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"A Vast and Terrible Drama": Frank Norris's Domestic Violence Fantasy in *McTeague*

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In the 1928 "Foreword" to *The Pit: A Story of Chicago* in *The Complete Edition of Frank Norris*, Juliet Wilbor Tompkins described Frank Norris as "so unwaveringly master in his own house" that, when he "[laid] down the law," his wife did as she was told.[1] Tompkins' commentary is not a criticism; in fact, she believes that any woman would have desired Norris as a husband.[2] This brief biographical sketch highlights one of the essential themes in Norris's fiction—the enduring struggle between the sexes. In *McTeague: A Story of San Francisco*, perhaps more clearly than in any of the other works, the male solution to the war between the sexes is to beat the aberrant woman into submission. It is important to note, however, that McTeague's solution is not necessarily Norris's. An examination of the novel in its historical context shows that while Norris appears to endorse his depictions of male discipline and female masochism, *McTeague* foregrounds and ultimately critiques the easy acceptance of conjugal crime in the late nineteenth century.

The idea that submission was the proper demeanor for women pervaded nineteenth-century thought and was still very much in place at the end of the century. In her 1841 study, *Treatise on Domestic Economy*, Catharine E. Beecher defers to Alexis De Tocqueville and his eloquent summation of the prevailing ideology regarding the virtue of female humility: "I never observed, that the women of America considered conjugal authority as a fortunate usurpation of their rights or that they felt themselves degraded by submitting to it. It appears to me, on the contrary, that they attach a sort of pride to the voluntary surrender of their own will, and make it their boast to bend themselves to the yoke, not to shake it off."[3]

Nor were women the only sex to have prescribed rules of conduct. In 1899, Kate Upson Clark's *Bringing Up Boys, A Study* proffered expectations about male behavior: "Each boy should understand the requirements of duty, the dangers of laziness, and the fact that the 'evolution of a strong and forceful character' depended in the last analysis upon male energy, proper manliness, and self-reliance."[4] Such a latent social philosophy is not unlike Norris's own beliefs about the roles that men and women should play. While Norris never directly condones violence against women, it nevertheless remains a recurrent theme in several of his works and a problem he had obviously pondered at length.

Norris also treats the subject of wife-beating in "Fantaisie Printanière," an 1897 short story that appeared in *The Wave*. In this story, a precursor to *McTeague*, Norris employs the subject of domestic violence as a vehicle for humor. The two battered women, Trina and Missis Ryer, are friends who are drawn together by their mutual victimization. However, when they engage in a macabre competition over who can claim the honor of having the most severe bruises and thus the most brutal husband, they end up hating each other; and their husbands—who find the whole discussion ludicrous—become friends for the first time.[5]

As disturbing as this light-hearted treatment of violence is, it is not unique to the pages of Norris's fiction. An examination of the domestic violence laws in the nineteenth century demonstrates a distinct reluctance to take the crime of wife-beating seriously. For example, in 1871, legislation in Alabama and Massachusetts made wife-beating illegal, but the explanation of such a prohibition is revealing: "And the privilege, ancient though it be, to beat her with a stick, to pull her hair, choke her, spit in her face, or kick her about the floor, or to inflict upon her other like indignities, is not now acknowledged by our law."[6]

In 1874, laws in North Carolina stipulated that if no permanent injury had been sustained, the courts should look the other way.[7] Add to these statutes the laws governing the behavior of women in the nineteenth century, and it is not difficult to see how Norris formed some of his attitudes regarding women and their social position.

Several of his biographers have also suggested that the divorce of Norris's parents helped shape his ideas about relations between the sexes. S.N. Verma comments that Norris believed women "were expected to live usefully for their men" and that he probably formed this idea in response to his father's desertion of his mother.[8] Franklin Walker notes that "Mrs. Norris's growing independence and self-expression gave him feelings of inadequacy."[9] These early reactions to the breakup of his family likely prompted Norris to develop an extreme sense of masculine dominance. According to Walker, Norris believed that men should never, under any circumstances, be afraid of firearms, women, or horses.[10] It is interesting, then, that in *McTeague* Norris creates a brute

giant protagonist who fears women. Freud's disciple, Karen Horney, believed that this "dread of women" is actually quite common among men, and, moreover, the way men deal with the threat to their self respect is disparagement.[11] In *McTeague*, Norris portrays the dentist's initial fear of Trina Sieppe and his later depreciation of her through his increasingly brutal acts of violence.

