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# FRANK NORRIS STUDIES

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B.F. Norris, Alister & Co.  
Wholesale Jewelers  
State Street, Chicago, ca. 1895

The sign on the roof of the building at right in the foreground announces the business of Norris's father. Below, above the clock, "B.F. NORRIS ALISTER & CO." appears in gilt letters; "WATCHES & JEWELRY AT WHOLESALE" is also in gilt, below the clock.

Chicago Historical Society

Negative 22261

J.W. Taylor, Photographer





B.F. Norris, Alister & Co.  
ca. 1890

The Columbus Building towering above the building in which the Norris and Alister company had its offices has not yet been built, nor has the Masonic Temple farther down the east side of State Street.

Chicago Historical Society  
Negative 22260  
J.W. Taylor, Photographer



**B.F. Norris (Senior) in Probate Court,  
with New Light on Frank Norris as Son**  
James Stronks  
*University of Illinois at Chicago*

Not much has been known about Benjamin Franklin Norris, Senior, the father of Frank Norris, and much of that derived from Gertrude Doggett Norris, his resentful ex-wife. After the death of B.F. Norris, Senior (whom I shall call BFN hereafter), his last will and testament came into Probate Court in Cook County, Chicago, and in due course generated a fat packet of documents which have lain untouched in county archives until now. They are full of concrete specifics, most of which Gertrude and Frank never knew.

There is first the divorce document from the superior Court of San Francisco, seven typewritten legal-size pages dated 22 June 1894. It pronounces the plaintiff Gertrude G. Norris and the defendant BFN "absolutely released from the bonds of matrimony and all the obligations thereof," then awards to Gertrude "as her share of the community property" twelve pieces of San Francisco real estate, each described with the exactitude of a deed. Gertrude believed these properties were worth some \$75,000; BFN claimed more than \$100,000.

Eight months later, on 15 February 1895, BFN, now remarried to a woman we know only as Belle B. Norris, made out a new will. Angry at Gertrude, he bequeaths only a shocking \$100 each to Frank and the younger son Charles Gilman Norris. All the rest goes to Belle, whom he names executrix.

Without question the most interesting paragraph is SEVENTHLY, in which BFN singles out Frank for a special provision. Readers may decide for themselves if it shows the influence of an insistent new wife or an unassertive husband and father:

SEVENTHLY. I hereby request my wife, the said Belle B. Norris, that in case it shall be convenient for her to do so to pay to my said son, Benjamin F. Norris, Jr., the sum of Five Thousand (\$5,000.00) Dollars, paying the same to him in equal monthly installments [*sic*] beginning one month from the time of my death and continuing until the Five Thousand (\$5,000.00) Dollars shall have been paid, but the payment of said Five Thousand (\$5,000.00) Dollars shall not be obligatory upon her in any respect whatever and this clause and paragraph "Seventhly" shall only be regarded and construed as being a request.

There is no evidence in nearly 100 pages of estate papers that Belle found the request convenient. SEVENTHLY was not legally binding. Unlike Trina McTeague, Frank never got his \$5,000. Biographers have said he was disinherited. So he was, but with a difference.

BFN died, aged 64, on 28 October 1900 after an illness of twenty days in the Lexington Hotel in Chicago, which was his home at the time. Why he was not moved to either of the nearby hospitals is unknown. One of four deluxe apartment-hotels where he and Belle lived during their six years together, the luxurious Lexington, then only eight years old and the stopping-place of presidents, was the address of scores of persons listed in *The Chicago Blue Book*.

It is still standing today, empty, but admired by architects, on Michigan Avenue at 22nd Street, around the block from where young Frank Norris attended The Harvard School for Boys in 1883-1884. After 1900, vice and crime made that neighborhood a less desirable place to live, and from 1928 to 1932 the Lexington's 4th and 5th floors were in fact Al Capone's headquarters. More recently, Geraldo Rivera staged a lurid TV show, "Capone's Burial Vault," in the hotel's basement. *Sic transit gloria mundi*.

On 8 November 1900 the Probate Court inquired into the possible existence of heirs unknown. In a six-page document labelled "Proof of Heirship," Belle B. Norris, "being first duly sworn" (which did not prevent her from fibbing about her age), was questioned in open court. Her testimony, in part:

Q. What is your age?

A. Fifty-two.

Q. Are you fully familiar with the family history of your deceased husband Benjamin F. Norris?

A. Not so fully.

Q. How many times was Benjamin F. Norris married?

A. Three times.

The third marriage (i.e., his first, and until now unsuspected by Norris biographers) was corroborated a few minutes later by William M. Alister, BFN's business partner of thirty-five years. Alister testifies under oath that he understood the first wife and BFN were divorced, "Must have been in 1867," and that the first wife was dead, as was their child.

A "Petition" signed by Belle now asks the court to accept the will for probating and lists BFN's survivors as Benjamin Franklin Norris, Jr., "address not known but believed to be New York, N.Y.," and Charles Gilman Norris, ditto San Francisco. On 9 November 1900 the clerk of the Probate court certifies that he has mailed "postage prepaid" a copy of this Petition to Frank and Charles, at New York and San Francisco, with no mention of any more specific addresses.

It is not clear from court records whether Frank Norris knew the provisions of his father's will, but he at least knew that Belle was likely to be appointed executrix. Frank (or conceivably his mother) hired a Chicago lawyer, Thomas B. Marston, to represent him in contesting Belle's appointment.<sup>1</sup> Marston submitted to the court a one-sentence "Caveat," handwritten and undated, an unimpressive-appearing document despite its ancient legalese:

Now comes Benjamin Franklin Norris, Jr., by his attorneys, Marston, Augur & Tuttle, on the hearing of the application by Belle B. Norris for the probate of the [will of BFN] and files this his protest against the probate of said will, and excepts to the issuance of letters testamentary thereunder to the said Belle B. Norris, Executrix under said alleged will.

In a document labelled "Proof of Will," dated 17 December 1900, Judge Charles S. Cutting "in open court" questions the lawyers who had drawn up the will for BFN six years earlier, Samuel Page and Arthur Fleager, and they testify that BFN had signed his will free of what the judge terms "fraud, undue influence, or duress." Frank's lawyer Marston then cross-questions both lawyers, briefly and perfunctorily, a minimum effort on his part. The court



reporter then notes, "At the conclusion of the above testimony Mr. Marston entered an objection to the probating of the will on behalf of...." Her sentence breaks off there, unfinished, without naming Frank Norris. Both she and the clerk of the court then sign the transcript, presumably vouching for its accuracy. Their evident boredom tells us that Frank's caveat made little impression on the court.

The issue was decided against him later that day in another document, also 17 December 1900, titled "Letters Testamentary," in which Belle B. Norris is appointed executrix of the estate and authorized to "collect and secure all and singular the goods and chattels, rights and credits" of BFN. The nature of those chattels and credits might have surprised Gertrude and Frank, as they will Norris biographers.

For the estate papers show that, having in 1894 ceded to Gertrude the twelve San Francisco properties, evidently worth in that depression year between \$75,000 and \$100,000, BFN at his death apparently owned no real estate, no house, no summer home, no boat, horses, carriage, stocks or bonds.<sup>2</sup> Repeatedly, Probate court records state that his worth consisted solely of his half-interest in B.F. Norris, Alister & Co., wholesale jewelers, his supply house at 103 State Street, Chicago.

