanne Campbell Reesman). After reading these narratives, I naturally wondered whether I had anything to add. Not surprisingly, though, as befits a literature professor, I found that I had more than enough material.

I would first like to echo what Jeanne Campbell Reesman had to say about the incredible opportunity that the Fulbright Fellowship Program affords. I had long dreamed of getting to teach abroad, so when I received news in April 2006 that my application for a Fulbright had been successful, I was overjoyed. As it turned out, it took much more work than I had anticipated to make all the arrangements necessary to arrange my leave, get everything here in Omaha (house, yard, etc.) ready for our year's absence, and to move myself and my family (my wife and three children, ages 10, 6, and 4) to Germany. However, I can now say that all the hard work paid off, and in so many ways our experience abroad far exceeded even our wildest expectations.

First, I had the opportunity to experience a way of life very different than my own here in the U.S. I had visited Germany a few times before, but only for relatively short periods, and never to the former East Germany. Leipzig is located in the former DDR (Deutsche Demokratische Republik), and even almost two dec-

ades after reunification with West Germany, it still has a culture that is very different from the latter. Through my experiences, conversations, and observations, I learned so much about what life had been like in the DDR, and as a result I had to modify many of my preconceptions about how difficult life was for people behind the Iron Curtain. Unfortunately, it was also quite distressing to watch a culture actively transitioning from one that couldn't valorize the acquisition of material goods to one where stores are bursting with goods, store opening hours are gradually being expanded, and some people are even learning the principles of conspicuous consumption.

Living in Leipzig also allowed us to experience urban living without a car, in a city whose cultural offerings differed quite a bit from those available in Omaha. Leipzig is a relatively large city (about 575,000) but has a "small city" feel to it. We lived in a university guest house (apartment building) right on the downtown church plaza (Nikolaikirchhof) where major events of the "Peaceful Revolution" of 1989 took place, and because of this central location we could go everywhere we wanted by foot, bus, streetcar, or train. This guest house—"modern" by DDR standards of the 1970s, when it was built to house visiting Socialist Party dignitaries—was a very exciting place to live, because there we got to meet visiting scholars and their families from all over the world and could watch and listen to major civic events from our windows. One downside, though, was that we lived on the sixth floor of the building, and there was no elevator. When people would approach me on the street with flyers about joining a health club, I always politely declined with a slight laugh, joking that in fact I had my own "Stairmaster" at home. An added benefit was that I got a good upper-body workout from constantly hauling backpacks and grocery bags filled with food to feed my family of five up all those stairs!

The cultural offerings in Leipzig were incredibly extensive. Leipzig is widely known as

the “Musikstadt” of Germany, and with good reason: Bach was the musical director of four Leipzig churches for many years, and Robert Schumann, his wife Clara Wieck, and Felix Mendelssohn spent key years of their careers there. Not only were we able to take in lots of great concerts at the Gewandhaus (the symphony hall), the Opera House (both within easy walking distance of our apartment), and various churches, but we could also listen to excellent string quartets, brass quintets, and so forth in the streets. Alas, the most common choice of street musicians was the accordion; after a while, we came to recognize individual accordionists and know their limited repertoires—sometimes a bit *too* well for our tastes...

Another way in which our year exceeded our expectations was that we were able to travel much more than we had anticipated. Fortunately for us, our children were just the right ages to take advantage of the very family-friendly travel policies of the German rail system (Deutsche Bahn): when accompanied by an adult, all children under 14 travel free. During the course of the year, we explored almost every corner of Germany except the far northwest. Berlin, Potsdam, and Dresden, for example, were only an hour away, as was the Meissen Porcelain Factory and the Erzgebirge Mountains, where Christmas ornaments and nutcrackers are made in small village workshops and sent throughout the world. We visited German friends in Tutzing, south of Munich on the Starnberger See (well-known to American literature scholars from the opening lines of “The Waste Land”) and in Bayreuth (home of the Cult of Wagner), and we also went to the Baltic Sea island of Rügen for a few days after I gave a lecture at the University of Rostock. On one trip, too, we had the chance to connect with my family’s German heritage by visiting the farm and community near Hanover from which my Johanningsmeier relatives had emigrated to the U.S. in the 1850s.

Further afield, we journeyed to Prague for a cold but beautiful January weekend, during

which we enjoyed the new Kafka museum, walked across the Charles Bridge in a snowstorm, and visited the city’s old Jewish Quarter. Taking full advantage of the kids’ school vacation in February, we went to Vienna for four days, where even riff raff such as we could enjoy coffee and sachertorte at the elegant Sacher Hotel Café, where this scrumptious dessert was first invented (I breathed a sigh of relief when we left without having broken any of the fine china!) We then returned to Leipzig and thoroughly enjoyed the Fasching (Carnival) celebrations, including a parade which featured some floats on which people were filling big cups of beer from the keg on board and offering them free to spectators. After that it was off to London (thanks to Ryan Air, the discount airline) for a week. The highlight for the kids, of course, was our visit to Track 9  $\frac{3}{4}$  at King’s Cross Station (Harry, Ron, and Hermione were unfortunately nowhere to be seen!) I will try to avoid making this too much of a travelogue, and will simply say that not only did we see a lot of Germany, but during various vacation times we also visited a number of other European countries (and yes, we have the credit card bills to prove it!)

Even though it might sound as if we were never in Leipzig very long, I *did* spend a great deal of time working during the academic terms. In fact, this is the third way in which my Fulbright experience greatly exceeded my expectations: my year at the Institute for American Studies in Leipzig was, for a number of reasons, the most exciting and fulfilling of my professional career. For one thing, as a Fulbright Senior Scholar, I was treated like royalty. To begin with, I was given an office that was three times the size of my office here in the U.S., with windows looking out on beautiful 18<sup>th</sup>-century buildings. In addition, my colleagues in the Institute, all of whom spoke fluent English and had spent considerable time in the U. S., were incredibly welcoming, intellectually engaging, and similarly committed to interdisciplinarity. Furthermore, as a foreign

“expert” I was invited to make presentations throughout Germany on topics ranging from Willa Cather to American immigration history, American public library history, and the role of newspapers in American literary studies.

Beginning in mid-September, I spent a few weeks or so at work just learning the ropes of how things worked at the Institute. When I first got to Germany, I knew perhaps 50 words of German and couldn’t put many of them together to say anything coherent, and thus I needed help navigating the system. Fortunately for me, not only was the bilingual secretary, Anne Keyselt, incredibly helpful, but I was also assigned a graduate student assistant, Alex Munzig, who throughout the year would perform incredibly invaluable services for me. Even though the language of instruction at the Institute is English, and a fair number of essential signs and web sites are in English, I still needed lots of help from Alex during the first weeks to understand how the library system worked (“OK, so if a book has a green dot on its spine you can’t take it out”; “Yes, I understand: you have to return books to an actual person, not a drop box, and you need to tell them, ‘Ich möchte dieses Buch zurückgeben’”), how to ensure students had books for my courses (when one registers the books on the online Lehrbox system, similar to Blackboard, an order is automatically sent to the one English-language bookstore in Leipzig and to Amazon.de, which offers students a discount if they order through them), and even how to make course packets at the local copy store, Zimo’s (apparently copyright infringement is no big issue—when a book from the U.S. is difficult to obtain in sufficient quantities, Zimo’s will make photocopies of it for students!) I’m proud to say, incidentally, that I figured out how to speak “Deutschekopiersprache” (German Copier Language—not a real word—or at least not yet!) all on my own. This may not seem that big a deal, but when you live in a country where you don’t understand the language, such accomplishments seem huge.

As the beginning of the term approached in early October, I felt as if I were somewhat prepared and ready to teach. I had learned the difference between what I could require for my students who wanted only to earn a “Teilnahmeschein” (a certificate awarded chiefly for attendance and class participation) and those who wanted to earn a “Leistungsschein” (a certificate which required the student to actually write papers and do other work), and I thought I understood how enrollment worked (when students register, an e-mail is sent to you, and you can either let them in or not). I had even set my “Sprechstunde” (office hour) for the semester. No, that’s not a typo: it’s an office *hour*, not *hours*. In Germany, instructors generally are less available to students (this will, I’m sure, change as students start to pay more for their education and come to expect customer satisfaction), and so they are only required to post one office hour per week. When I suggested to a colleague that I might offer a few more hours, I was discouraged from doing so; if I did it, this colleague explained, then students might start expecting other professors to also do it. Not wanting to make waves, I reluctantly relented. . .

During the fall semester, I taught classes in both “The Pursuit of the American Dream” (mostly for students near the beginning of their studies) and “American Regionalist Fiction, 1865-1925” (for advanced students). From the beginning, I was very impressed with the abilities of my students. Not only were all of them at least proficient (and many near fluent) in English, but because of their excellent training at the Institute and, often, extended study or work experience in the U.S., most had a fair amount of background knowledge to which I could refer when necessary. Still, although they could be quite astute at some times about American culture, there were also some gaps that needed filling in. On the first day of my regionalism class, for instance, I passed out maps of the U.S. that showed only the state boundaries, and asked them to sketch out where

they thought America's "regions" are and to tell what they think they are called. One group astutely pointed out that "West Coast," at least culturally, applies chiefly to the area from the coast inland about 100 miles, but I had a good laugh when one slightly baffled group circled the area roughly including Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Nebraska, and labeled it, "Corn Grows Here"! On the first day, too, I was rather surprised when at the end of the class the students all rapped their knuckles rather loudly on their desks. When I looked a bit befuddled, one student kindly explained that this is the way German students register their approval of the day's class. Talk about instantaneous student evaluations!

I found that, in general, this regionalist literature course "translated" quite well (please pardon the pun). As in the U.S., in Germany there is a very conflicted relationship between its regions, such as Bavaria, Thuringia, Saxony, etc., and what Raymond Williams would call its "Metropolises," such as Munich, Frankfurt, Hamburg, and Berlin, as well as a major conflict between the "regions" of the former West and the former East. In addition, my German students could readily identify with certain themes of *Country of the Pointed Firs* and *Main-Travelled Roads*, such as the appeal of country living—but only for short respites from city life. As for their reactions to Charles Chesnutt, well, let's just say that dialect is very, very difficult to translate, and this made his works almost inaccessible to them. Seizing the opportunity, though, in the class session devoted to Chesnutt we had a lively, spirited discussion of German regional dialects and how some are privileged more than others.

I might note that this turned out to be one of my major projects of the year: educating Germans about the importance of America's "regions." Few seemed to have a very clear understanding of the role that the areas between the coasts plays in American culture and politics (of course, one might say the same about many Americans. . .). I gave one talk on re-

gionalism to a group of English teachers in Chemnitz (formerly known as Karl Marx Stadt), and on another occasion I delivered a public lecture at the University of Leipzig with the title of "How Cheeseheads, Huskers, and NASCAR Fans Will Elect the Next U.S. President." In the latter I not only talked about regional cultures (they loved learning about Rocky Mountain Oysters!) but also proposed that a successful candidate for the presidency needs to be perceived in each region as respecting that region's cultural traditions and should know how to talk convincingly about that region's sports teams.

By the time the "Summer" semester began in April (it would go until late July), I felt as if I was well prepared to teach my "American Literary Realism and Naturalism" Hauptseminar for advanced students. Not only had I taught at the Institute for an entire semester (even learning how to fill out the grade forms in German), but I also had had the opportunity to observe German culture on a daily basis for seven months and to start tentatively analyzing what I was seeing. I was aided in this endeavor by my slow acquisition of German language skills. Unfortunately, I did not have time to take a formal course, but by this point I had learned enough to understand, at least so I thought, the import of newspaper articles, advertisements, and various cultural practices. (Nonetheless, I was still far behind my daughters, who after just a few short months in a German elementary school were nearly fluent in German and could understand almost everything; I was so proud of them, but I did have to break them of the habit of correcting my less than proficient pronunciation, grammar, and word choice in front of people!)

The reading list for my American Literary Realism and Naturalism course was almost identical to what I usually put on the course syllabus for my course here in the U.S.; the only difference was a slightly lighter reading load. We started with *How the Other Half Lives* and, in addition to many short works from *The*

*Portable American Realism Reader*, moved on to *Life in the Iron Mills*, *Daisy Miller*, *The House of Mirth*, *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, and *The Sport of the Gods*.