When Trina and McTeague are left alone for the first time, the dentist acknowledges to himself that he does not like young women and has "an intuitive suspicion of all things feminine."[12] The more time McTeague spends with his patient, however, the less fearful and the more enchanted he becomes. McTeague's desire reaches a crisis point when he kisses the anesthetized Trina and the reader learns that the dentist has given in to the "vices and sins of his father and of his father's father."[13] Since Norris has already mentioned that McTeague's father was a drunk and his mother a drudge, it is likely that within the narrative McTeague is beginning subconsciously to recreate the dysfunctional sexual dynamic of his parents. Eve and Carl Buzawa note that witnessing violence in adult relationships is a "stronger predictor of violence in adulthood than the direct presence of childhood violence."[14] It is here, then, that the reader receives the first hint that McTeague is not entirely responsible for his bestial behavior and the first clue that the relationship between Mac and Trina will be based on force and submission.

Other indicators that the relationship is doomed to end in Trina's utter disparagement are McTeague's loss of respect for her when she submits and Trina's unusual reaction to her submission. She remembers: "But he had only to take her in his arms, to crush down her struggle with his enormous strength, to subdue her, conquer her by sheer brute force, and she gave up in an instant. . . . Why did she feel the desire, the necessity of being conquered by a superior strength? Why did it please her?"[15] Trina's thoughts here foreshadow her masochism later in the novel. Another suggestion of McTeague's barely dormant brutality is his verbal abuse of the ticket-seller who tries to "make small" of him.[16] The dentist's word choice is significant because his perception that Trina "makes small" of him ultimately leads to his abusive behavior. George M. Spangler, in his analysis of the structure of the novel, notes that the threat to McTeague's masculinity begins with the lottery money which empowers Trina and is intensified by the loss of the dental practice which disempowers him.[17] The shifting balance of power is intolerable to such a man, who, by virtue of his size and strength, is used to commanding a certain amount of respect.

Neither of these events, however, has quite the impact on McTeague's patience and self-respect that Trina's miserliness does. Once Trina begins to withhold money from him, she begins to rob him of his perceived power, his need to feel like the master of his domain. Winifred Farrant Bevilacqua notes that Trina's increasingly miserly behavior corresponds with her increasingly cavalier attitude about her physical appearance and her genteel manners. She ceases to adhere to the Cult of True Womanhood and becomes not a helpmate but a "slattern" and a shrew.[18] Once Trina no longer represents the ideal woman, she become an anomaly, an aberration whom McTeague feels he must punish.

The first violent incident takes place after McTeague is forced to walk in the rain because Trina would not give him money for car fare. He tells her, "You can't make small of me *always*"[19] and then threatens to thrash her. Interestingly, Trina's only response is to wonder where her husband got the money to buy whiskey.[20] It is also ironic that before McTeague's return, Trina had been telling the novel's other battered woman, Maria, that she should leave her husband.[21] Later, Maria will become like Missis Ryer from "Fantaisie Printanière," and she and Trina will compete with each other to see whose husband is more brutal. Each of these women is portrayed as a victim who is also in some way responsible for her own downfall. The two drudges are contrasted with gentle Miss Baker, the representation of True Womanhood who finds happiness with a kind old gentleman. The notion is suggested, thus, that women who are capable of threatening masculine supremacy must be dealt with severely, and women who adhere to the prescribed rules of conduct will be rewarded.