A "Partnership Appraisal" dated 21 June 1901 itemizes the company assets at the time of BFN's death:<sup>3</sup>

Watch movements & cases, \$47,393. Jewelry, all kinds, \$136,187. Silver plated ware, \$13,485. Optical, camera, and photographic goods, \$6,641. Clocks of all kinds, \$6,971. Tools and materials of all kinds [i.e., supplies for watchmakers and retail jewelers], \$12,286. Diamonds and precious stones, \$92,415. Total, \$315,378.

In a "Partnership Inventory" dated 25 June 1901, the surviving partner Alister "respectfully submits the following as a true, full and perfect inventory" of the firm's worth at BFN's death:

Real estate—none.	
Stock of goods	\$315,378.
Liabilities	\$144,591.
<hr/>	
Total Net Assets	\$170,787

The BFN estate inherited by the widow Belle B. Norris, therefore, was one-half of that total, or \$85,393.

On 26 June 1901, in a "Petition for Confirmation of Sale," Belle "represents" to the Probate Court that "she is the sole beneficiary, except that the sum of \$100 is given to each of said B.F. Norris' two sons." She says the only property is the half-interest in the company, and describes the partners' long-standing legal agreement in accordance with which Alister has now bought BFN's half. She and Alister have compromised, raising her share to \$88,250, of which \$20,000 is in cash, and the remainder in three notes of \$22,750 each at 6%, due in one, two, and three years respectively from 2 January 1901. She asks that this sale be approved by the court. It was.

Franklin Walker writes that BFN left a "fortune of nearly a million dollars."<sup>4</sup> In fact, BFN was worth \$88,250. It was, to be sure, a huge sum in A.D. 1900, probably worth at least ten times that today. Belle was a rich widow; the \$5,000 which BFN wanted to

give his son but she did not was less than 1/17 of her portion. Walker says Frank and his new wife Jeannette were at that time living on \$125 per month.<sup>5</sup> If true, the \$5000 would have supported them for over three years—or long after Frank's death, as it turned out.

The BFN estate papers do not include a death certificate, but of interest is a sheaf of bills, fastened by a rusted straight pin, which was submitted to the estate for payment, and dating from BFN's final illness in the Lexington Hotel. His doctor, Arthur R. Elliott, charged \$800.<sup>6</sup> Elliott called in as consultants Dr. Filipp Kreissl (\$35), a Vienna-trained genito-urinary specialist, and Dr. Frank Billings (\$25), a distinguished internist.<sup>7</sup> Libbie Levinson, nurse, billed for two weeks (\$50). The Lexington Pharmacy, in the hotel itself, itemized the medicines Dr. Elliott had prescribed day-by-day. The undertaker too itemizes his services (\$700).

Unexplained is \$2,500 in three promissory notes at 5% which BFN and Belle both signed near the end, on 14 September 1900, the lender being a Mrs. Bessie Wilcox, whom I have been unable to identify. This tells us that BFN was worth \$88,250, dead, but when he needed \$2,500 he had to borrow it. It is possible that by now Gertrude's San Francisco properties had appreciated in value to the point that she was wealthier than he was.

On 6 February 1902 Belle reports to the Probate Court that as executrix she has collected all assets (that is, has sold BFN's half of the firm to his partner Alister) and that claims have been allowed in the sum of \$4,260. She represents that she is the sole legatee of BFN, "excepting two specific legacies in the sums of \$100 each." No mention of any \$5,000.

The last document, dated much later, 20 March 1904, returns the story to young Frank Norris himself. It is a Court Order by Judge Cutting:

On motion of C[hancellor]. L. Jenks, Jr., Attorney for the estate of Benjamin F. Norris, Jr., deceased, and Charles G. Norris, the County Treasurer of Cook County is directed to turn over to the legal representatives of the said Benjamin F. Norris, Jr., deceased, and to Charles G. Norris (one-half to each) the sum of One Hundred and ninety-eight dollars and fifty cents (\$198.50) heretofore deposited with said County Treasurer for the use of said Benjamin F. Norris, Jr., and Charles G. Norris, under the Order of this Court herein.

The fact leaps out at us. This is certainly the \$100 which BFN bequeathed to each of his sons, less a \$1.50 fee of some kind. Frank Norris and his brother had scorned to accept what they probably looked upon as their father's mean-spirited denial of them. In settling Frank's affairs, however, a Dickensian-sounding lawyer, practical and un sentimental, had found the \$100 was due to Frank's estate and called it in.

The B.F. Norris file was closed.<sup>8</sup>

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Later in 1901 Frank would be in Chicago and would write of his conference there with "a lawyer whom we have retained in a most unhappy cause." Note the interesting word "cause." *Frank Norris: Collected Letters*, comp. and ed. by Jesse Crisler (San



Francisco: Book Club of California, 1986), p. 149.

<sup>2</sup>For a single example, when the court authorized Hall, Farnum & Anderson to appraise the "goods, chattels, and personal estate" of BFN the appraisers testified on 26 June 1901 that "We the undersigned ... do hereby report ... that no property belonging to said estate has come to our sight or knowledge."

<sup>3</sup>I have rounded off the odd cents. The appraisal refers to an itemized inventory running over 100 pages which is not included in the estate papers.

<sup>4</sup>Frank Norris, *A Biography* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Doran, 1932), p. 87.

<sup>5</sup>p. 267.

<sup>6</sup>In the "Undertaker's Report of Death" filed at the Department of Health, Dr. Elliott states that the chief cause of death was Acute Enteritis, with a "contributing cause" being "suppression of urine." Elliott's office was at 103 State Street, as BFN's was, and he lived in the Auditorium Hotel, as BFN had for four years, so they were perhaps acquainted in this way.

<sup>7</sup>Billings was dean of the medical faculty at Northwestern University and President of the American Medical Association from 1902 to 1904. He lived a five-minute walk from the Lexington and was family doctor to millionaires in the "Prairie Avenue District" nearby.

<sup>8</sup>Part of B.F. Norris's story, however, is what became of his widow and the \$88,250. Belle B. Norris lived two more years in the Lexington Hotel, then apparently moved to Huntington, Long Island, where she died in 1921 at the age of 75. Records at Graceland Cemetery in Chicago state that she was buried beside BFN on 30 April 1921, but her name does not appear at the grave site. The monument, a rounded stone five feet high, reads simply B.F. NORRIS. Their plot (Lakeside #169) is near the grandiose tombs of Potter and Bertha Palmer, George M. Pullman, and Philip D. Armour.

Belle's last will and testament, signed 31 August 1912 in Huntington, left everything to her daughter, Bessie B. Vernam, whom she nominated executrix. At the time of her marriage to BFN, therefore, Belle, whose previous surname we still do not know, was 47 or 48, a widow, or divorced, and with a child.

Belle had not honored her husband's wish to pay his son \$5,000, but in her own will she asks her daughter to pay \$600 a year for life to Belle's friend Fredrika Grosvenor of Geneva, Switzerland, saying, "This request is made with the distinct understanding that the matter is left entirely to the discretion of my said daughter, in whom I have confidence...." She also wished to remember with bequests of \$1000 each three cousins: Kate, Eleanor, and Belle Bovee, all of 836 Fifth Avenue, New York City.