In the first class session, though, I did something I had never done with my American students: I gave them a questionnaire. Based on my observations of German cultural practices, I had formed a number of assumptions about students' attitudes and believed that this questionnaire would highlight for them a number of differences between their beliefs and those of most Americans, beliefs that I thought might influence their attitudes towards realist and naturalist literary works. Based on what I thought were quite astute observations, I believed that my German students would (a) be distrustful of blatant, East German-style propaganda/representations but not be especially astute at seeing through the less obvious "propaganda"/representations of "reality" more commonly found in Western media; (b) be more fatalistic than my American students, thus identifying much more heartily with Naturalist beliefs; and (c) be more sympathetic to the critiques offered in many naturalist works of the dangers of excessive individualism and thus be more supportive of societal cooperation.

Much to my surprise, student responses to the questionnaire indicated that my early analyses of Germans and German culture were, on the whole, quite superficial and simplistic. For instance, in response to my question, "Does the news media today provide Germans with 'propaganda'?" only two out of the 19 respondents said "No," while others perceptively charged the German news media with bias created due to political and economic pressures on the companies that produce the "news." Four other questions were designed to gauge how fatalistic my students were, which might in turn influence their attitudes towards naturalism. The first one was: "How much control do you feel you have over determining your future in life?" (They could circle "Very Much" all the way down to "None"). I expected most students

to answer "None" or "Hardly any at all"; instead, of the 19 responses, only two were "Hardly any at all," and zero were "None." The four "Very Much" responses and 13 "A fair amount" ones, it seemed to me, were about what I might expect from my American students, due to Americans' indoctrination in personal agency. The second question was, "Do you believe that a Divine Being exists that controls and orders events in the world?" Possibly due to the legacy of atheism in the DDR, the 16 respondents to this question were fairly split: 10 answered "Yes," and 6 answered "No." The third question was, "If you believed strongly that you had been wrongly turned down for a scholarship, would you. . ." (They could circle options from "Accept the decision of the scholarship committee and do nothing" to "Contact the scholarship office and, after the secretary tells you the committee doesn't reconsider its decisions, ask to speak to someone in authority at the office"). Based on what I had observed about Germans' general obedience to authority, I thought that many would just accept the decisions of the committee; instead, 9 opted to take action and pursue the matter to its fullest; only one would passively accept the decisions of the committee, while the rest opted for a middle course. The fourth question was, "To what extent do you believe that *economic* forces out of your control play a role in determining your future?" Here, students felt least in control of their destiny. Only a handful wrote responses such as that penned by one student: "They play a role, of course, but they are limited. . . I don't believe in blaming forces from the outside." More representative was the sardonic comment, "No money for theatre = theatres are closed = less [sic] jobs = smaller chance for me to get a job due to higher competition = I didn't really have much influence there, did I?" Yet, despite this response, I came away from reading the questionnaires with a real sense of comeuppance—that I didn't understand Germans as well as I thought, and that their attitudes—quite possibly influenced by their own experiences

with American culture—seemed to not be all that different from those held by my American students. I also realized, unfortunately too late, that it would have been very interesting to have known which responses came from “Wessies”—students from the former West Germany—and which from “Ossies,” from the former East.

My next surprise came in the very next class meeting. I had arranged beforehand with my assistant, Alex Munzig—who, fortuitously enough for me was also an actor—to barge into class and get into an argument with me over his grade for the previous semester. I planned then to ask the students, after he left, to write down their “testimony” of what “had happened,” and then compare these accounts in an attempt to get them to recognize the importance of point of view and how “reality” is always a construct. Everything went pretty smoothly, and because of his acting skills Alex was very convincing; however, our argument escalated, and Alex improvised a bit further than we had discussed, calling me a “punk.” I will never forget how one outraged student turned around, faced Alex, and yelled at him, “Hey, you have no right to treat our professor like that; he deserves to be treated with respect—get out of here now!” After Alex left, I thanked the student for his spirited defense, and then I revealed that it was all an act put on for pedagogical purposes. I must say that I have done this activity a number of times in the U.S., and *no one* has ever defended me; so much for German passivity, right?

As the course progressed, I was somewhat surprised to find that, overall, my students responded to the texts much as my American students typically do. The only major difference that I could see was that my German students had little idea of the influential role that religion plays in American life. My American students—at least the ones in Omaha—generally dislike naturalist philosophy for the ways in which it downplays the role of God. Further, they strongly resist the critique of Christian hy-

pocrisy in *Maggie* and the role this hypocrisy plays in Maggie’s downfall. In Germany, religion plays no role in public life, and in general people are not as strongly committed to their religious beliefs. Thus, my students in Leipzig were quite befuddled by my questions about the role of religious hypocrisy in *Maggie*, and I think this might also have accounted for why they were not as critical of the atheistic-leaning ideas of the naturalists.

Such a difference, however, was unusual; similarities were much more prevalent. Like my American students, for example, only four students in the class had ever read works by Jack London, despite the huge promotion of his works in Socialist East Germany, and of these four, they all said they had only read “that dog story”; apparently *The Iron Heel* is not on many German high school or university reading lists. And in our discussion of “The Law of Life,” few criticized Koskoosh’s son for leaving his father behind. When I commented that I thought there was a stronger sense of community responsibility in Germany for the aged, many students pointed out that more and more people were actually protesting paying high taxes to care for the elderly. As one student succinctly put it, “I think, Dr. J., that you overestimate Germans’ sense of obligation to each other.” When we discussed *The House of Mirth*, too, only one of my students agreed with the argument that Lily is an organism doomed by her upbringing and economic forces to evolutionary demise. One student called the proposition that Lily was a victim of forces outside her control “lame,” and many suggested that Lily could have tried much harder to get a job.

Interestingly enough, too, it was clear that, like my American students, my German students were willing to use literary works to interrogate how representations of “the other” can create unfair stereotypes, but only up to a certain point. They were quick to see, for instance, how Miss Evans’s desire to convert the Native American Harjo in John Oskison’s “The Problem of Old Harjo” was selfish and ethno-

centric. Further, they were willing to connect these issues to Germany's current treatment of ethnic and racial "others," such as Turks, Arabs, and African immigrants. However, just like American students, there were limits past which they did not want to go. In my experience, for instance, American students draw the line at reparations for slavery and the return of lands to Native Americans, arguing that "Why should we pay for that today, so long after it happened?" Possibly for similar reasons, on the two occasions when I introduced—in a completely non-threatening way—the idea that Germans had a history of the dangers of stereotyping the "other," namely of Jews, resulting in the Holocaust, the conversation definitely came to a standstill. Overall, even though my Leipzig students of course had some viewpoints on the U.S. and its culture that were quite different than those of my American students, my German students tended to interpret literary works from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in quite similar ways.

For many reasons, I am incredibly grateful for having had the opportunity to teach and live in Germany for an entire year. We were so fortunate to find ourselves in a city filled with such kind, welcoming, and helpful people, and we made a number of good friends that we were very sad to have to say goodbye to. I learned a great deal about German culture from my students, colleagues, and other people I met, and I hope that in some small way I helped them better understand Americans and American culture. In addition, I felt as if I gained a much broader perspective on my own work and life; since my return I have certainly been seeing American culture in a much different way than I did before I left. For these reasons, I would highly recommend that anyone who can arrange a teaching stint abroad should do so.

As you might well imagine, because of my and my family's great experience in Leipzig, I'm now actively looking for opportunities to teach and live abroad again. Don't be surprised, then, if in a few years I contribute another arti-

cle to *ALN* comparing my experiences teaching realism and naturalism in Germany to, say, my experiences doing so in Japan. . . or Australia . . . or Spain. . . or . . .

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## Teaching American Women Naturalists

Linda Kornasky

Until recently, instructors looking for naturalist texts by American women writers to include in courses on naturalism or women's fiction had often been hindered by a lack of critical sources on the gendering of American naturalism by women writers or on the emergence of their distinct tradition within the larger genre of naturalism. In the last few years, however, feminist literary critics Donna Campbell, in "Where are the ladies? Wharton, Glasgow, and American Women Naturalists" (2006), and Jennifer Fleissner, in *Women, Compulsion, Modernity: the Moment of American Naturalism* (2004), have given instructors welcome guidance for, respectively, selecting naturalist texts by women writers and rethinking feminist gender issues in naturalism. Nevertheless, much work remains to be done to get women naturalists' texts into the classroom, first, in regard to bringing the many noncanonical naturalist texts by women writers to the attention of interested instructors and, secondly, in regard



to accounting for the complexity of naturalism's engagement with sexuality and gender.

To address the first task, I will outline here two sample courses on American women's naturalism, one on the 1860-1920 period and the other on the 1920-1970 period, drawing on a body of texts by women naturalists initially recovered by 1970s and 80s feminist literary critics (but most now sadly in need of *re-recovery*). To address the second task, I will outline a third sample course pairing women's naturalist texts with canonical texts by male writers, and thereby suggest a few ways to approach with students the markedly gendered project of naturalism in both its masculinist/male-centered and feminist/female-centered variations.

Recent criticism on canonical male naturalists has been very perceptive in its analysis of the inherently gendered quality of 1890's male-centered naturalism. In the last decade, several excellent articles and book-length studies have been published. The breakthrough study of this type is Campbell's *Resisting Regionalism: Gender and Naturalism in American Fiction, 1885-1915* (1997), which examines the tensions between the feminine realm of local color and the masculine realm of naturalism—tensions, Campbell argues, that inform these inherently gendered genres. The most comprehensive of these studies is John Dudley's *A Man's Game: Masculinity and the Anti-Aesthetic of American Literary Naturalism* (2004), which examines the process through which the canonical white and black male naturalists and Edith Wharton (the only woman writer included, as in Campbell's book as well), constructed a masculinist anti-aesthetic in line with the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century cult of masculinity.

The feminist dimensions of naturalism have also been recently explored by critics, most notably in the article by Campbell and the book by Fleissner cited above. Fleissner's approach is uniquely revisionary, challenging the long-standing critical consensus that male-authored naturalism is exclusively masculinist

and that, for this reason, almost no women writers, except Wharton, have chosen to contribute to it. Fleissner insightfully posits that there is an "association between feminism and a rationalized modernity" initiated during the literary-historical period of naturalism (8). Also revisionary is her inclusion of women's naturalist texts from the turn-of-the-century—for example, Mary Wilkins Freeman's regionalist short fiction and Gertrude Stein's early modernist collection of novellas, *Three Lives*—in a revised canon of naturalism. But less helpful is that her analysis of male naturalists' anxious engagement with the feminism of the era's New Woman relies heavily on two novels, Frank Norris's *McTeague* and Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*. Because of a lack of balance, Fleissner's points about the feminist gendering of the entire genre fall short of being wholly persuasive, particularly insofar as she passes over Jack London altogether and covers Stephen Crane cursorily. Nevertheless, Fleissner's argument that naturalist writers and their preoccupations are diverse regarding gender (and race) is convincing. Moreover, the use of Fleissner's insights about the feminist currents in naturalism in Campbell's article demonstrates that they are present in many other American women's naturalist texts besides those covered by Fleissner.

This argument about the feminist currents in naturalist novels by women writers has also been indirectly made by feminist literary critics who have studied the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century era in the American women's literary tradition. In such studies as, for instance, Elizabeth Ammons's *Conflicting Stories: American Women Writers at the Turn into the Twentieth Century* (1992), feminist critics have similarly noted the dark pessimism found in much turn-of-the-century women's fiction. Ammons and others have worked to put this pessimism in the historical context of women's fiction, tracing its dark roots in nascent trends in American women's fiction written between the 1860s and the 1880s. These critics have not explicitly as-

sociated the salient feminist pessimism of women's writing in this era with 1890s male naturalism, yet a few of them, such as Elaine Showalter in *Sister's Choice: Tradition and Change in American Women's Writing* (1991) have warned fellow feminist critics about the tactical mistake of approaching turn-of-the-century women's writing as a separate tradition entirely unrelated to men's writing in this era.

Applying Showalter's warning to the case of naturalism and taking into account Ammons's insights about the darkness of women's writing in the period, one can conclude that naturalism is, paradoxically, an extension of changes made in the ideological conventions of sentimental women's fiction between the 1860s and 1880s that led to the naturalists' rejection of this fiction's (and 1870s and 1880s Howellsian realism's) more optimistic ideology. As Showalter demonstrates, as early as the 1860s, tensions in women's allegiance to the 1850s cult of true womanhood developed as younger women started to challenge the cult's hegemony. And these tensions began to change the tenor of women's fiction, even that written by the staunchest proponents of traditional gender roles, such as, for example, Susan Warner, the author of one of the mid century's most conservative, optimistic women's novels, *The Wide, Wide World*, published in 1851 (Showalter 15-16). Warner's later, lesser known novel, *Diana* (1880), explores the psychological damage inflicted on a daughter by her mother by enforcing traditional feminine domesticity (Showalter 21).