Further reinforcing the idea of necessary chastisement is the perverse pleasure that Trina and Maria seem to take in their submission. Although they both know that their husbands have the power to kill them, they prefer to remain within the strictures of their ostensibly secure marriages. Trina is even willing to forgive McTeague for the loss of her fingers and for his desertion, but not—of course—for the theft of her gold. When McTeague returns begging for more of her money and threatening to make her "dance," she feels guilty because he looks "pinched," and she laments, "I ought to have given him something."[22] Unaware of Trina's feelings of guilt, McTeague allows his hatred for his wife to grow until he fantasizes and dreams about thrashing her.[23] Trina finally attempts to defend herself moments before McTeague kills her; yet even before her struggle, her initial response is the plea, "I'll do anything you want."[24]

The problem of female masochism is indeed vexed, for it seems that Trina, and to some extent Maria, want to be hurt. However, a number of theories could account for this paradox. In *Civilization and its Discontents*, Freud equated love with beating when he mentioned the peasant woman who "complained that her husband did not love her any more, because he had not beaten her for a week."[25] Although Freud's theories about female masochism are largely outdated, he

points to an important component of the masochistic personality: the need for recognition. Current arguments regarding feminine masochism seek to demonstrate that some women use masochism as a strategy to maintain identity. Michelle A. Masse writes, "To be ignored . . . is to disappear as a self. To be beaten is proof of existence, and even of lovableness. . . ."[26] Masse's comment certainly describes Trina, who seems more saddened by Mac's refusal to say "I love you" than by his beatings and finger-bitings.[27] Unfortunately, as Ruth-Jean Eisenbud remarks, "Martyrdom is satisfactory until fatal."[28]

Both Maria and Trina are violently murdered by their husbands in the ultimate manifestation of domestic abuse, and the nature of Norris's dramatic rendering of their homicides simply cannot by ignored by those with an interest in determining his attitude toward what he describes. For, as with the beating episodes, the two murder scenes contain an element of voyeuristic fantasy, and the reader may glimpse the looming specter of Norris as an author reveling in his abject presentation of the novel's grisly events. Whether Norris indeed delighted in disgusting his readers thus is uncertain; but even more problematic is the question at hand, whether he was reveling in his own misogyny.

As a writer of Naturalistic fiction, Norris took his cues from Emile Zola; and in this may be found clarification of his intentions and attitude when rendering the debasement and death of both Trina and Maria. Norris's description of Naturalism in "Zola as a Romantic Writer" is revealing: "Terrible things must happen to the characters of the naturalistic tale. They must be twisted from the ordinary, wrenched out from the quiet, uneventful round of every-day life, and flung into the throes of a vast and terrible drama that works itself out in unleashed passions, in blood, and sudden death."[29] At the top of Norris's agenda, then, was not the desire to gratify audiences, and himself, with misogynist rhetoric, but to write in the Naturalist mode as he understood it. At the same time, though, it must also be noted that Norris's ideas regarding women are not enlightened either. Frank Norris was a product of his time; that he firmly believed in the strong male and the ideal submissive female is clear, but no evidence exists to show that Norris beat his own wife or that he sanctioned such behavior within the pages of his fiction.

Rather than merely indicting *McTeague* for its depictions of nineteenth-century mores, critics would be better served by acknowledging the implicit social lessons embedded within Norris's narrative. Indeed, upon reading *McTeague*, a reader may be left with the notion that Norris upheld domestic violence as a solution for dealing with women who did not meet his idealized expectations. One may infer that, because such a woman as Trina can "make small" of her husband, she must be disparaged and beaten "like a piece of meat, to make her tender."[30] Additionally, one may conclude that Maria's and Trina's masochism suggests that they themselves rightly approve of their punishment.

However, it must be remembered that, as Paula J. Caplan observes, "society uses the myth of women's masochism to blame the women themselves for their misery."[31] And there is good reason to believe that Norris was quite aware of this mode of abusing women, reacting to it accordingly in *McTeague*. Because Trina and Maria are actually not to blame for their victimizations, their abusers meet horrible fates: Maria's husband drowns, and McTeague is left to die in the desert. While Norris may appear to endorse domestic violence, he ultimately undercuts that position by illustrating what happens to men who use violence against women.