As for the \$88,250, Probate Court records in Chicago contain a petition of 23 July 1931 in which Bessie B. Vernam swears that the remaining value of Belle's estate, which had been put into a trust, "does not exceed \$34,000," and lists four parcels of Chicago real estate which had been Belle's. The titles to these properties show them to be apartment house addresses, or perhaps apartment houses (her will alludes to "tenements"), in the Studs Lonigan neighborhood on the South Side, parcels which Belle acquired (one from a builder named Benjamin Franklin George) between 1900 and 1912. Bessie B. Vernam sold one of these in September 1931

during the Depression; the other three were sold by Belle's granddaughter, Valerie Vernam Foster, in the fall of 1945.

I am indebted to Alfred Hale, Tract Department Supervisor, Cook County Recorder's office, for help in searching titles.

## A Recent Definition of Naturalism

Amy Johnson

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In *Form and History in American Literary Naturalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), June Howard argues the significance of American Literary Naturalism as a distinct genre—a type of prose fiction which she defines, not as a body of literature developing out of historical antecedents, but as newly emergent in turn-of-the-century America. Naturalism, for instance, is not traceable from Greek tragedy, later fatalistic western literature, and the sociological and psychological concerns seen in Realism. Rather, Howard emphasizes the notion of an immediate response to a particular historical moment. To her mind, an unique condition in socio-economic history gave rise to an equally unique art form. Readers seeking a broader definition of Naturalism, of the kind for which Donald Pizer has convincingly demonstrated the need, will find instead another narrow view recalling the old emphasis on "philosophical determinism" as the essential of Naturalistic art.

Focusing mainly on selected texts by Dreiser, Norris, London and—to a surprisingly lesser degree—Crane, Howard attempts to reconstruct from the dynamics of their era an ideology which is immanent in, and has given shape to, Naturalistic forms. We soon find that she relies heavily on Marxist theory, and her resulting propositions are essentially in harmony with such a general orientation toward modern history and literature's relationship to it. Thus, the central preoccupation is with class conflict, which grew with rapid industrial progress in America, specifically from 1893 to 1909, and with reformist movements such as Populism and Progressivism attempts to address the concerns of the working class in a laissez-faire economic system. Thus also, in the introductory chapter, Howard defines "history" and "genre"; put simply, the former is the hen, and the latter is the egg of a particular shape and content determined by the conditions under which it was conceived and laid. After some modifications of Georg Lukács' differentiations between Realism and Naturalism, the chapter concludes with an account of the conditions during the historical period in question, and thus a preview of the literature shaped by the time: it was a time of oppositions, contradictions, and anxiety. Writers were distressed by what they saw going on around them; and what they *did not do* was create a Naturalistic fiction of the kind that has been simplistically equated with "pessimistic materialistic determinism." Rather, we find in the next chapter, writers produced a literature characterized by "a coherent pattern of oppositions" in which the discernible dialectic was that of determinism versus reformism. It is in Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*, London's *White Fang*, and Norris's *Vandover and the Brute* that Howard invites the reader to see such a tension between the recognition of determinisms at work and a simultaneous desire for amelioration.

The third and fourth chapters elaborate upon this thesis



concerning such contraries within Naturalism. The focus is on the polar characters ubiquitous in Naturalistic art: on one hand, there is the brute who cannot rationally direct his experience, and is or becomes unaware of the forces around and within him at work; on the other, there is the spectator who can only passively observe the effects of determinism and sometimes wish that things might be changed for the better. She similarly describes the roles of the narrator and reader, who also figure as spectators or observers. Further, and in harmony with her Marxist perspective, Howard explains how Naturalistic characters are treated in terms of their positions in the framework of class conflict: the brute is synonymous with the proletariat, or with essentially any manifestation of the brutal or victimized, but always dangerous "Other." That is, the bourgeois spectator (character, novelist, or reader) sees the brute thus; while perhaps a would-be reformer, he observes the "Other" from a safe, privileged position. Typically, the spectator observes a character in, or descending into, a nightmarish condition in which he is not aware of what is transpiring and has lost control of his situation; he is essentially declassed, becoming more and more the brute, or proletarian figure, as he is determined by the forces impacting upon him. *Maggie*, *The Sea-Wolf*, and *Sister Carrie* are narratives in which the would-be reformer-spectator must watch as such a scenario inexorably develops. *The Octopus*, too, is analyzed as a deterministic reform-novel of the kind.

The fifth and last chapter concerns the various strategies Naturalistic authors use to achieve engaging narrative continuity and successful closure. Discussed here are the plot of decline or fatality in which a character is declassed and thus brutalized; the use of documentary techniques for the sake of enhancing the impression of facticity; and the adoption of melodramatic devices typical in sentimental or domestic drama. The chapter closes with reflections on a "naturalistic tendency" in selected post-World War I novels.

Throughout her discussion, Howard rarely focuses for any time on a particular literary work. She samples; or, to use her words, "reads across" several literary and a few non-literary texts as she makes her case. That is, she leaps from title to title, selecting data that she believes will illustrate her theses—going only so deep into a particular work as is necessary to buttress her assertions, and in a later chapter often returning to the same work for more. It is a legitimate method, of course; but her cursory close-readings do not conceal what finally must be called skimming. Her strongest arguments occur during the numerous considerations of *Sister Carrie*, notably with regard to Hurstwood's fall. Her weakest moments come during her analyses of Norris's works. For example, Howard's view of the passive-spectator character as somehow being free, or, at least, safe from determinisms, is sorely tried in *The Octopus*. Can we countenance her notion that Presley, who is literally locked into a distinctive behavioral pattern as observer-artist, and who is finally the ultimate example of passive spectatorship in a Naturalistic novel, is free from determinisms? Is there any other character who proves so fickle as Presley when changing conditions repeatedly determine the latest manifestation of his chameleon-like personality?

Especially significant is Howard's apparent unawareness of current and, I would argue, authoritative scholarship on Norris. For

instance, in an early discussion of *Vandover*, Howard's argument hinges on the generalization that Naturalism's brute, caught in the onrush of determinisms, is completely lacking in self-awareness and self-expression. Had Howard been more familiar with ongoing discussion of Norris's narrative techniques, she would be aware that Norris—like Zola, Crane and Dreiser—employs free indirect discourse, that he regularly channels a character's thoughts or feelings *through* the third-person narrator's voice. What Howard assumes is Norris's state of mind (the spectator's) is, on many occasions, actually Vandover's.

Howard's continued insistence on equating the narrative voice with a Norris always expressing his own point of view leads to another dated conclusion: that Vandover's view of sexuality is, in fact, Norris's. Here, when picturing Norris as an arch-Victorian, Howard is willing to weave what she perceives as biographical fact out of and into her interpretation of *Vandover*; but, later, when discussing *The Octopus*, she dismisses biographer Franklin Walker's explanation that Norris did not intend this work to be read as a reform novel, and she persists in treating it as such. Treating it that way leads her into another problem: since she assumes that Presley's point of view is Norris's, she does not deal with the now-traditional problem of reconciling a reformist reading of *The Octopus* with Presley's—and, allegedly, Norris's—"solution" in the conclusion. What is to be reformed if Presley and Norris see Nature's determinisms in terms of "Whatever is, is right"? While Howard is correct in seeing a proletariat versus bourgeois conflict in the novel, who has not?