In fact, as early as the 1860s, Rebecca Harding Davis, in her novella, *Life in the Iron Mills* (1861), and Elizabeth Drew Stoddard, in her bleak, sexually-charged novel, *The Morgesons* (1862), and her short story, "Lemorne Versus Huell" (1863), register the initial movement toward a subversion of sentimental women's fiction from within its ranks. These works illustrate the appearance in women's fiction of violent and determinist subject matter: poverty, malnutrition, inhumane working con-

ditions, alcoholism, criminality, post-partum depression, and men's sexual and economic exploitation of women. One can argue that these changes in the subject matter of women's sentimental fiction constitute an early impetus toward naturalism, leading women writers to eventually cross generic paths with male writers to a degree unprecedented in American fiction prior to the turn of the century.

However, even with this movement to a shared generic space, male and female naturalists' ideological positions on issues of human sexuality differ sharply along gender lines. Indeed, the genre of naturalism can be seen not so much, ultimately, as exclusively masculinist, but as deeply polarized toward either masculinist *or* feminist ideological positions on the period's debates about sexual issues. As Bert Bender has shown, from the 1870s into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, American culture was preoccupied with Darwinian approaches to the study of human sexuality, especially with Charles Darwin's conclusions (and his rare but telling inconclusiveness) about the correlations between socially sanctioned gender roles and the natural processes of sexual selection. Not surprisingly, male writers employ Darwinian notions of the sexual selection uncritically in some (but not all) of their texts, agreeing with Darwin that Victorian gender roles reflect the necessity of natural forces.

Describing these masculinist polemics in male-authored texts, Mark Seltzer, in his 1991 study, *Bodies and Machines*, argues that "the emphatically 'male' genre of naturalism" (29) inscribes what he vividly terms "a miscegenation of the natural and the cultural" (21) in an ideological move that manages male psychosexual anxieties about human agency, erotically refiguring this anxiety and converting it into a masculinized generative power that counters female reproduction and, Seltzer contends, nature itself. Perhaps overreaching somewhat in claiming that male writers' emphasis on the alleged primacy of the male role in sexual selection constitutes an anti-nature (and not just

an antifeminist) agenda, Seltzer's observations about some male naturalists' masculinist project are useful for understanding the polemics of the genre.

Women's naturalist texts are similarly polemical in their feminist reinterpretations of Darwinian theories of sexual selection. For instance, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, in *Women and Economics: A Study of the Economic Relations Between Men and Women as a Factor in Social Evolution* (1898), posits, with a feminist certainty that mirrors male naturalists' masculinist certainty, that women are inclined by nature to be active in sexual selection. And she and other American women naturalists demonstrate in their many texts (indeed, their literary output rivals their prolific male naturalist peers) the destructive result of the social implementation of the masculinist theory of sexual selection and its self-fulfilling power to proscribe and thwart women's natural instincts toward sexual selection through the manipulation of the more biologically imperative instinct to survive (the power of natural selection).

Such provocative polemics spurred literary creativity by both male and female writers; in fact, both groups wrote numerous and often lengthy texts in response to these Darwinian debates about sexual selection, so numerous that making a short list of the many texts related to this topic from just the mostly male-authored canon for use in an undergraduate or graduate course is challenging. Still, naturalist texts by women writers related to this topic should be assigned for courses as well, despite the unwieldiness of the resulting canon, for doing so allows us to provide students with a fuller understanding of the gendered aesthetic and ideological concerns of the genre—to let them hear the many voices coming from both sides of this ideological divide.

Indeed, the numerous available texts by women writers—writers diverse in terms of class, race, ethnicity, and region—comprise such a proverbial embarrassment of riches that I have placed these women writers' texts into

three syllabi outlines—two covering what I would suggest are the two historical phases of American women's naturalism and a third that pairs comparative texts by female and male writers to highlight naturalism's polemical gender issues.

#### ***Advanced Course on 1860-1920 American Women's Naturalism:***

The selected texts for this period, as well as for the 1920-1970 period below, represent key novels or short stories of substantial length by American women naturalists. However, many less well-realized and/or only partially naturalist novels, as well as many shorter texts by women writers, may also be viable choices depending on an instructor's needs. And, of course, a single, less exhaustive course could be developed by cutting the lists in half and combining them. Also indicated on both lists below is the availability of texts and of useful film adaptations.

- Rebecca Harding Davis's novella, *Life in the Iron Mills* (1861)
- Elizabeth Drew Stoddard's novel, *The Morgesons* (1862)
- Stoddard's long story, "Lemorne Versus Huell" (1863, available online)
- Lillie Buffum Chace Wyman's collection of stories, *Poverty Grass* (1886, available online)
- Mary Hallock Foote's long short story, "Maverick" (1895, available online)
- Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (1899)
- Charlotte Perkins Gilman's long short story, "The Yellow Wall-Paper" (1899)
- Mary Wilkins Freeman's novel, *The Portion of Labor* (1901)
- Edith Wharton's novella, *Bunner Sisters* (written in 1892 but published in *Xingu and Other Stories* in 1916)
- Wharton's novel, *The House of Mirth* (1905, adapted for a 2000 feature film directed by Terence Davies, starring Gillian Anderson and Eric Stoltz)

- Gertrude Stein's collection of novellas, *Three Lives* (1906)
- Wharton's novel, *Ethan Frome* (1911, adapted for a 1992 feature film directed by John Madden, starring Liam Neeson and Patricia Arquette)
- Wharton's novel, *The Custom of the Country* (1913)
- Ellen Glasgow's novel, *Virginia* (1913)
- Mary Austin's novel, *The Ford* (1917)
- Anzia Yezierska's collection of stories, *Hungry Hearts* (1920)
- Angelina Weld Grimke's play, *Rachel* (1920)
- Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings's novel, *South Moon Under* (1938, not currently in print, but copies available for sale online)
- Tillie Olsen's novel, *Yonnondio: From the Thirties* (written in the mid-1930s, but published in 1974)
- Glasgow's novel, *In This Our Life* (1941, Pulitzer Prize, adapted for a 1942 feature film directed by John Huston, starring Bette Davis and Olivia de Havilland)
- Ann Petry's novel, *The Street* (1946)
- Harriette Arnow's novel, *The Dollmaker* (1954, Runner-Up for National Book Award, adapted for a 1984 television feature directed by Daniel Petrie, starring Jane Fonda)
- Joyce Carol Oates's novel, *them* (1969, National Book Award)

***Advanced Course on 1920-1970 American Women's Naturalism:***

Obviously, this selection of 13 novels would be too numerous for an undergraduate class without some cutting, but it would serve well for a graduate seminar, especially given that these novels are not as lengthy as many novels by male naturalists from this period. In addition, one of Glasgow's novels might be left out to make this list more manageable.

- Wharton's novel, *The Age of Innocence* (1920, Pulitzer Prize, adapted for an Academy-award winning 1993 feature film directed by Martin Scorsese, starring Michelle Pfeiffer and Daniel Day-Lewis)
- Evelyn Scott's novel, *The Narrow House* (1921)
- Edith Summers Kelley's novel, *Weeds* (1923)
- Dorothy Scarborough's novel, *The Wind* (1925, adapted for the classic 1928 silent film of the same name directed by Victor Sjöström, starring Lillian Gish and Lars Hanson; not currently in print, but copies available for sale online)
- Nella Larsen's novel, *Quicksand* (1928)
- Glasgow's *The Sheltered Life* (1932)
- Josephine Johnson's novel, *Now in November* (1935, Pulitzer Prize)

***Comparative Course on Gender in Naturalist Texts by Male and Female Writers:***

**Pairing #1:** Gilman's "The Yellow Wall-Paper" (1899) and London's *The Sea-Wolf* (1904), *Two Studies in Feminine Passivity*.

In *The Sea-Wolf*, a masculinist Darwinist competition takes place between two types of men—Humphrey Van Weyden, a genteel sexual selector, and Wolf Larson, an animalistically violent sexual selector—over a woman, the poet Maude Brewster, whose fate represents human survival itself. In the end, the ability of the right man, Humphrey, to prevail in the contest between two men represents the triumph of the paternalistic mode of male sexual selection over the savage mode in the progress of civilization. Conversely, in "The Yellow Wall-Paper," the enforced passivity of the narrator, also a writer like Maude, enduring Weir Mitchell's "rest cure" after the birth of a baby has caused a case of post-partum depression, turns what Gilman shows to be a healthy biological instinct for active self-determination inward

with destructive consequences. The unnatural gender role forced on the narrator impedes the evolutionary progress of civilization, an outcome represented by the narrator's finally succumbing to insanity.

**Pairing #2:** Chopin's *The Awakening* (1899) and Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* (1900), Two Studies in Passive vs. Active Sexual Selection and the Female Artist.

In both novels, the authors emphasize the sexual liberation of the protagonists. Chopin's Edna Pontellier is decidedly active in sexual selection, however, while Carrie is noticeably passive. Carrie's emotional passivity is rewarded as she finds artistic and economic success on the stage by exploiting the active male instinct to sexually select beautiful women and avoids complicating reproductive consequences, while Edna's initial passivity in the courtship and marriage to her husband is punished with what to her is an uncongenial state of motherhood, one that stands in her way as she plans an independent future as a painter and a partner in an egalitarian sexual relationship. Her awakening to her own instinct for sexual selection is aesthetically empowering, but she is psychologically defeated by the barriers society puts in her way for expressing her dual artistic and sexual identity.

**Pairing #3:** Wharton's *Bunner Sisters* (1892, first published in 1916) and Norris's *McTeague* (1899), Two Studies in Evolutionary Decline Represented by Failed Heterosexual Couples.

Both this novella and this novel can be read as cases of inexpedient sexual selection, but Norris and Wharton approach this topic from different angles. Wharton focuses almost entirely on the courtship of her characters to reveal how the wife's inadequate understanding of sexual selection and the warping of her own instinct to actively select a sexual partner by the social strictures of the cult of true womanhood make her a victim who poignantly brings about her

own victimization. When the two sisters become rivals in pursuit of an underemployed clockmaker who is an opium addict, but whom they misidentify as a gentle, sickly man in need of a wife to feed him properly, each is constrained by silly notions of female modesty to hide that she instinctively desires to sexually select a mate. Under this strain, the sisters botch the selection, overlooking numerous clues that the man, who eventually marries the younger sister (although he initially thought the older one would be a better target because she seems more passive), is a dangerous opportunist. Wharton does not portray the younger sister's later physical abuse directly or the birth and death from disease of her infant, but instead focuses on the later return of the sister, now dying, and the older sister's refusal, even in the end when she is alone and destitute, to face the truth of what has happened.

In contrast, Norris, in *McTeague*, represents Trina's passivity in sexual selection as a biological given. Because she is a woman, she becomes a sexual being only when her feminine weakness is overpowered by McTeague's brute strength. As Norris has it, even when a woman and a man have apparently mutually selected each other, as Trina and her cousin Marcus have done at the beginning of the novel, a stronger, more determined man can seduce her, creating a resentful rivalry made more intense, of course, after she wins \$5,000 in a lottery. In the bulk of the novel, Norris then details the wife's descent from contented, lower-middle-class domesticity and a seemingly natural dependence on her husband into pathological passivity, miserliness, sexual masochism, and her own savage murder. She, and eventually the two men, become victims of a male rivalry that is ill-fatedly and unnaturally corrupted by greed.

**Pairing #4:** Dreiser's *The Financier* (1912) and Wharton's *The Custom of the Country* (1913), Two Studies in the Interaction between Forces of Natural and Sexual Selection.

These novels read in tandem highlight the difference in casting a ruthless, power-hungry manipulator as male or female, respectively. While Wharton's female manipulator's wealth is acquired through a series of strategic marriages, Dreiser's male manipulator's fortune and disregard for sexual conventions are merely reflected in his marriages. Wharton's Undine Spragg-Moffatt-Marvell-de Chelles-Moffatt must sublimate her sexual selection instinct in a final marriage to a man (who ironically also was her first husband), whom she finds physically repugnant but financially ideal, but Dreiser's Frank Cowperwood uses his directly acquired wealth to gain the freedom he needs to exercise his sexual selections without social interference.

**Pairing #5:** Edith Summers Kelley's *Weeds* (1923) and James T. Farrell's *Studs Lonigan* trilogy (1932, 1934, 1935), *Studies of Sexual Entrapment and the Naturalist Bildungsroman*.

These novels are strikingly similar despite the contrasts in their rural Kentucky and urban Chicago settings. Both novels represent the vulnerability of sensitive youths to the traps of their limited environments: the hypocrisy of religious institutions, inadequate educational access, and restrictions on satisfying interaction between men and women (sexual and otherwise), enforced by sexual double standards. The two novels also show how bootleg alcohol poisons young men who drink it to excess to conceal from themselves the gap between their lives and the ideals of sexual and material masculine achievement. And both portray the shallow, false patriotism that lures some of these young men to fight in World War I.