*Form and History in American Literary Naturalism* certainly will have appeal for those interested in class struggle in burgeoning industrial America. For those interested in writers who were Naturalists and in Literary Naturalism *per se*, the work's focus is too limiting. At best, Howard's argument calls for leniency in accepting a coherent pattern of oppositions as defining the genre of the Naturalistic novel; at worst, her argument conventionalizes that pattern in an unfortunate way. Consider this statement: "The genre cannot, and should not, be delimited, but its distinctive array of features and the narrative dynamic established by their coordination can be described." Can one really have it both ways? The array of features presented becomes in itself categorical, and a number of the literary texts, especially those of Norris, must be worked, if not manipulated, to manifest such features. Put another way, actual Naturalistic novels must be seen as Marxist novels. In addition, one wonders if other texts not treated, notably Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage* and *The Monster*, can find a place in Howard's Naturalistic school. What of James Lane Allen's pleasant love idyl, *A Summer in Arcady*, which Norris described as Naturalistic?

Howard seems to have chosen a term that is too broad for the kind of literature to which she wishes to apply it. Perhaps the rubrics of Populism, Progressivism, or even Socialism would have served her better than reference to so broad and various a movement as Naturalism. Further, she might have relied more heavily on non-literary texts or works from more openly reformist authors for her illustrations. As it is the only work whose form reveals with any consistency the ideology Howard attempts to reconstruct is Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*—which happens to be the only novel she explores in any depth. Within Howard's narrow view, *Sister Carrie*



may be the only viable expression of American Literary Naturalism.

## A Note on Frank Norris's Banjo

Thomas Blues

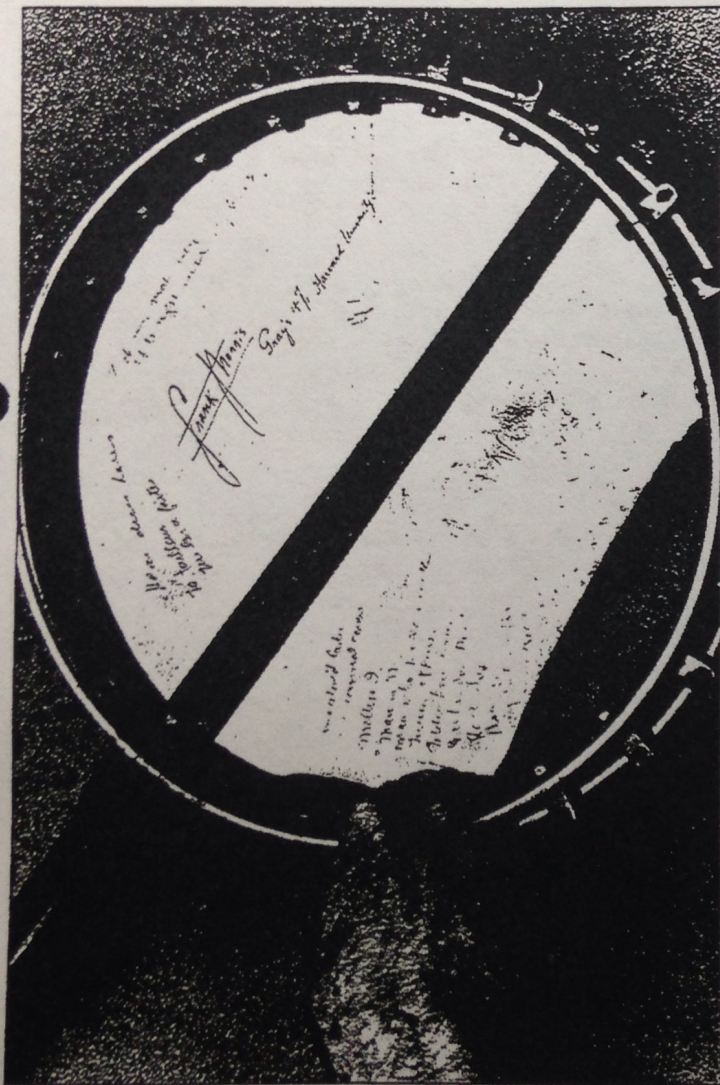
University of Kentucky

"Somewhat dilapidated" was Charles G. Norris's understated assessment of what once had been his older brother's banjo, as he prepared to make a memorial gift of it to Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity.<sup>1</sup> There is no reason to doubt that the condition in which he departed with it half a century ago is the condition in which we find it today, on exhibit in the museum room of the fraternity's international headquarters in Lexington, Kentucky.<sup>2</sup> The instrument is missing its bridge, all but one of its five strings, and a number of its fingerboard inlays; the head is detached from the rim along a third of its circumference and partially torn away. Pencil scrawls on the reverse side of the head indicate that Frank Norris's

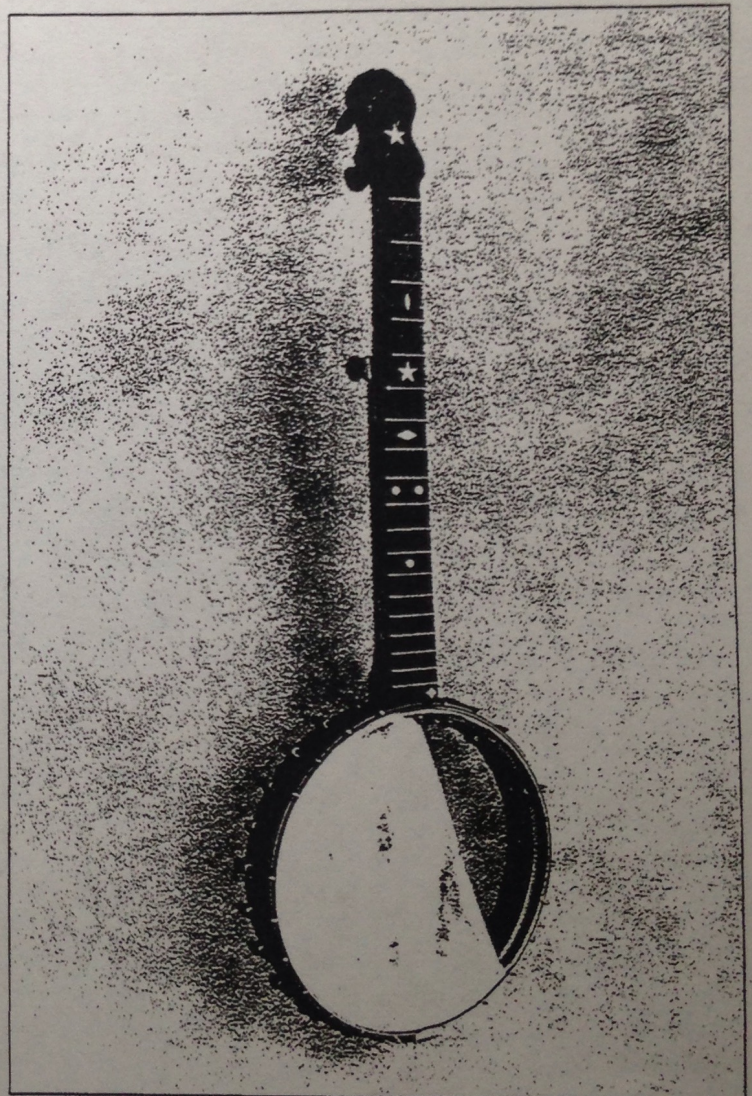
banjo became at some point in its afterlife of neglect and abuse a toddler's plaything.

Expert opinion estimates that for about \$250 the forlorn wreck could be restored to playable condition; but Frank Norris scholars, accustomed to working with remnants and scraps, to putting up with the leavings of natural disasters and human carelessness, will take the old banjo just as it is, and make what they can of what they have.

What they have is a five-string, open-back banjo, made in Cambridge, Massachusetts by the A. C. Fairbanks Company between 1890 and 1892.<sup>3</sup> It is an "Electric" model, the adjective referring to nothing electrical, but employed by the manufacturer to describe the scalloped, brass tone-ring that Fairbanks introduced in 1890. The metal tail-piece (the device that anchors the strings) had to have been added after 1900, probably to accommodate steel strings; the original, celluloid tail-piece was made to secure the gut or silk strings for which the instrument was designed. Dirt and wear marks



Norris's Inscriptions  
The Inside of His Banjo's Head  
Ken Goad, Photographer  
University of Kentucky Photographic Services



Frank Norris's Banjo  
Ken Goad, Photographer  
University of Kentucky Photographic Services



on the front of the calfskin head indicate that Norris employed a minstrel stroke style, similar to claw-hammer "frailing."

There are other, intentional, personal touches. On the upper half of the face of the head we see Norris's "chop mark" in black ink. Turning the banjo over, neck leftward, we find on the reverse side of the head, above the dowel stick, his signature—highly stylized, also in black ink—and his Harvard residence address: "Gray's 47 Harvard University."

Imagining the still-reversed head as a clock face, and starting at twelve o'clock, we follow a series of pencil notations in Norris's handwriting counter-clockwise around the circumference; all but three of a total of twenty-five entries are crowded below the dowel stick, from about eight to four o'clock. Doubtless these are the titles or key words of songs he had learned to play and sing, pencilled in for ready reference. As the list proceeds from eight to four o'clock, the handwriting becomes increasingly cramped, for the writer's hand was increasingly hindered by the rim. These words are obscured by dirt, wear, and the child's scrawls; parts of several of the phrases are gone with the missing segment of the head.

Despite these hindrances, many of the entries can be either authoritatively or tentatively identified; the list is presented here as an initial compilation of the repertoire of Frank Norris, banjo player.

By way of preface: the list begins with Norris's "twelve o'clock" entry and proceeds counter-clockwise, with a number assigned to each entry; all entries are indicated, however fragmentary, to whatever extent decipherable,<sup>4</sup> and not excluding those I have been unable to identify. Each entry is reproduced verbatim, to the best of my ability, followed by my notes and comments. An anthology or sheet music source is indicated for each identified song, except those still well known and readily available in various collections.

1. "Oh honey mah honey | Ef de night would only las"  
"Oh Honey, My Honey," by George R. Sims and Cecil Raleigh (w) and Ivan Caryll (m), 1893.<sup>5</sup> (This is the only entry in blue pencil.)
2. Hear dem bells  
"Hear Dem Bells," by D. S. McCosh, n.d., a "Jubilee Song" (SPEBSQSA)
3. Le tailleur | qui les a faite<sup>6</sup>
4. "am a colored lady"  
" " convivial man"<sup>7</sup>
5. Molly & I  
"Molly and I and the Baby," 1892, by Harry Kennedy (SPEBSQSA).
6. Man in M.  
"My Sweetheart's The Man in the Moon," 1892, by James Thornton.<sup>8</sup>
7. Man who broke bank  
"The Man Who Broke the Bank in Monte Carlo," 1892, by Fred Gilbert (SGA, 125-26).
8. Tommy Atkins  
"Tommy"; Rudyard Kipling's 1890 poem set to music by Mary Carmichael (1892).<sup>9</sup>
9. Golden Hair hanging  
"And Her Golden Hair Was Hanging Down Her Back," 1894, by Monroe H. Rosenfeld (w) and Felix McGlennon (m) (SGA, 71-73).
10. Washington Post

- "Washington Post," 1889, by John Philip Sousa.<sup>10</sup>
11. [K]achacher
12. Bowery  
"The Bowery," 1892, by Charles H. Hoyt (w) and Percy Gaunt (m) (SGA, 25-27).
13. My Girl is a Bowery G.  
"My Pearl's a Bowery Girl," 1894, by William Jerome (w) and Andrew Mack (m) (SPEBSQSA).
14. Daisy Bell  
"Daisy Bell" (Also "A Bicycle Built for Two" and "Daisy, Daisy"), 1892, by Harry Dacre.
15. res
16. ish David
17. banjo<sup>11</sup>
18. qui s'avance
19. with yr eyes  
"Drink To Me Only With Thine Eyes." Poem by Ben Jonson; author of air unknown.<sup>12</sup>
20. le girls in blue  
"Two Little Girls in Blue," 1893, by Charles Graham (SGA, 77-79).
21. ng [two indecipherable words] snow  
"Jingle Bells" or "The One Horse Open Sleigh," 1857, by James S. Pierpont.
22. a tavern  
"There is a Tavern in the Town," 1891, by F. J. Adams.
23. [indecipherable word] Fille
24. [indecipherable entry]
25. Promise [indecipherable word]  
"Oh Promise Me," 1889, by Clement Scott (w) and Reginald DeKoven (m).

However incomplete or open to question my identifications, Norris's song list adds a few details to what we know of his career as strummer and singer of popular melodies. We do not know precisely when he began to play the banjo,<sup>13</sup> or how he learned to play it, although there were available to him a variety of instructional manuals.<sup>14</sup> It is also possible that he took some lessons. We do know that, like his mother, he had a taste for the limelight, that he produced and performed in various college productions, and that, according to one of his fraternity brothers, he could have "made a name for himself upon the professional stage."<sup>15</sup> He clearly enjoyed performing, whether in semi-public productions at Berkeley<sup>16</sup> or for his friends, as the following reminiscence suggests:

Many a pleasant evening we spent in Frank's room, smoking, singing, and telling stories. After our recitations for the next day were prepared, and sometimes before, a cry of "bum gang" would be raised, and we would go hammering at Frank's door . . . . Then out would come the battered and abused old banjo from which he would produce a series of frightful discords, which we accepted as music. Occasionally he sang us French songs which he assured us had really been set to tuneful airs, but that he had forgotten them. His recollection of the airs was



exceedingly faint, and we never received any positive proof in the matter.<sup>17</sup>

We may have a clue here to the origin of the enigmatic entries in French, as well as an affectionate critique of his playing and singing. But if we can trust his brother's memory, our banjo player's technique may have improved by the mid-1890s, for in Charles's opinion, Frank played the banjo well, particularly during his Harvard sojourn.<sup>18</sup> Almost certainly he was building a banjo repertoire while a student at Berkeley, so that when he wrote his name and Harvard address on the instrument, most probably in the fall of 1894, he had command of a sufficient number of songs to require a ready reference; thus the list on the inside of the banjo head, which he probably wrote out in one sitting—at least items four through twenty-five (those below the dowel stick)—some time in the same year.<sup>19</sup> Norris played and sang with his California friends on occasion while at Harvard,<sup>20</sup> and continued to play beyond his student days, according to his widow, who recalled that he played the banjo during their honeymoon.<sup>21</sup>

As for the songs themselves: nothing in this repertoire of sentimental, novelty, and humorous tunes—many of them the "hits" of Norris's college days at Berkeley and Harvard—sets him apart from an emerging mass audience for "popular" music.<sup>22</sup> But with Frank Norris, what we see is only a part of what we get. The preoccupations of the writer identify a far more troubled and complex figure than does the song list of the banjo player. This is most clearly indicated in the literary use to which the writer put his banjo—as an emblem of juvenility and even degeneracy in a series of partial self-portraits.