These novels differ in their depictions of these promising young people's psychological and physical defeat in so far as Studs's problems stem from his unchecked liberty to roam urban streets, where he joins the violent male culture represented by Weary Reilly, whereas the difficulties of Kelley's Judith are rooted in

her domestic confinement, especially after her three children are born. But both feature the entrapment of unplanned pregnancy and emphasize the emotionally deadening effects and aesthetic deprivation of a life of poverty.

### **Conclusions:**

These three course outlines are presented here to inform instructors about the richness and breadth of the tradition of American women's naturalism as both a distinct tradition and a part of the larger genre of naturalism. As the first and second outlines demonstrate, this distinct, feminist tradition could be taught in two separate women's literature courses or in one less comprehensive course. And, at the same time, since this tradition constitutes roughly half of naturalism, it should be integrated fully, as the third outline exemplifies, into courses that aim to cover a range of representative naturalist texts.

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## Teaching the Slum Narrative and Dissenting Responses to it in a Course on American Literary Naturalism

Susan Nuernberg

Ironically, American literary naturalism at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh is one of the few courses for English majors *not* listed as having “optional content.” Most of the courses, such as the American Short Story, Native American Literature, Modern American Novel, Shakespeare, and Creative Writing, may be offered with different content. With a different subtitle, an “optional content” course may be taken twice with the signature of the department chair. I say *ironically* because, while I continue to teach what Eric Carl Link, in *The Vast and Terrible Drama: American Literary Naturalism in the Late Nineteenth Century* (2004) calls “the tried-and-true works of Crane,

Norris and Dreiser” (xiii), I have changed the focus and content of the course enough over the years to justify the use of many different subtitles in an attempt to anchor the study of literary naturalism to the broad social, economic and cultural forces at work in the United States in the late nineteenth century.

Link argues in his book that we need to view literary naturalism “as a whole” if we are to think our way out of the box created when it is treated as “the lesser son of realism” (xii). His book opens out our understanding by “exploring the influence of naturalism upon utopian fiction and by suggesting that naturalism is not a phenomenon restricted to the 1890s and beyond” (xiii). Likewise, Donna Campbell widens our perspective on literary naturalism in her book, *Resisting Regionalism: Gender and Naturalism in American Fiction, 1885-1915* (1997). She argues that naturalists like Crane, Norris, and London are in some ways the logical, if resisting, “heirs” of the conventions of local color fiction. I have been experimenting with a similar project, albeit on a much smaller scale, by asking students in my course to view naturalism in part as a dissenting response to the genre of slum narration and to the era's growing concerns about urban squalor and poverty. In this essay, I describe my teaching methods and some of the outcomes of this project.<sup>1</sup>

Initially, I considered assigning *Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch* (1901) by Alice Caldwell Hegan [Rice] for two reasons. Not only does it thoroughly exemplify sentimental slum fiction, but it can be paired effectively with Jack London's story “The Apostate,” which perfectly illustrates a dissenting response to it. *Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch* is a tremendously popular story set in Louisville, Kentucky, about how wonderful it is to be poor and about hope triumphing over despair, that has been made into countless stage productions, radio shows, Cabbage Patch dolls, and several movies, including a comedy in the 1930s starring Pauline Lord, W. C. Fields, and Zasu Pitts,

who played Trina in Erich Von Stroheim's 1924 silent film *Greed*, which is based on Norris's *McTeague*.

Instead, I chose to focus on the modern, documentary type of slum narrative-cum-exploration that is epitomized by Jacob Riis's *How the Other Half Lives* (1890). Riis employs photographs, graphic descriptions, and statistics to depict slum conditions in a non-fiction account of life in the Lower East Side of Manhattan. In his preface to the Dover edition (1971) of the book, Charles Madison states that *How The Other Half Lives* "became a landmark in the annals of social reform" (vii). Jack London, an outspoken advocate of socialism, was familiar with *How the Other Half Lives* as well as Riis's *The Battle with the Slum* (1902), and he had visited the Lower East Side of Manhattan on his way to London in the summer of 1902 immediately prior to researching and writing *The People of the Abyss*.

I pair Riis with Jack London's *The People of the Abyss* (1903). While it employs photos, graphic descriptions, and statistics in a non-fiction account of life in the East End slum of London, the differences between these two books far outweigh their similarities, and the contrast between them illuminates both the genre of slum narration and a dissenting response to it. Riis's *How the Other Half Lives* functions in the course as a foil for London's *The People of the Abyss*.

This section of the course, affectionately subtitled "slumming it," is rounded out with two seminal essays—one by Reginald Twigg titled, "The Performative Dimension of Surveillance: Jacob Riis's *How the Other Half Lives*" (1992), and one by Kevin Swafford titled, "Resounding the Abyss: The Politics of Narration in Jack London's *The People of the Abyss*" (2006). Both essays address the performative nature of slum narration itself and help reinforce Riis's role as a foil for London.

Pedagogically, the section on "Slumming It" enables students to achieve some of the Association of American Colleges and Universi-

ties' essential learning outcomes for a liberal education. First, students learn how to read photographs and to question statistics from our examination of *How the Other Half Lives*. The students generally take Riis's book at face value—they find it objective, factual, and morally sound—a "truthful" representation of tenement life. For the most part, they accept Riis's thesis that the biggest problem facing the immigrant population is the tenement living quarters. They also accept his view that the squalid, overcrowded conditions lead to physical and moral degeneration, that the immigrants are victims of their own genetic heritage, and that alcohol, lack of food, lack of education and other inherent qualities work to keep the immigrants in their economic place. This, of course, precisely summarizes Riis's argument. Regarding Riis's photographs, students tend to agree they show "that all of this is really going on." When asked how the statistics in the appendix bear on the tenement problem as presented in the photos and the text, the students see them as offering "just more proof of the reality."

Second, the students develop skills in inquiry, analysis and critical thinking. I ask them to comment on the racism in Riis's chapter titles, such as "Jewtown," "The Street Arab," "The Color Line in New York"; to tell me why the people are only identified as a mass and not as individuals; and to explain why the statistics should count as evidence in support of Riis's claims. When students examine the statistics, which include figures on density of population, death rate, the number of tenements, a few police statistics, and some numbers on immigrants by country of origin, they begin to question—not the reliability—but the relevance of this evidence to their initial reading of his book. The assumption they bring with them into class that a photograph cannot lie because it presents an image of reality starts to unravel when students learn that Riis paid people to pose—and they see that easily in the photo of young boys who are supposed to be sleeping on the street but who are smiling or frowning (208).





*Street Arabs in night quarters (from How the Other Half Lives by Jacob Riis.)  
The Authentic History Center: [www.authentichistory.com/postcivilwar/riis/illustrations.html](http://www.authentichistory.com/postcivilwar/riis/illustrations.html)  
(Permission granted by Michael Barnes)*



*Garters by Lewis Hine*

These garters are made for Berger, 92 Spring St. 9:00 P.M., Feb. 27/12. Making garters (armlets). A Jewish family and neighbors working until late at night. This happens several nights in the week when there is plenty of work, the youngest children working until 9 P.M. and the rest until 11:00 or later. Family of Adolph Weiss, 422 E. 3rd St., N.Y., Seven-year-old Sarah, next is 11 yr. old sister. Next is 13 yr. old brother. On left is seven-year-old Mary and ten-year-old Sam, and next the mother is a 12 yr. old boy. The last three are neighbors' children who come in regularly to work. "It's better than running the streets" the father said. He was a grocery clerk but has been out of work for some months and works at home on the garters. Location: New York, New York (State). Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, National Child Labor Committee Collection, [LC-DIG-nclc-04202]

Third, the students learn to make aesthetic judgments. The quality of Riis's photos is poor, and students develop or refine their aesthetic acumen when asked to compare Riis's photos to more artistic ones of the same subject. I introduce them to the work of social documentary photographer (and Oshkosh native) Lewis Hine, who took pictures of children working in factories, mines, and mills and of immigrant families arriving at Ellis Island and doing piecework in their Lower East Side tenements in the early 1900s.<sup>2</sup> In contrast to Riis, Hine recorded the name of every child or family member, how long they had to work every day and their wages, how old they were and at what age they had started working, whether they went to school and if they spoke English. Although less well known than Riis, Hine was an artist and a humanitarian who traveled back and forth across the country documenting the plight of working children for the National Child Labor Committee's campaign for stricter enforcement of anti-child labor laws. In *America & Lewis Hine* (1977), Alan Trachtenberg says of Hine, "In his NCLC days, his vision made a real difference, and it can once more. Allow his images to mingle with our own evidence of the quality of work and life today, and we learn about our common history as Americans" (136). The contrast drawn between Riis's depiction of slum dwellers as the "Other Half" and Hine's compassion for them as Americans is not lost on the students; rather it tends to generate discussion about their own class identity and origins.

Fourth, the students learn to engage the big questions of today. I ask them to imagine what social/historical process a documentary photographer working today would document. I introduce them to the work of Brazilian photographer Sebastiao Selgado, who documents in black and white the travails of people—many of them children—fleeing from war, famine and natural disasters around the world.<sup>3</sup> Selgado's photographs portray the extraordinary grace of these people in the face of adversity.

Like Hine's, Selgado's photographs vividly express human suffering and despair, *and* they capture their subject's humanity and their dignity.

I conclude the lesson on Riis with an examination of Reginald Twigg's essay, "The Performative Dimension of Surveillance: Jacob Riis's *How the Other Half Lives*." Twigg's essay explores the implications of photography on several levels—as a form of surveillance, as the performance of race/gender/class identity, and as class voyeurism and the performance of desire. Although the essay is long and difficult, it exposes students to new theoretical concepts, such as the authority of photographic realism, photography as a signifying practice, the performance of self identity, the representation of otherness, photography as a form of surveillance, the negation of otherness, the disciplinary gaze, class voyeurism, and the performance of desire. The students enjoy grappling with these concepts and report that Twigg's essay shows them what "Riis was really up to in his book." In short, they accept Twigg's thesis that Riis's book can be read as an attempt to make the immigrant and working classes visible, so that they could be transformed from "alien" populations into an exploitable labor and consumer force (308).

Twigg's essay also engenders lively discussions about surveillance and discipline today. The students recognize that many books, TV shows, movies and internet sites are performing similar functions now, and that the idea of who looks and who is looked at continues to regiment and control behavior in American communities. They also are quick to acknowledge that issues of race, gender, and class continue to be in the forefront of what makes up American identity and that ethnic groups are still often regarded as passive, subservient, and atavistic.

The study of Riis also sets the stage for an investigation of Jack London's slum narrative-cum-exploration *The People of the Abyss*. By way of introducing London, I assign two of his

non-fiction essays, “What Life Means to Me” (1906), and “How I became a Socialist” (1903). In the latter essay, London recounts his conversion at age eighteen from “a rampant individualist,” who saw himself “only raging through life without end like one of Nietzsche’s *blond beasts*, lustily roving and conquering by sheer superiority and strength,” to a socialist. In the former essay, he describes some of his work experiences as a working-class youth and how he came to realize that the only commodity he had to sell was muscle and that “there was no way of replenishing the laborer’s stock of muscle.” He resolved to become a “brain merchant” and as such was a success, but he was disillusioned by the materialism, fatuousness, selfishness, and immorality of those who lived on “the parlor floor of society,” so he returned to the working class to “cleanse the cellar” and eliminate the “parlor floor.”

In discussing London, it becomes clear that the students harbor many different ideas about what social classes are and tend to think of class vaguely in terms of different incomes or life styles. It is important to establish a common reference point, and I refer them to Michael Zweig’s book, *The Working Class Majority: America’s Best Kept Secret* (2000), which puts forward a new definition of what makes a person a member of the working class. Zweig argues that social class is based on power, and that power at work extends into power in the broader society. In his formulation, “working class people have relatively little control over the pace and content of their work, and they don’t supervise other workers—they’re not a boss.”<sup>4</sup> By counting people in the different occupations that fit the definition, using the Department of Labor’s job categories, he analyzed the American workforce and found that over 60 percent of Americans are working class. He also found that the middle class is much smaller than many people believe and that professionals—like doctors and professors—might be losing control of their work day to HMOs and university administrations. Zweig’s definition

of social class gives the students a new perspective on what it means to be working class, which informs, in one sense or another, a major underlying current of American literary naturalism.