This is not the place to explore Norris's deeply conflicted and ambiguous treatment of childhood and adulthood. I would merely observe here that in his fiction he generally associates manhood with grave and pleasureless purpose, with unswerving, even obsessive, dedication to heroic enterprise—in brief, with the likes of Ward Bennett, Magnus Derrick, Curtis Jadwin; boyhood he links to self-indulgence, fecklessness, vagueness of purpose.

Condy Rivers, for example, is a twenty-eight year old "overgrown boy"<sup>23</sup>—pink-cheeked, hyper-active, and a banjo player.

Recall this exuberant moment in a Chinatown restaurant:  
"You're not going to play that banjo here?"  
said Travis, as he stripped away the canvas covering.

"Order in the gallery!" cried Condy, beginning to tune up. Then in a rapid, professional monotone: "Ladies-and-gentlemen-with-your-kind-permission-I-will-endeavour-to-give-you-an-imitation-of-a-Carolina-coon-song,"—and without more ado, singing the words to a rattling, catchy accompaniment, swung off into—

"F—or my gal's a high-born leddy,  
She's b[jack], but not too shady." (3, 40)<sup>24</sup>

Condy's banjo-playing marks a spirited moment in his painless passage from clownish boyhood to purposeful maturity, under the curiously maternal-fraternal guidance of Blix. But his doomed counterpart, Vandover, spurns the elevating love of woman and lapses into pathological idleness: "It was during these days that Vandover took up his banjo-playing seriously, if it could be said that

he did anything seriously at this time." He takes lessons, learns to play two banjos at the same time, and makes up "comical pieces that had a great success among the boys" (5, 161). Finally, there is young Osterman of *The Octopus*, with the face of "a comic actor, a singer of songs," who at one point in his career of manic dilettantism "devoted himself to learning how to play two banjos simultaneously" (1, 96).

Why did Norris give his banjo over to the likes of Condy, Vandover, and Osterman? It was not that he was abandoning the stage; indeed, the novelist had a higher order of performance, neither playful nor puerile, in mind for himself:

The man who can address an audience of one hundred and fifty thousand people who—unlightened—believe what he says has a heavy duty to perform, and tremendous responsibilities to shoulder; and he should address himself to his task not with the flippancy of a catch-penny juggler at the county fair, but with earnestness, with soberness, with a sense of his limitations, and with all the abiding sincerity that by the favor and mercy of the gods may be his. (7, 9)

Thus the banjo had to go; there was no room for it in the novelist's deadly serious ideal of manhood.

So there are ironies of sorts in his banjo's survival, as well as a certain aptness in its fate. Contemplating that battered old wreck, hanging on the wall of a fraternity museum, we wonder at the younger brother who preserved it for posterity, but who destroyed the manuscript of one of his greatest novels, *Vandover and the Brute*. We think, too, of those noisy song fests in the fraternity house on Dana Street in Berkeley, and of Vandover's banjo, that token of his ruin, hanging on the walls of his Sutter Street rooms. Perhaps Norris's banjo is where it belongs, after all.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Charles G. Norris to Cecil J. Wilkinson, 2 August 1939. Phi Gamma Delta International Headquarters, Lexington, Kentucky.

<sup>2</sup>I am grateful to William A. Martin III, President, Phi Gamma Delta International Headquarters, and to his staff, for their cooperation and assistance.

<sup>3</sup>I owe many thanks to Thomas Adler, scholar and player of the banjo, who inspected the Norris banjo and provided helpful information, including informed conjecture on Norris's playing style. I am also indebted to Jim Bollman, banjo collector and historian, co-owner of The Music Emporium, Inc., Cambridge, Massachusetts, and expert on A. C. Fairbanks banjos, for his assistance in dating the banjo and providing other relevant details. Information in an article Bollman co-authored with Dick Kimmel and Doug Unger makes it clear that the Norris banjo had to have been manufactured between 1890 and 1892 (see "A History of Vega/Fairbanks Banjos," *Pickin*, June, 1978, p. 26.), Bollman's "best guess" being 1891.

<sup>4</sup>My colleague Joseph H. Gardner and I puzzled over Norris's list, aided with samples of his handwriting and a magnifying glass. Even so, the going was not easy, and I cannot guarantee absolutely the accuracy of the transcription, for which I must take responsibility.



<sup>5</sup>Sheet music in the collection of the Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America, Kenosha, Wisconsin (hereinafter referred to as SPEBSQSA), with grateful acknowledgement to Ruth Marks, who located this and other songs, as indicated, and provided photocopies.

<sup>6</sup>I am obliged to André Poncet, Université de Nice, for checking on popular French songs current during Norris's stay in Paris. He also consulted collections of French folk songs. These searches, however, turned up nothing regarding this entry and numbers 18 and 23 below.

<sup>7</sup>Not identified; most likely a "coon song," that is, a song out of the minstrel tradition featuring Black characters. Most "coon songs," exploiting racist sentiments, were written by whites.

<sup>8</sup>Margaret Bradford Boni, ed. *Songs of the Gilded Age* (New York: Golden Press, 1960) 40-42. Hereinafter referred to as SGA.

<sup>9</sup>James McG. Stewart, *Rudyard Kipling: A Bibliographical Catalogue* (Toronto: Dalhousie University Press, 1959), p. 585.

<sup>10</sup>A seemingly odd banjo selection, "The Washington Post" was well-suited and quickly adapted to the dance craze of the 1890s, the two-step, with which it became identified. Paul E. Bierly, *The Works of John Philip Sousa* (Columbus, Ohio: Integrity Press, 1984), p. 95.

<sup>11</sup>Possibly "Ring De Banjo," by Stephen Foster, 1851, or "I've Been Working on the Railroad," a traditional American folksong of the early 1880s. See Roger Lax and Frederick Smith, *The Great Song Thesaurus*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 288. Hereinafter referred to as GST.

<sup>12</sup>William Chappell, ed. *The Ballad Literature and Popular Music of the Olden Time* (1859; New York: Dover, 1965), p. 707.

<sup>13</sup>There is this beguiling entry in Norris biographer Franklin Walker's interview notes (9 June 1930) with Charles Norris: "It was [shortly after Norris's return from Paris in 1889] that he became enthusiastic for a horse and joined the National Guard.... His mothe[r] bought him the banjo to keep him at home." Franklin Walker Collection (C-H 79), Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

<sup>14</sup>Pete Seeger, *How To Play The 5-String Banjo*, 3rd ed. rev. (Beacon, New York: Pete Seeger, 1962), 70.

<sup>15</sup>Wallace W. Everett, "Frank Norris In His Chapter," *The Phi Gamma Delta*, 52 (April, 1930), 565-566.

<sup>16</sup>A 31 March 1894 *Wave* piece calls attention to a fraternity "Low Jinks" entertainment, led by Norris, and featuring "banjo specialties," as quoted in Joseph R. McElrath, Jr. "Frank Norris and *The Wave*: 1894," *Frank Norris Studies*, No. 1 (Spring, 1986), p. 4.

<sup>17</sup>Frank Morton Todd, "Reminiscence of Frank Norris," holograph manuscript, Frank Norris Collection, v. 7, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, p. 3.

<sup>18</sup>Interview with Franklin Walker, 9 June 1930.

<sup>19</sup>That these items were listed in one sitting is indicated by location on the head, the fact that the list is in pencil, and by the order of several of the entries, which suggests that in writing down one item, he was reminded of a similar sound or subject. If the list was made in a single sitting, it could not have been earlier than 1894, when two of the songs were published.

<sup>20</sup>Franklin Walker, *Frank Norris: A Biography* (1932; New

York: Russell & Russell, 1963), p. 93. See also Frank Morton Todd, "Frank Norris—Student, Author, and Man," *The University of California Magazine*, 8 (November, 1902), rpt. in Joseph R. McElrath, Jr., "Frank Norris: Early Posthumous Responses," *American Literary Realism*, 12 (Spring, 1976), 18.

<sup>21</sup>Franklin Walker, interview with Jeannette Preston, 22 May 1930, Franklin Walker Collection, v. 1, University of California, Berkeley.

<sup>22</sup>Eight of the songs on Norris's list were among the most popular songs for the years indicated: "My Sweetheart's the Man in the Moon" (1892), "The Man Who Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo" (1892), "And Her Golden Hair Was Hanging Down Her Back" (1894), "The Bowery" (1892), "My Pearl's a Bowery Girl" (1894), "Daisy Bell" (1892), "Two Little Girls in Blue" (1893), "Oh Promise Me" (1890). See SGA, pp. 23-25.

<sup>23</sup>Frank Norris, *Blix* in *The Complete Edition of Frank Norris*, vol. 3 (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Doran, 1928), 20. Subsequent in-text references to this edition are by volume and page number.

<sup>24</sup>Earlier, Condy and Travis "stopped at a music-store on Kearney Street to pick up her banjo, which she had left to have its head tightened" (3, 34). Norris probably had in mind Sherman, Clay & Co., on Kearney at the corner of Sutter, and the most likely retail source of his own banjo. The store, which advertised the Fairbanks banjo in 1890 editions of the San Francisco *Examiner*, was "the music store in San Francisco" during the period, according to Jim Bollman, who estimates the Norris banjo's original retail price at twenty-five to thirty-five dollars.

Condy's "imitation" "coon-song" may have been written by Norris; I have found no reference to a song featuring these lyrics.

## Current Publications: Update

Thomas K. Dean

Cardinal Stritch College

Presented here is an eighth installment designed to complement *Frank Norris: A Reference Guide* (1974). The arrangement of items is chronological and alphabetical within years. Please forward new and omitted items to Thomas K. Dean.

Bevilacqua, Winifred Farrant. "From the Ideal to Its Reverse: Key Sociocultural Concepts in *McTeague*," *Centennial Review*, 33 (1989), 75-88. Norris's writing reflects "some of the principal transformations in American culture and thought" and reinterprets national ideas about evolutionary ethical dualism, the ideology of success, and the Cult of True Womanhood.

Borus, Daniel H. *Writing Realism: Howells, James, and Norris in the Mass Market*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989. Realistic writers made choices in technique in conjunction with their audience and historical circumstances. Norris's ideas about the methods and social role of a writer figure prominently.

Bucco, Martin. "The Rise of Silas Lapham: The Western Dimension," *Western American Literature*, 23 (1989), 291-310. Norris



recognizes Howells's vision of the East as being informed by the values of the West.

Caron, James E. "Grotesque Naturalism: The Significance of the Comic in *McTeague*," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 31 (1989), 288-317. The comic in *McTeague*, rooted in incongruity, "is an integral part of the narrative presentation of naturalism, a presentation that turns upon the issue of freedom versus determinism." The novel also reflects new theories of laughter by Spencer, Darwin, Bergson, and Freud.

Crisler, Jesse S. "Norris in South Africa," *Frank Norris Studies*, No. 7 (Spring, 1989), pp. 4-7. Reprints four articles from the San Francisco *Chronicle* focusing on Norris's mother's concern for her son's whereabouts as he travelled to South Africa and reveals new details about Norris's involvement with the Jameson expedition.

Crow, Charles L. "Homecoming in the California Visionary Romance," *Western American Literature*, 24 (1989), 3-19. California fulfills the dream of the harmonious linking of life and landscape in novels by Jack London, Ernest Callenbach, and Ursula LeGuin. London's *The Valley of the Moon* begins in a Norris/Zola Naturalistic mode.

Davison, Richard Allan. "The Marriage, Divorce and Demise of a Father of Novelists: B.F. Norris," *Frank Norris Studies*, No. 8 (Autumn, 1989), pp. 2-5. Newly-discovered family letters and B. F. Norris's obituary shed new light on Norris's father.

—. "Of *Mice and Men* and *McTeague*: Steinbeck, Fitzgerald, and Frank Norris," *Studies in American Fiction*, 17 (1989), 219-226. Fitzgerald's annotated copy of *McTeague* sent to Edmund Wilson reveals Norris's influence on Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*. Also discusses other similarities not pointed out by Fitzgerald.

Goldman, Steven L. "Images of Technology in Popular Films: Discussion and Filmography," *Science, Technology, & Human Values*, 14 (1989), 275-301. *The Octopus* and *The Pit* are important literary counterparts to popular films which depict science and technology negatively, particularly in the corporate usurpation of technology toward inhuman ends.

Gunning, Tom. "'Primitive' Cinema—A Frame-up? or The Trick's on Us," *Cinema Journal*, 28, No. 2 (Winter, 1989), pp. 3-12. Contextualizes discussion of early film technique by exploring the reactions of *McTeague*, Trina, and Mrs. Sieppe to the kinoscope in *McTeague*.

Lansford, Ingrid Grimm. "The Rise and Fall of the Artist Aristocrat in the American Novel," *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 50 (1989), 444-A. *The Pit* portrays an amoral and socially-alienated "artist aristocrat" (Corthell), characterized by an humble economic position, rejection by most unartistic males, and dependence on female patronage.

Lasseter, Victor K. "Rabbit Is Rich as a Naturalistic Novel," *Amer-*

*ican Literature*, 61 (1989), 429-445. Updike's novel has stylistic and philosophical characteristics close to those of the classic American naturalistic novels, such as *McTeague*.

Lawlor, Mary. "Naturalism in the Cinema: Erich von Stroheim's Reading of *McTeague*," *Frank Norris Studies*, No. 8 (Autumn, 1989), pp. 6-8. Von Stroheim's realistic critical posture virtually duplicates Norris's. This is particularly evident in his film *Greed*, an adaptation of *McTeague*.

McElrath, Joseph R., Jr., and Jesse S. Crisler. "The Bowdlerization of *McTeague*," *American Literature*, 61 (1989), 97-101. Norris altered the August incident in *McTeague* not at Doubleday's request but at Grant Richards's when Robert McClure was negotiating with him for the British publication of the novel.

Mitchell, Lee Clark. *Determined Fictions: American Literary Naturalism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1989. The extremes of naturalistic style are not rooted in authorial incompetence and thin philosophy, but are necessary to the profound narrative implications of a deterministic philosophy. Naturalistic style and plot subvert the moral assumptions of intention and responsibility that guide realistic narrative action. An analysis of *Vandover and the Brute* focuses on ways in which Vandover is destroyed less by natural forces than by the moral strictures of conventional language, comparable to the reader's acceptance of moral labels inherent in the naturalistic medium.