The concluding piece on “Slumming It” in the course is Kevin Swafford’s essay “Resounding the Abyss: The Politics of Narration in Jack London’s *The People of the Abyss*” (2006). It focuses on the “ways in which London’s narrative reflexively works against the grain of prior slum narratives” (840). He locates London’s work in the context of slum narratives and explorations written about the East End and shows that, while *The People of the Abyss* borrows and appropriates the tones and images of the slum narrative, it reveals and questions the most illustrative tendencies of the genre, most of which were seen in Riis’s *How the Other Half Lives*. For example, the language used is that of the author—the voice of the slum dwellers is silenced, and if they say anything, all voices affirm the attitudes or perceptions of the author. The social position of the author is never relative to that of the slum dwellers, and the slum inhabitants are approached as problems to be analyzed and solved by outsiders.

*The People of the Abyss* throws these characteristics of the slum narrative into relief by borrowing and resisting them. For example, London disguises himself as a member of the working class and actually lives and works among the people he is writing about. He directly addresses his readers: “But, O dear, soft people, full of meat and blood, with white beds and airy rooms waiting you each night, how can I make you know what it is to suffer as you would suffer if you spent a weary night on London’s streets?” (75-76). He also gives expression to a variety of voices in allowing the people of the East End to speak for themselves, and it is not always clear if the characters express London’s view or if London’s view is informed by theirs. A final characteristic of the slum narrative that *The People of the Abyss*

throws into relief is the absence of a critique of the status quo. For example, London comes straight out and states, “class supremacy can rest only on class degradation, and when the workers are segregated in the ghetto, they cannot escape the consequent degradation” (220).

The section on “Slumming It” comes full circle with *The People of the Abyss* and Swafford’s essay on the politics of narration in it. It allows students to appreciate Riis’s *How the Other Half Lives* as a social document that is just part of the discourse of those in power rather than a “truthful representation of tenement life.” It also widens their perspective on literary naturalism by enabling them to see the work of Lewis Hine and Jack London as dissenting responses to the era’s growing concerns about urban squalor and poverty and to the genre of slum narration. The introduction to the work of Sebastiao Salgado encourages students to contemplate the largest social issues in the world today as well as the relevancy and continuity of social documentary photography to bring visibility to them. In sum, the section on “Slumming It” provides an exercise in integrative learning that helps students develop their capacity to synthesize intellectual and practical skills for lifelong learning through engagement with the big questions, both contemporary and enduring.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> For more information and essential background on the rise of the industrial city, the emergence of literary naturalism, and how to read the city as literature, see the following: *The City in Literature: An Intellectual and Cultural History* by Richard Lehan (1998), *The Naturalistic Inner-City Novel in America: Encounters with the Fat Man* by James R. Giles (1995), and *The Urban Sublime in American Literary Naturalism* by Christophe Den Tandt (1998).

<sup>2</sup> For records of 4735 photographs of child laborers taken by Lewis Hine for the National Committee on Child Labor, see the Digital Im-

ages from the University of Maryland Baltimore County Special Collections online at <http://aok.lib.umbc.edu/specoll/digitcoll.php>.

<sup>3</sup> The photographs of Sebastiao Salgado can be found in his books: *Workers: An Archaeology of the Industrial Age* (1993), *Terra: Struggle of the Landless* (1998), *Migrations: Humanity in Transition* (2000), *The Children: Refugees and Migrants* (2003), *The End of Polio: A Global Effort to End a Disease* (2003), and *Sahel: The End of the Road* (2004). Also see, PDN and Kodak present Legends online: Sebastiao Salgado [www.pdngallery.com/legends/legends10](http://www.pdngallery.com/legends/legends10)

<sup>4</sup> For more information on Michael Zweig and a summary of his statistics, see Bill Moyer’s talk with Zweig on the NOW show on PBS, Oct. 22, 2004, online at <http://www.pbs.org/now/politics/zweig.html>.

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## Critical Editions of Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*: Literary and Theoretical Trends, Pedagogical Choices

Anita Duneer

In May of 1899, a month after the publication of *The Awakening* and the inauspicious critical reception that quickly followed, Kate Chopin issued the following statement in her defense:

Having a group of people at my disposal, I thought it might be entertaining (to myself) to throw them together and see what would happen. I never dreamed of Mrs. Pontellier making such a mess of things and working out her damnation as she did. If I had had the slightest intimation of such a thing I would have excluded her from the company. But when I found out what she was up to, the play was half over and it was then too late. (Norton 178)<sup>1</sup>

Chopin assumes the stance of a naturalist, placing her specimen, Edna Pontillier, in an unfamiliar Creole environment, where she takes on a life of her own. If what bothered the critics more than the scandal of Edna's sexual desire and her rejection of social, wifely, and maternal duties was the absence of moral condemnation from the author, then Chopin, as the author of Edna's rebellion, remains here firmly resistant to conferring a moral on either her protagonist or the text. Moreover, Chopin could not have "dreamed" that criticism of the text more than one hundred years later would still be taking on a life of its own, and through her very act of "making such a mess of things," Edna has engendered a body of scholarship that applies every imaginable approach to understanding her inability to define herself according to the social codes of her environment. As scholars now acknowledge, finding out "what she was up to" is not so simple a task as Chopin's play-

ful retort might suggest. Thus, in the twenty-first century, the text of the *The Awakening* continues to invite new interpretations that reevaluate Chopin's literary aesthetics and the novel's place in the literary canon.

*The Awakening* offers almost unlimited pedagogical opportunities. As Peggy Skaggs has noted in the *MLA Approaches to Teaching The Awakening* (1988), "in the small compass of one short but fine work it illustrates virtually all the major American intellectual and literary trends of the nineteenth century" (80). To rephrase Skaggs twenty years later, recent scholarship has encompassed a range of intersecting approaches that draw on virtually all the major philosophical and theoretical trends of the twentieth and twenty-first century. Critical editions of *The Awakening* are useful for undergraduate students because they situate the novel in the broad context of changing ideas about literature and culture.

Two critical editions of *The Awakening* currently available are Margo Culley's 1994 Norton Critical (Second) Edition and Nancy A. Walker's 2000 Bedford Case Studies in Contemporary Criticism, second edition.<sup>2</sup> The Norton provides a broad scope of supplementary materials, suitable for courses ranging from freshman composition and introductions to literature, to surveys of American literature and upper-level courses structured by theme or genre. The Bedford could also be adopted for a range of courses, depending upon the pedagogical objectives of the course. Although the Bedford offers fewer individual selections, the Case Studies specifically ground each critical essay as an example of a particular critical perspective, or a combination of perspectives. The broader scope of the Norton is useful for situating the novel within the historical and literary context of American literature; the critical focus of the Bedford is more appropriate for instructors wishing to emphasize methods of literary criticism more than the novel's place in the literary canon.

The Norton provides a number of contemporary documents and visual aids to contextualize the social conventions and fashions of Edna's world. In particular, Culley has compiled an "An Etiquette/Advice Book Sampler," which reveals the extent to which rules of decorum applied to Edna's duties as a wife and mother, and to her conduct and appearance at any social occasion. The "Sampler" includes such topics as "Duties of the Wife," "Beware of Confidants," "Influence of Mothers," "Reception Days," "Rules for Summer Resorts," "Flirtation and Increasing Fastness of Manner," "Places of Amusement," "Formal Dinner Parties," "Dress to Suit the Occasion," "Costumes for Country and Sea-side," and "Bathing Dresses." Following the "Sampler" is a series of "Fashion Plates from *Harper's Bazaar*," depicting gowns and costumes for watering-places and the races, and ladies' bathing suits. As Culley puts it, "It is difficult for a modern reader, for example, to understand the extent to which Edna Pontellier flouts social convention on almost every page . . . . Similarly, it is hard to appreciate the significance of 'for the first time in her life she stood naked in the open air,' without a picture of what the bathing costume Edna has just cast aside would have been like" (121).

Other contemporary pieces include selections from Dorothy Dix's advice column to women, which includes "Summer Flirtations" and "A Strike for Liberty," Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Women and Economics*, Thorstein Veblen's "Conspicuous Consumption and the Servant-Wife," and essays on Creole women and southern womanhood. The Norton also reprints Emily's Toth's "A New Biographical Approach," which appeared in the *MLA Approaches to Teaching Chopin's The Awakening* (1988) in anticipation of the 1990 publication of her Chopin biography. Overall, the Norton provides a range of directly relevant contextual materials, which are pedagogically useful because they are short enough to be used in the

classroom or as supplementary reading assignments along with the novel.

Another useful pedagogical resource in the Norton for historical contextualization is the collection, "Contemporary Reviews." Some reviewers were unable to overcome their moral aversion to Chopin's "sex fiction" (166).<sup>3</sup> A recurring theme in many of the contemporary reviews is that Chopin squanders her capable style on such an unworthy subject. The following, for example, is a representative comment from the 1899 reviews: "One cannot refrain from regret that so beautiful a style and so much refinement of taste have been spent by Miss Chopin on an essentially vulgar story" (168).<sup>4</sup> Perhaps surprisingly, Willa Cather similarly characterized a disjunction between style and theme. The first of many to compare *The Awakening* to *Madame Bovary*, Cather added Tolstoy's doomed heroine to the excessively romantic character "of the Bovary type" (171): "Perhaps from the same motive which threw Anna Karenina under the engine wheels, [Edna] threw herself into the sea, swam until she was tired and then let go. . . ." (171, original ellipses). Apparently Cather was less critical of the story's immorality than of the "unbalanced idealism" of this type of romantic heroine, yet she concluded her review of *The Awakening* with a familiar piece of advice: "And next time I hope that Miss Chopin will devote that flexible iridescent style of hers to a better cause" (172).<sup>5</sup> These reviews provide opportunities for close readings that look beyond the stated objections of the critics. As Culley observes, "Early reviewers of *The Awakening* whose moral sensibilities were affronted by the novel's themes of sex and suicide gave testimony to the power of the novel in their vigorous condemnations of it. . . . The artistic power of the novel was precisely what made it such a dangerous book in the opinions of most early reviewers" (159). Yet in their description of the artistic merits and what many perceived to be thematic flaws, the reviewers leave interesting clues about the aesthetic and moral value of

literature, as well as more specific assumptions about Chopin's character types and genre.

The Norton's "Essays in Criticism," organized for the most part chronologically, provide an overview of the development of nearly a century of scholarship on *The Awakening*. The collection begins with Percival Pollard's satirically humorous 1909 essay, in which he mocks Edna, who "became utterly unmanageable," while her husband "never knew that his wife was in a trance all their wedded days" (179, 181). Cyrille Arnavon emphasizes the French influence on Chopin's use of symbolism; Kenneth Eble views her use of the "unifying symbol" as "touches of paint upon the canvas" (189, 190), comparing her painterly style with Stephen Crane's impressionism. Several essays approach the question of Chopin's attitude toward her protagonist from different angles, as do, for example, Donald A. Ringe's essay on "Romantic Imagery" and Ruth Sullivan and Stewart Smith on "Narrative Stance" (the latter with an emphasis on the "dominant image" of food [227]). Three essays work particularly well together as a discussion of existential versus deterministic themes in the novel: Margo Culley on *The Awakening* as "an existential novel" (247) in "Edna Pontillier: A Solitary Soul," Suzanne Wolkenfeld on Chopin's "refusal to endorse sentimentality" or "feminist fatalism" (246) in "Edna's Suicide," and Nancy Walker's "Feminist or Naturalist?" To supplement these essays from the Norton, instructors could also introduce Donald Pizer's more balanced "A Note of Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* as Naturalistic Fiction" in dialogue with Walker, who concludes that in the novel there is "no stance about women's liberation or equality," that "from the perspective of a naturalist [Chopin gives] Edna little control over her own destiny, . . . she is controlled by her own emotions, not by men or society" (256). Pizer's reading of the "plain meaning" of the novel through the lens of literary naturalism makes room for a feminist reading of the text, in his departure from Zola by allowing for a

“view of experience without absolute fidelity to the principle of determinism” (12).

Although most of the essays in the Norton are accessible to college-level readers, some require more “unpacking” in the classroom: such as Cynthia Griffin Wolff’s Freudian reading, “Thanatos and Eros,” and Sandra M. Gilbert’s mythological approach, “The Second Coming of Aphrodite.” The essays on language by Patricia S. Yaeger and Paula A. Treichler may be especially challenging for freshmen. Several essays, which situate the novel within a literary context, could be particularly useful for American literature surveys or courses on women’s literature, realism or naturalism: for example, the excerpt from Per Seyersted’s 1969 biography of Kate Chopin that compares her to authors like Crane, Garland, Norris, and Dreiser; Helen Taylor’s “Gender, Race, and Region,” which situates Chopin within a transnational circle of authors, including, among others, Wollenstonecraft, Sand, and Charlotte Brontë; and Elaine Showalter’s “Tradition and the Female Talent: *The Awakening* as a Solitary Book,” which compares and contrasts Chopin with her American female contemporaries, many of whom were not even aware of her novel, concluding that while “the [critical] death of *The Awakening* was a tragic loss for Chopin’s artistry” (319), ultimately, this novel, “like other lost masterpieces by American women . . . takes its rightful place in our literary heritage” (320). Finally, two essays on race by Anna Shannon Elfenbein and Elizabeth Ammons are indispensable for a discussion of the novel’s treatment of female liberation. Both are concerned with the dark characters in the background: Elfenbein argues that the novel was “[p]rofoundly subversive and courageous . . . and advanced a new conception of female desire that was colorblind and democratic” (292); conversely, Ammons asserts that Edna’s story is not universal. . . . The great unexamined story . . . is the narrative of sororal oppression across race and class” (310). Overall, the selections in the Norton offer numerous op-

tions for clustering critical essays, reviews, and visual materials.

The Bedford does not include the range of excerpts of reviews and critical essays found in the Norton, but Nancy Walker’s “Introduction: Biographical and Historical Contexts” provides an excellent overview of a century of critical trends in Chopin scholarship. Walker discusses the contribution of many of the critics included in the Norton, as well as the scholarship published later in the 1990s.

The Bedford’s “Contextual Documents” are primarily from *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Godey’s Magazine*, *Ladies’ Home Journal*, and *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*. Advertisements for corset waists and bustles, face powder and an exerciser for a lady’s home use, along with examples of ladies’ fashions, illustrate what Walker calls, “the cultural consensus regarding constraints on proper womanhood” (140). While the fashion plates are not clearly matched with the occasions for which they are designed, as they are in the Norton (e.g., watering-places or the races), the selections on advice and etiquette address similar topics, such as etiquette for “Visiting Cards” and excerpts from Helen Watterson Moody’s “What It Means to Be a Wife” and “The True Meaning of Motherhood.”

The strength of the Bedford edition is in its presentation of essays as case studies. Instructors familiar with other Bedford Case Studies editions will recognize the accessible introductions by the series editor, Ross C. Murfin, to feminist criticism, gender criticism, new historicism, deconstruction, and reader-response criticism. Murfin outlines the development of each critical approach, identifying key theorists that have shaped the field and situating the essays that follow within a transnational dialogue of scholars. Another useful resource for students entering the field of literary criticism is the “Glossary of Critical and Theoretical Terms,” by Murfin and Supryia M. Ray.

In comparison to the Norton’s twenty-seven abridged critical essays, the six essays



reprinted in the Bedford are full length. As Walker notes, “all of them can be said to be feminist in orientation” (183). Three of the six are full-length versions of the selections in the Norton: by Showalter, Yaeger, and Treichler. The Bedford version of Showalter’s feminist approach includes about seven pages not included in the Norton that contribute additional literary contextual and textual analysis, analysis especially helpful as a model for undergraduate readers who are learning to develop skills in close reading. The Bedford’s example of reader-response criticism is Treichler’s “The Construction of Ambiguity in *The Awakening*: A Linguistic Analysis.” I found this longer version to be much more accessible than the Norton abridgment (which I read first). My response perhaps speaks to the integrity of Treichler’s argument, in that each point is part and parcel of the whole. The Norton omits more than half of the original essay, including Treichler’s preliminary analysis of the correlation between passive and active language and Edna’s passive or active behavior, a crucial component to Treichler’s argument about the reading experience: “In the process we grow used to the language that at first distanced us from Edna’s verbal territory, that mark the progress of her awakening” (Bedford 355). I would recommend assigning the full-length version of Treichler’s essay to any level student. Yaeger’s essay, “‘A Language Which Nobody Understood’: Emancipatory Strategies in *The Awakening*,” offered as an example of deconstruction, applies concepts from Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan, Julia Kristeva, Jean-François Lyotard, Theodor Adorno, G.W.F. Hegel, and Sigmund Freud. To students with no prior exposure to theory, Yaeger’s essay itself may be as incomprehensible as Madame Lebrun’s parrot, speaking a range of discourses, among them a “language which nobody understood.” However, for students in an introductory theory class, the essay could be a useful model that illustrates the application of a diverse range of theories to help make sense of

a literary text—or in the case of this deconstructivist analysis, to consider the “undecidability” of meaning. It should be noted that in her abridgment for the Norton, Culley has omitted much of Yaeger’s evocation of specific theorists, leaving an excerpt that remains challenging but potentially useful for class discussion.

The essays unique to the Bedford, Margit Stange’s “Personal Property: Exchange Value and the Female Self in *The Awakening*” and Elizabeth LeBlanc’s “The Metaphorical Lesbian: Edna Pontellier in *The Awakening*” would be well worth assigning in any course. In her new historicist approach, Stange contextualizes her analysis within the late-nineteenth-century ideology informing the “self-speculation” of women whose value is dependent upon their bodies as evidence of their “status as surplus” (278), drawing on Thorstein Veblen’s theories of “conspicuous consumption” and “vicarious leisure,” and on their inextricable identification as mothers. LeBlanc’s essay would be especially suitable for a women’s literature or gender studies course, as she draws on important theorists who will be familiar to those students, such as Adrienne Rich, Audre Lorde, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Teresa De Lauretis, Monique Whittig, and Bonnie Zimmerman. The last essay in the collection, Wolff’s “Un-Utterable Longing: The Discourse of Feminine Sexuality in Kate Chopin’s *The Awakening*” (in lieu of her “Thanatos and Eros” essay in the Norton) demonstrates “combining perspectives.” Indeed, Wolff’s essay adds another dimension to this collection of criticism, extending Stange’s new historicist approach that contextualizes Edna’s sexual and linguist repression in terms of late-nineteenth-century Presbyterian ideology and sexual theory, both of which account for any suggestion of “normal” female desire in terms of maternal instinct. Like Treichler and Yaeger, Wolff provides a close reading of Edna’s dilemma of self through a deficiency of language: it is “a tale about *not* speaking . . . not merely about things

that are never named, but most significantly about stories that cannot be told and things that can be neither thought nor spoken because they *do not have a name*" (377). Ultimately, Wolff echoes Culley's assessment of early criticism of the novel: "The ruthless contemporary reviews leave no doubt that Kate Chopin had invented a powerful (and thus threatening) discourse for feminine sexuality" (393). At the same time, Wolff extends Showalter's affirmation that Chopin has finally assumed her rightful place in the American literary canon: "we cannot forget that, if her heroine faltered, Kate Chopin fashioned a splendid success. *The Awakening* is the new narrative that Mrs. Pontellier was unable to create: not (it is true) a story of female affirmation, but rather an excruciatingly exact dissection of the ways in which society distorts a woman's true nature" (393). In sum, the six essays in the Bedford Critical Edition offer a variety of approaches that can provide interesting intersections for class discussion. It should be noted, however, that since these essays have been selected for their application of specific critical approaches, they are not wholly representative of the larger body of Chopin scholarship. The most obvious omission is criticism that links issues of race with gender and class.

Another critical collection of note is *Kate Chopin's The Awakening: A Sourcebook*, edited by Janet Beer and Elizabeth Nolan (2004), of the series Routledge Guides to Literature. This is not a critical edition of the novel, per se, because the complete text of the novel is not included. However, like the Norton and Bedford critical editions, the *Sourcebook* is "designed as a guide for the undergraduate student of *The Awakening*" (1). The range of its compilation of contemporary documents and modern criticism might be compared with the secondary sources in the Norton. Selections from late-nineteenth-century periodicals include, for example, "The Louisiana Creoles," "Good and Bad Mothers," "Kissing," and "Smoking in Street Cars," "Suicide," and "The Legal Status

of Women." An 1894 editorial in the *North American Review*, "The Modern Novel," in which Amelia E. Barr expresses concerns about the moral influence of "the erotic-sensational novel which deserves unqualified anger and disgust" (20) provides an interesting contrast to an 1898 article in *Harper's Bazaar*, "The New Heroines of Fiction." Whereas Barr perceives a disturbing trend in the new "kind of heroine"—"She is, alas! something of a Freethinker. She rides a bicycle, and plays tennis, and rows a boat" (21)—the author of the *Harper's* article sees the new heroine as a positive product of the literary move from romance to realism: "The heroine of the period is not satisfied to look pretty and obey the fixed rules of etiquette; nor is the actual woman so satisfied either. The actual woman wants to be somebody, to do something, to take some part in life" (23). Samples of visual art from *Harper's Bazaar* and *The Delineator* feature fashion plates (identified by occasion), diagrams of bathing costumes (with corsets), sketches of summer resort scenes, and advertisements. Unique to the *Sourcebook* is an editorial commentary that introduces each selection and draws a clear correlation between the selection and the novel.

The twelve critical essays in the *Sourcebook* are more abridged than the selections in the Norton. However, the samples here are the most recent of any collection to date, and offer a range of approaches. In addition to excerpts from LeBlanc's "The Metaphorical Lesbian" and Wolff's "Un-Utterable Longing" (printed in their entirety in the Bedford), the *Sourcebook* includes, for example, Pizer's "A Note on Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* as Naturalistic Fiction" and Bert Bender's "The Teeth of Desire: *The Awakening* and *The Descent of Man*," Michelle A. Birnbaum's "Alien Hands: Kate Chopin and the Colonization of Race," and Beer's "Walking the Streets: Women out Alone in Kate Chopin's New Orleans." As a teaching resource, the abridgements are just long enough to give a sense of the larger argument; thus, the

variety of selections can suggest a starting point for further research.

Another exclusive pedagogical aid in the *Sourcebook* is a section on “Key Passages.” Beer and Nolan draw connections between Chopin’s themes and style in headnotes for eighteen of the novel’s thirty-nine chapters, in which they discuss structure, symbolism, and language, and the ways in which Chopin’s novel takes up social issues of the day, as illustrated in the *Sourcebook*’s contemporary documents. Overall, the *Sourcebook* can be a helpful resource for instructors, or as assigned reading for students as a supplementary text. This text would be particularly suitable for an introductory course in literature, cultural studies, or gender studies.

There are several editions of the text without supplementary materials. The Oxford University Press 2000 edition, *The Awakening and Other Stories*, for example, would be a good choice for instructors who wish to teach Chopin’s stories along with the novel. Included among the Oxford’s thirty-two stories are “At the ’Cadian Ball,” “The Storm,” and “Desiree’s Baby.”

The newest publication of *The Awakening* is the 2008 Bedford College Edition, edited by Sharon M. Harris. This scholarly edition does not include critical essays, but it does offer several helpful features for undergraduate readers: a comprehensive introduction with a biographical background, an overview of contemporary and recent criticism, and a most useful section on “Literary Genres of *The Awakening*,” in which Harris discusses the novel as a complex work drawing on conventions from romance, realism, naturalism, regionalism, and an emerging modernism. Harris also provides a chronology of Chopin’s life, a glossary of literary terms, suggestions for further reading and research, including a list of websites.<sup>6</sup>

In choosing an edition of *The Awakening*, instructors will want to consider what resources will best complement course objectives. Each of the critical editions and the sourcebook offer

ample contemporary documents and visual aids. The main consideration should be on the breadth and depth of the criticism. For instance, students using the Norton will be introduced to the evolution of a century’s literary criticism of the novel. Students using the Bedford will be immersed in the application of more recent theoretical approaches. Those assigned the *Sourcebook* will be exposed to more diversity of recent criticism. And those reading Harris’s 2008 edition will receive a solid grounding that situates Chopin in the American literary tradition, with more up-to-date resources for library and online research.

#### **Acknowledgment:**

I would like to thank my friend and colleague Joanne Córdón, with whom I collaborated in teaching *The Awakening* this semester, and whose ideas I have incorporated into this review.

#### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> “Aims and Autographs of Authors,” *Book News* 17 (July 1899): 612.

<sup>2</sup> The Norton first edition was published in 1976, the Bedford first edition in 1993.

<sup>3</sup> “Books of the Day,” *Chicago Times-Herald* 1 June 1899: 9.

<sup>4</sup> “Fiction,” *Literature* 4 (23 June 1899): 570.

<sup>5</sup> “Books and Magazines,” *Pittsburgh Leader* 8 July 1899: 6.

<sup>6</sup> As Harris notes, “the most comprehensive Web site on Chopin and *The Awakening*” (151) is maintained by Barbara Ewell at Loyola University New Orleans:

[www.loyno.edu/~kchopin/](http://www.loyno.edu/~kchopin/). Another valuable online resource is Donna M. Campbell’s “Kate Chopin’s *The Awakening*: Bibliography of Secondary Sources”: <http://www.wsu.edu/~campbell/amlit/chopinawakeningbib.htm>.