Ryder, Mary R. "'All Wheat and No Chaff': Frank Norris' *Blix* and Willa Cather's Literary Vision," *American Literary Realism*, 22 (1989), 17-30. Cather's positive response to *Blix* indicates a strong Norris influence on her own early pastoral tone, her female heroic figures, and her ideas about romance and realism.

Stronks, James. "Frank Norris and the Eighth Grade," *Frank Norris Studies*, No. 7 (Spring, 1989), pp. 2-4. Recreates Norris's curriculum at Chicago's affluent Harvard School for Boys in 1883.

—. "The Norris Divorce Suit: Another Newspaper Account," *Frank Norris Studies*, No. 8 (Autumn, 1989), pp. 8-9. Reprints a *Chicago Daily News* story of 4 January 1894, wherein B.F. Norris disclaims his wife's allegations regarding their divorce.

Watts, Michael, and Robert F. Smith. "Economics in Literature and Drama," *The Journal of Economic Education*, 20 (1989), 291-307. Discusses ways in which literary works such as *The Octopus* have treated economic themes.

Weisenburger, Steven C. "Errant Narrative and *The Color Purple*," *The Journal of Narrative Technique*, 19 (1989), 257-275. Narrative errors focus critical attention on the production and reception of fiction and its socio-cultural horizon. Examples from *The Octopus* contextualize the argument.

Crow, Charles. "Norris, Crow and the Mussel Slough Tragedy," *California English*, March-April, 1990, pp. 20-21, 30-31. Explores



the ambiguities of the historical interpretations of the Mussel Slough Tragedy which Norris depicted in *The Octopus*, and presents Crow's own version of what happened to his ancestor, Walter J. Crow, who was involved in the incident.

Dean, Thomas K. "The Flight of McTeague's Soul-Bird: Thematic Differences Between Norris's *McTeague* and von Stroheim's *Greed*," *Literature/Film Quarterly*, 18 (1990), 96-102. While Norris's novel is about a man suffering an atavistic decline as a result of alignment with corrupt economic forces, von Stroheim's film is about a man succumbing to the Judeo-Christian corruption of the Fall as a result of sin.

McElrath, Joseph R., Jr. "Frank Norris: Biographical Data from *The Wave*, 1891-1901," *Frank Norris Studies*, No. 10 (Autumn, 1990), pp. 1-12. Excerpts or summarizes all of the references to Norris and family members in *The Wave*. Note error: entry for 3 March 1894 (p. 4) should read 31 March 1894.

Orishima, Masashi. "Frank Norris and the Killing of Clocks," *Studies in American Literature*, 27 (1990), 33-47. Notes the frequent references to clocks by a Norris who had absorbed the value-system of industrial capitalism. Observes that a time-money-personal identity equation manifests itself in *McTeague*, *Vandover*, and *Blix*. Characters who lack the ability to manage time and money are developed as characters who do not, in fact, manage effectively their lives.

Anderson, Jennifer, and Robert C. Leitz, III. "Norris Notices in *The Conservator*," *Frank Norris Studies*, No. 11 (Spring, 1991), pp. 5-8. Introduces and reprints a eulogy to Norris by Julie A. Herne and reviews by Horace Traubel—of *The Octopus*, *The Responsibilities of the Novelist*, *The Third Circle*, and *Vandover and the Brute*.

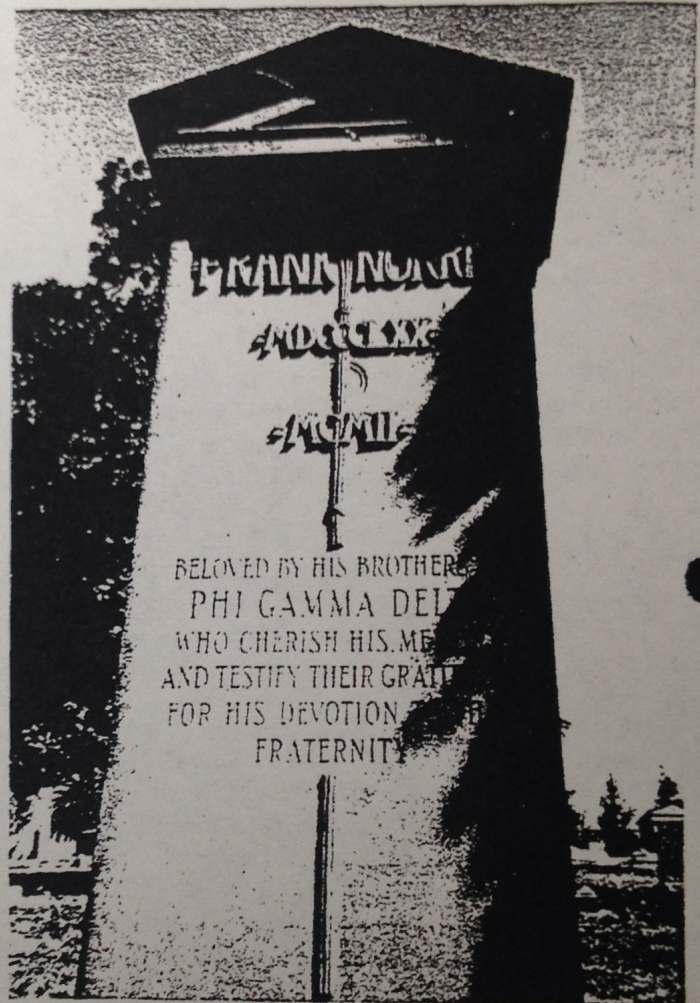
Cook, Don L. "*McTeague* at Ninety: The Novel and Its Tensions," *Frank Norris Studies*, No. 11 (Spring, 1991), pp. 2-5. Describes *McTeague* in terms of a pattern of tensions within it: between sociological documentation and ironic implication; visceral reality and bravura artistry; and scientific objectivity and humane sympathy.

Litton, Alfred G. "The Kinetoscope in *McTeague*: 'The Crowning Scientific Achievement of the Nineteenth Century,'" *Studies in American Fiction*, 19 (1991), 107-11. Focuses on the reference in *McTeague* to a kinetoscope when a vitascope is the device to which Norris is obviously alluding. Gives the history of both devices. Interprets the thematic significance of the kinetoscope reference in light of the possibility that Norris deliberately refrained from citing the vitascope.

McElrath, Joseph R., Jr. "Frank Norris's *Blix*: Jeannette Black as Travis," *Frank Norris Studies*, No. 11 (Spring, 1991), pp. 8-11. Excerpts references to Jeannette Black's social activities in *The Wave*. Observes that *The Wave's* high society columns suddenly ceased reporting her activities, suggesting that, like Travis Bessemer in *Blix*, Jeannette suddenly removed herself from the world of

debutantes.

Myers, Robert M. "Dreiser's Copy of *McTeague*," *Papers on Language & Literature*, 27 (1991), 260-67. A copy of a 1903 American printing of *McTeague* includes Dreiser's bookplate at front and his characteristic pencil markings in the text. Myers identifies the passages marked and comments on the qualities which drew Dreiser's attention. Considering the nature of Norris's possible influence on Dreiser, Myers also reconstructs the possible history of his familiarity with *McTeague*.



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