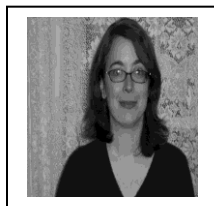
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**Anita Duneer** is a Visiting Assistant Professor of English at the College of the Holy Cross, where she teaches introduction to critical reading and writing, and courses in American and Caribbean literature. She has published articles on Sarah Orne Jewett, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and Susan Glaspell. Her work in progress is a revision of her dissertation on women and the sea, which includes authors such as Jewett, Chopin, Norris, London, and O'Neill.

## Ten Questions with Jennifer L. Fleissner



**Jennifer Fleissner** is Associate Professor of English at Indiana University in Bloomington, having previously taught at UCLA. She is the author of *Women, Compulsion, Modernity: The Moment of American Naturalism* (Chicago, 2004) and of essays in

such journals as *Critical Inquiry*, *ELH*, *American Literature*, and *differences*.

**ALN: Most of your work seems to revolve around issue of modernity and gender. How did you first get started working on these issues, and what attracted you to the questions these issues raise for the literary scholar?**

I owe much of my interest in gender to my mother, Norma Klein, an outspoken feminist who incorporated her views into her many popular novels for young adults. She worked at home, and I spent a lot of time as a child imitating her by hammering out my own stories on a typewriter (to this day, having begun typing at the age of 6, I type as fast as 100wpm using one finger). In college, I took a great course called "Gender and the Machine" (taught by a history grad student from Holland, Ruth Oldenziel) where I became fascinated by the history of the typewriter and the way its entry into the workplace dovetailed with that of female clerks, who were also then called "typewriters." (I've written about this more in an article on Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, which has been reprinted in a fun collection called *Literary Secretaries/Secretarial Culture*.) The feminization of clerical work was *both* a move toward proletarianization of the field *and* an unprecedented opportunity for young women to become independent wage earners; this kind of paradox is what continues to interest me in thinking about gender and modernity together.

**ALN: Your first book, *Women, Compulsion, Modernity: The Moment of American Naturalism* (U of Chicago P, 2004), is one of the more recent major studies of literary naturalism. What was the genesis of this project?**

In graduate school, I encountered Norris's *McTeague* and Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* for the first time while reading for my oral exams. I

was struck by the fact that both books contained scenes in which a man is driven to beg for money from a woman with whom he had once lived. As I was already interested in the entry of non-working-class women into new forms of wage work, such as typewriting, around this time, I thought, might this recurrent scene, on whom no scholars seemed to have commented, say something about the impact of the independent, wage-earning woman on American social life? And, if so, might the sense of naturalist fiction as being about human beings subjected to deterministic forces be recast, given that those subjected here appeared to be men in particular, with modern women playing the role of the forces doing the subjecting?

**ALN: From your vantage point, what are the major ideas that you would like scholars to take away from your book?**

The idea that the figure of the modern woman can trouble what tends to remain a doomy, Weberian and Foucauldian account of modernity as sheer rationalization and restriction (and that naturalist fiction affirms that account) is a key one. Relatedly, in my replacement of “determinism” with “compulsion,” I hope to move our thinking beyond more dichotomized accounts of human agency vs. its evacuation, but in ways that can still speak to the really strange things that happen to human agency in naturalist novels (which I didn’t see yet happening in humanist versions of naturalism like Donald Pizer’s). The book is also an implicit attack on the historicist mode that remains dominant in American literary studies, for its inability to talk about the open-endedness of history (which I think the figure of the modern woman exemplifies). Undoubtedly, I tried to do too much in one book. I plead guilty to the “compulsion to describe.”

**ALN: Your current book project focuses on eating and its connection to issues of self-**

**identity and other aspects of turn-of-the-century American culture. What can you tell us about this project?**

Peter Baguley writes in his study of naturalism that the genre sees persons as “motivated by the basic instincts of food, sex, [and] violence,” so my question is, why so little about the eating part? There has been an explosion of scholarship on food and eating recently across many disciplines. One finds within that scholarship a classic dichotomy between materialist accounts of human behavior (we eat what we do because of biological factors, climate, etc.) and more symbolic ones (we eat what we do because it encodes cultural meanings; or: animals feed, but human beings affirm their common humanity, and also send social messages, through eating—i.e., we throw dinner parties). So, in literary terms, these map onto crude understandings of naturalism vs. realism. As usual, I want to suggest it’s more complicated: that we need to talk about ways in which people socially and psychologically organize or relate to what nonetheless persist as the intractable facts of bodily life. And I think turn-of-the-century fiction in general is interested in doing that. The book, currently titled *Novel Appetites*, has chapters on writers such as Charles Chesnut and Abraham Cahan, and I have a piece in the spring 2008 issue of *ELH* on eating in relation to Henry James’s *In the Cage*.

**ALN: A couple scholars of literary naturalism (I’m thinking specifically, for instance, of the recent work of Donna Campbell) have been focusing on the role of women (both as authors and as characters) in American literary naturalism. What are some of the key questions that scholars need to answer regarding this issue?**

Donna Campbell’s work is very important, especially in making the links, which seem obvious once made, between naturalism and the regionalism with which many clearly naturalist-influenced women writers (such as Mary Wil-

kins Freeman, Ellen Glasgow, or Edith Summers Kelley) have more commonly been associated. I think one main issue for scholars interested in exploring women and naturalism is women's relation to Darwinist thinking in its many forms in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Clearly, evolutionary ideas allow writers like Kelley or Kate Chopin to take a radically desentimentalized, and hence potentially feminist, view of maternity, for example. Yet things become more interesting when we note the way alternatives to Spencerian Darwinism, like those of Lester Ward, influenced writers like Charlotte Perkins Gilman to imagine ways "nature" might be socially reoriented, indeed literally remade, in ways beneficial to women's lives. (Birth control would be an obvious example.)

**ALN: If you were to assemble a list of women writers who can be classified as literary naturalists, who (and what texts) would be on that list?**

I don't think I'm so interested in classification per se, but the writers mentioned above, and obviously Edith Wharton, should certainly be thought about in relation to both the ideas that cluster around the term "naturalism," and the writers we usually associate with that term. In addition, African-American women writers like Angelina Weld Grimké, Nella Larsen, and Ann Petry, who've received less attention in this regard, can be seen as significant practitioners of naturalist modes. And, of course, Gertrude Stein!

**ALN: Is American literary naturalism a peculiarly "modern" school of fiction? Can issues of modernity help scholars understand the evolution of literary naturalism from the 1890s through the twentieth century?**

Well, naturalism, period, is modern; I don't really think of American naturalism as distinct from the innovations of writers like Flaubert

and Zola. The more formal of those innovations relate more to the development of the novel as it moves from realism toward modernism; I do think naturalism should be taught as being as much "early modernism" as "late realism." (Stein's early work, or Crane's entire oeuvre, is one obvious way to make that point.) The more thematic innovations, such as Zola's view of human beings as bodies as much as minds, clearly owe a great deal to modern thinkers such as Darwin and Marx, though perhaps also, in ways we've only recently begun to explore, to the materialist psychology of the pre-Freudian era.

**ALN: Do you have a favorite work of American literary naturalism to teach? How do you teach that work?**

I'll put in a plug for *Vandover and the Brute*, which I've taught a lot to grad students in particular. It's really a shame there's no affordable paperback edition of it in print. I've thought of trying to edit one sometime. In my experience, students love it and often want to write about it. It lends itself to so many underexplored issues, quite aside from the obvious "degeneration" plot: the plight of the artist in a naturalist milieu, the rise of youth culture, urban modernity, the idea of adolescence as discussed by G. Stanley Hall, issues of psychology and habit-formation, protomodernist techniques, etc. There's great stuff in there about eating, too!

**ALN: What other projects are you working on?**

Aside from the eating one, I'm beginning a more sprawling project called *Maladies of the Will*. An opening salvo for it just came out in the fall 2007 issue of *Critical Inquiry*: it's essentially an argument for obsession-compulsion as a rubric through which to think about modern life, and through which to make a case for what the humanities might be able to talk about

that the sciences can't (which is something I believe we really need to think about right now). The basic question that interests me is: what are the effects of modernity's account of human beings as both unprecedentedly willing and unprecedentedly determined at the same time? One answer seems to be the description and proliferation of what the nineteenth century called "maladies of the will": various forms of not-quite-willed behavior, like obsessional habits. So this project takes off from some of the themes of the first book, but gives them a broader genealogy that stretches from Poe and Melville all the way up through contemporary fiction.

**ALN: We notice that in another life you wrote a number of record reviews for magazines such as *Spin*, *The Village Voice*, and *The Boston Phoenix*. This earns high marks from ALN (one of whose editors dabbled briefly in record reviewing as well). It also suggests that you might be much cooler than we are. What are the greatest albums we should be listening to but have probably never heard of?**

In the spirit of what we've been talking about here, I'll mention a few that have some relation to "women and modernity." When I was in college in the late '80s, one of my favorite bands was Antietam, from Louisville, which remains one of the very few non-all-female groups with a woman, the incredible Tara Key, on lead guitar. My favorite album of theirs is *Music from Elba*, released on Homestead Records in 1987, but sadly never yet on CD. There were also some excellent bands fronted by women in the initial punk explosion of the late '70s, beyond the more obvious cases of Patti Smith and Blondie. A number of them recorded for Rough Trade Records in the U.K., and were included on the seminal Rough Trade compilation *Wanna Buy a Bridge?* Some of the best include the all-female Raincoats, who did a great gender-bending cover of the Kinks'

"Lola" on their debut, *The Raincoats* (reissued by DGC in the '90s, and a favorite of Kurt Cobain's); X-Ray Spex, fronted by braces-wearing 14-year-old Poly Styrene, who belted cheerily about consumerism and genetic engineering and later became a Hare Krishna (*Germ Free Adolescents* is their one and only full-length album, which has also been reissued on CD); and Liliput, from Switzerland, whose entire body of work can be found on a terrific eponymous two-CD set put out by the label Off Course (and later reissued by Kill Rock Stars).

## Five on Thirty-One

*For each issue of ALN the editors ask someone in the field to share his or her favorite books. We aren't sure why we do this. Call it an obsession. For this issue of ALN, we asked Steven Frye, a professor of American literature at California State University, Bakersfield. He is the author of *Historiography and Narrative Design in the American Romance: A Study of Four Authors*, as well as scholarly essays in *American Literary Realism*, *Studies in American Naturalism*, *American Studies*, and *The Southern Quarterly*, among other journals. He is currently at work on a book length study of Cormac McCarthy.*

### The Frye Top Five

1. *Moby-Dick*, Herman Melville
2. *The Crossing*, Cormac McCarthy
3. *Sister Carrie*, Theodore Dreiser
4. *Invisible Man*, Ralph Ellison
5. *My Antonia*, Willa Cather

Clearly Professor Frye has wanderlust in his spirit! From sailing the seven seas to riding horseback in the American southwest, from the factories of Chicago to the Broadway lights of New York, from the American South to the bustling streets of Harlem...is the answer to be found in the fecund fields of the great plains? Shall Black Hawk be our resting place? That depends on the cell phone and cable service. And the restaurants. We like nice restaurants.

## Naturalism News

ALN seeks to note all items of interest to scholars of American literary naturalism and related to the memberships of the Frank Norris Society, the Jack London Society, the Hamlin Garland Society, the Stephen Crane Society, the Theodore Dreiser Society, and beyond. If you have a newsworthy item, please send it to Eric Carl Link at [elink@ngcsu.edu](mailto:elink@ngcsu.edu) and we'll be sure to take note of it in a forthcoming issue of ALN. Did someone in your society win an honor or reach an important career milestone? We want to know. Do you know of a forthcoming volume that might be of interest to the ALN readership? Tell us about it. Is there an event related to American literary naturalism that you attended (or would like us to attend in the future)? Are there competitions, prizes, or grant opportunities that you have learned about? Let us know.

•ALN•

### From Molly McFall, librarian at The Mount

The Mount, Edith Wharton's home in western Massachusetts, is in the midst of a major financial crisis, and our principal creditor is threatening to foreclose on the property at the end of March, which could result in its being closed to the public forever. Our bank has generously agreed to give us a little extra time before they proceed with foreclosure, and therefore we have launched an urgent "Save The Mount" campaign. The Mount is the only one of Wharton's homes open to the public, and it is on the National Register of Historic Places. It hosts some 30,000 visitors each year.

We must raise \$3 million before March 24th. If this amount is raised, additional matching funds have been pledged which, together with a successful restructuring with our major creditors, will enable The Mount to keep its doors open and to work toward financial stability. During the first two days of our campaign

we have raised approximately \$300,000 so we do feel that there is a good chance of success.

If anyone is interested in making a contribution to the "Save The Mount" campaign, I suggest they visit our website, <http://www.edithwharton.org>, for details and more information. All contributions to the campaign will be held and drawn down only if "Save The Mount" is able to meet its goal of raising an amount sufficient to successfully negotiate a restructuring plan with its bank and other major creditors.

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### New Scholarship on Garland:

Arriving soon, two new works on Hamlin Garland: *Hamlin Garland, A Life* by Keith Newlin (due spring 2008 from the University of Nebraska Press), as well as *A Summer to Be, a Memoir of Hamlin Garland*, by Isabel Garland Lord, edited and with an introduction by Keith Newlin, and a foreword by Victoria Doyle-Jones (due spring 2008 from Whitston Publishing).

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### Congratulations due!

*Studies in American Naturalism* (edited by Keith Newlin and Stephen Brennan) was awarded runner up in the Best New Scholarly Journal category by the Council of Editors of Learned Journals (CELJ.org).

[In the opinion of ALN, *Studies in American Naturalism* is number one! A tip of the cap from ALN to SAN for a job well done...]

•ALN•

### New Red Badge Edition:

Now available: the newly published 4<sup>th</sup> Edition of the Norton Critical *The Red Badge of Courage*, edited by Donald Pizer and Eric Carl Link.



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**New Volumes in the Dreiser Edition:**

Now available is *Theodore Dreiser: A Picture and a Criticism of Life: New Letters—Vol. 1* (University of Illinois Press). This volume, edited by Donald Pizer, is part of the ongoing Dreiser Edition.

Tom Riggio's Vol. 2 of new Dreiser letters, *Letters to Women*, will be out in the fall.

Clare Eby's edition of *The Genius* (based on the 1911 holograph and without the infamous quotation marks in the title) is now available.

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**Arriving this summer:** *American Naturalism and the Jews: Garland, Norris, Dreiser, Wharton, and Cather* by Donald Pizer (University of Illinois Press).

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**From Cara Erdheim:** In my work on the eco-critical rethinking of American naturalism, I have recently become interested in Anzia Yezierska's 1925 novel *Bread Givers*. I would be interested in sharing thoughts with anyone who is currently working on Yezierska. You can contact me at Cara79@aol.com.

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**NEA Selects *The Call of the Wild* for its "Big Read" Program**

The National Endowment for the Arts has chosen *The Call of the Wild* for its program, "The Big Read," a nationwide initiative to promote reading. NEA Chairman Dana Gioia and his staff recognize Jack London's novel as a classic that can be read and re-read by people of all ages. The novel joins such other works as *The*

*Great Gatsby*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, and Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* in the Endowment's funding program. All across the U.S., libraries, schools and community groups can apply for funding to present book discussions, lectures, film screenings, and other events to promote literary reading. For further information, see [www.neabigread.org](http://www.neabigread.org).

--Sue Hodson

Curator of Literary Manuscripts  
The Huntington Library

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**More on The Big Read:**

Jeanne Campbell Reesman will be speaking on "*The Call of the Wild* as a Slave Narrative" as part of the NEA Big Read Program at the Massillon Public Library, Massillon, OH (birthplace of Flora Wellman London) on April 19 at 7 p.m.

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**Two New London Collections**

Daniel J. Wichlan's new book *Jack London: The Unpublished and Uncollected Articles and Essays* has been released. It offers a collection of London's rarest nonfiction writing which is either published for the first time anywhere; published in the United States for the first time; or reprinted for the first time in almost 100 years. The book may be purchased online at [authorhouse.com](http://authorhouse.com), [amazon.com](http://amazon.com) or [barnesandnoble.com](http://barnesandnoble.com). It can also be ordered from your local bookstore. The book is available in either a paperback (ISBN 9781434332844) or hardcover (ISBN 9781434332851) edition.

*The Complete Poetry of Jack London*, also edited by Wichlan has just been released by

Little Tree Publishing (ISBN: 978-0-9789446-2-9). Order online: [www.littleredtree.com](http://www.littleredtree.com) or by phone: 860-444-0082. This collection brings together all the poetry, published and unpublished, of Jack London. The book contains the poetry embedded in London's writing and correctly identifies previously unattributed authors and defines the poetry probably written by Jack London. Included are two published plays in verse, and book inscriptions Jack London wrote in his first editions.

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### Coming Attractions: A Preview of some Panels at the Upcoming 2008 ALA in San Francisco

#### Theodore Dreiser Society Panels

Dreiser's Influences

Chair: Gary Totten

1. "Homeward Bound/Identity Found: Home and National Identity in James's *The American Scene* and Dreiser's *A Hoosier Holiday*," Donna Packer-Kinlaw
2. "Sentimentality and the Social Sciences: Warring Currents of the Progressive Era in Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*," Jill M. Neziri
3. "A Rumor of War: Philip Caputo's American Tragedy," Stephen C. Brennan

Dreiser as Pragmatist, Naturalist, & Muckraker  
Chair: Keith Newlin

1. "More than Snakes and Flies: The Centrality of Nature in *The Bulwark*," Annette R. Dolph
2. "Dreiser as Muckraker: Elements of Literary Exposé in *The Financier*," Jennifer Louise Young
3. "American Pragmatism in the Money Novels of Norris and Dreiser," Roark Mulligan

#### Frank Norris Society Panels

Frank Norris

Chair: Eric Carl Link

1. "The Responsibilities of the Subject: Naturalism, Anti-Liberalism, and the Specter of Anarchy," Dan Colson
2. "Did a Mathematics Disorder Prevent Frank Norris from Attaining a Baccalaureate Degree?" Deanna Paoli Gumina
3. "Plot and Characterization as Manifestations of Determinism in Frank Norris' *The Octopus*," Stephen Fairbanks

Issues in American Literary Naturalism

Chair: Steven Frye

1. "Progressive Degeneration, Degenerative Progress, and Morbid Genealogies in the Age of American Literary Naturalism," Vincent Fitzgerald
2. "Experimental Naturalism: Zola, Norris, Stein," Natalia Cecire
3. "Norris at the Dump: Detritus in His Early Novels," J. Michael Duvall

#### Jack London Society Panels

Jack London I

Chair: Jeanne Campbell Reesman

1. "Jack London's Pragmatism via David Starr Jordan's 'The Stability of Truth,'" Patrick K. Dooley
2. "Jack London: The Wild Revisited," Jonah Raskin
3. "The 'destiny of their race': Cultural Irreconcilability and Narratives of Native Absence in the Short Stories of Jack London," Kirby Brown

Jack London II

Chair: Jeanne Campbell Reesman

1. "London's 'Socialist' Biographies: New Developments," Andrew Furer
2. "Under the Influence: The Later Racial Thinking of Jack London," Jessica Greening Loudermilk

## Stephen Crane Society Panels

Stephen Crane:

Exploring the Ethnic Landscape in the 1890s

Chair: Robert M. Dowling

1. "Irish Americans in Stephen Crane's Writings," Donald Vanouse
2. "The New York City Topography of *Maggie* and *George's Mother*," Stanley Wertheim

Teaching Stephen Crane's "The Monster":

A Roundtable Discussion

Moderator: Patrick Dooley

Participants:

Bert Bender

Donna Campbell

John Dudley

James Nagel

Jeanne Campbell Reesman

## The Call of the Papers

### 9th Biennial London Society Symposium

The Jack London Society seeks one-page paper proposals for the 9th Biennial Jack London Society Symposium to be held Oct. 10-12, 2008 at the Huntington Library, San Marino, CA. Hotel reservations can be made at the Westin Pasadena (866-716-8132). Registration for the conference will be \$100. There will be an opening reception the first evening and a banquet the second evening. Keynote speaker will be Thomas R. Tietze, incoming JLS President. Proposals along with complete contact information for all panelists should be sent to Jeanne Campbell Reesman by July 30, 2008 at [jeanne.reesman@utsa.edu](mailto:jeanne.reesman@utsa.edu).

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### *The Iron Heel* at MLA 2008

Barbara Foley is planning a special session commemorating the 100th anniversary of Jack London's *The Iron Heel* at the 2008 MLA convention (to be held this year in San Francisco, December 27-30). Papers can focus on any

number of issues, including: (1) the strengths and/or shortcomings of the novel's class analysis of fascism (even if the term is not deployed); (2) pedagogical approaches to the novel; (3) the novel's relationship to 20th-century literary radicalism; (4) its relation to gender studies, race/ethnic studies, issues of imperialism/internationalism; (5) its treatment of the eventual emergence (inevitability?) of communism after the long dark night of the iron heel; (6) its relationship to the rest of London's oeuvre. If you are possibly interested in participating in this session, contact Barbara Foley at [bfoley29@aol.com](mailto:bfoley29@aol.com).

## From the Archives

### A British Parody of Stephen Crane

*The item that follows, reprinted from a British newspaper, presents parodic hits at Crane's uses of color. Since Crane specialists have long debated the significance of color in Crane's writings, this item should be of interest. Obviously, the writer had keen sensitivity to Crane's methods because all worthwhile parody results from creators who comprehend the essence of what's found in the targeted material.*

--Benjamin F. Fisher

University of Mississippi

### [Untitled, *The Clarion*, 25 July 1896, p. 234]

Rev. *George's Mother* (E. Arnold) Mr. Stephen Crane's new book, "George's Mother," published by Edward Arnold, is a story of slum life in New York. It is pathetic and clever, but not in the same class as "The Red Badge of Courage." From it we select the following examples of the new one-colour language:—

The broad avenue glistened with that deep-bluish tint which is so widely condemned when it is put into pictures...Kelcey fell with a yellow crash... He perceived all the futility of a

red existence...A red street-lamp threw a marvelous reflection upon the wet-pavement. It was like the death-stain of a spirit...He saw it as one might see a skeleton emerge from a crimson cloak...The man was exasperated to black fury... He could feel her grey stare upon him.

The new language opens up wide fields of crimson possibilities. McGinnis says it will be a god-send to the cricket reporters, and offers the following example of how to use it:—

“Richardson’s first ball, a scarlet yorker, was pulled squarely and bluey by Grace to the leg boundary. But the bowler soon had his revenge, the champion drably spooning his next delivery, a sea-green long hop, to extra mid-off, where Lohmann, with a crimson bound, took it low down with the left hand—one of the yellowest catches of the year. Townshend, who replaced his captain, had a gundy-grey smile on his face on confronting Lockwood, and began with a purple push-stroke, which got up with pale suddenness and caused a crushed-strawberry scramble in the slips, through which it came to earth like a black dab, the spectators bursting out into old-gold and claret cheers at the let-off.”

“The application of the new colour-phrases to poetry would,” says McGinnis, “add a biscuit-brown joy to life. The following vernacular drama speaks for itself with magenta eloquence:—

#### AN ORANGE-TAWNY SCENE

With pale carnation passion the lover said his say,  
With bottle-green derision the father turned away,  
The maid cried peacock-bluey, “Dear pa, I love  
him so.”

But her parent, really snorting, thundered indian-inkly, No.”

“This kind of poetry, like Mr. Stephen Crane’s prose, reaches within one step of the sublime.”

\*\*\*

“Or, we might add,” the old man goes on, “use sound-terms for colour instead of colour-terms for sound, as thus:—

Her eyes were of a deep bass-blue,  
Her lashes tenor black,  
And ringlets of a soprano hue  
Waved shrilly down her back

In short we might do anything silly and unusual and blatantly idiotic and call it style, and I daresay we shall—a good many of us.”

McGinnis is somewhat conservative.

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Did you enjoy this issue of ALN? The editors desire your feedback. Send your questions, comments, suggestions, critique, and assorted commentary to:

Eric Carl Link  
elink@ngcsu.edu

and/or

Steven Frye  
sfrye@csu.edu

Coming up in our Fall 2008 Issue: Naturalism news. Another bibliographic update. More stuff from the archives. An interview with a scholar working in the field. Pages and pages of stuff that 99.98% of the world’s population has probably only a glancing notion of, if at all. How almost all of that 99.98% wind up sitting in our classrooms (probably on the back row by the window) is one of the great cosmic mysteries.

If you would like to contribute to ALN, please contact the editors. We need your help. We are particularly interested in articles of 2000-3000 words that look at literary naturalism in the classroom, both in the United States and abroad. If you would like to contribute such a piece, we’d like to hear from you. In addition, if you have items that would be suitable for presentation in *From the Archives*, please let us know.

Submissions: please use MLA specifications for all matters of style and documentation. Submit material for consideration as an e-mail attachment, as the text of an e-mail, or send by post to...

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