NOTES

[1]Volume 9 (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Doran & Company, [1929], ix.

[2]Tompkins, x.

[3](Boston: Marsh, Capen, Lyon, and Webb, 1841), p. 6.

[4]In John S. Haller, Jr., and Robin M. Haller, *The Physician and Sexuality in Victorian America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974), p.193.

[5]In *Frank Norris of "The Wave": Stories and Sketches of the San Francisco Weekly, 1893 to 1897* (1931; St. Clair Shores, Michigan: Scholarly Press, 1972), pp. 62-76.

[6]Terry Davidson, *Conjugal Crime: Understanding and Changing the Wifebeating Pattern* (New York: Hawthorn, 1978), p. 102.

[7]Davidson, p. 103.

[8]*Frank Norris: A Literary Legend* (New Dehli: Vikas, 1986), p. 116.

[9]*Frank Norris: A Biography* (1932; New York: Russell, 1963), p. 86.

[10]Walker, pp. 46-47.

[11]"The Dread of Woman," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 13 (1932), 351.

[12]*McTeague: A Story of San Francisco* (1899; New York: Penguin, 1982), p. 23.

[13]*McTeague*, p. 32.

[14]Eve S. and Carl G. Buzawa, *Domestic Violence: The Criminal Justice Response* (Newbury Park, California: Sage, 1990), p. 17.

[15]*McTeague*, p. 88.

[16]*McTeague*, p. 95.

[17]"The Structure of *McTeague*," *English Studies*, 59 (1978), 50.

[18]Winifred Farrant Bevilacqua, "From the Ideal to Its Reverse: Key Sociocultural Concepts in *McTeague*," *Centennial Review*, 33 (1989), 86.

[19]*McTeague*, p. 297. [20]*McTeague*, p. 302.

[21]*McTeague*, p. 295. [22]*McTeague*, pp. 363-64.

[23]*McTeague*, p. 367. [24]*McTeague*, p. 373.

[25](London: Hogarth, 1953), p. 77, n. 1.

[26]*In The Name of Love: Women, Masochism, and the Gothic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 105.

[27]*McTeague*, p. 332.

[28]"Masochism Revisited," *Psychoanalytic Review*, 54 (1967), 575.

[29]Joseph R. McElrath, Jr., and Gwendolyn Jones, "Introduction," *The Pit: A Story of Chicago* (New York: Penguin, 1994), p. xvii.

[30]Masse, p. 101.
[31]*The Myth of Women's Masochism* (New York: Dutton, 1985), p. 22.

Frank Norris and the Visual Arts

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Almost five years after Frank Norris's death on 25 October 1902, an article by Denison Hailey Clift appeared in *Pacific Monthly*, describing "an old painting of a blind man," that had been left hanging in the office of the *Overland Monthly*: "The picture was a simple one, not overgood in its technique, representing the full figure of a blind man, erect in the center of the canvas, clutching blindly and feverishly for an invisible something. But there was a personality behind the thing that brought it to mind again and again, long after everything else about that room was forgotten. In the big, bold strokes, in the dramatic pose of the body, in the very strength of the conception, there was an element suggestive of the man who was later destined to give us *McTeague* and *The Octopus*. For the painting was signed 'Norris.'" He had submitted the canvas to the magazine as an illustration for one of his short stories "some ten years earlier."[1]

As Clift noted, "there are, perhaps few who know that at one time it was [Norris's] ambition to become a great artist." In fact, information about Norris's connection with the visual arts was not at all publicized during his lifetime, nor even mentioned in the autobiographical blurbs Norris wrote for editors and publishers. Further, knowledge of Norris's work as an art *critic* was restricted to the small, select readership of the San Francisco *Wave*, while passages in *The Pit* and *The Octopus* which demonstrated his extensive knowledge of painting and the arts were simply overlooked. The earliest printed reference to Norris's art background occurs in the *Oakland Enquirer* on the day of his death, 25 October 1902: "He was an art student in Paris in 1887-9."[2]

Two years earlier, at age fifteen, Norris began drawing illustrations and copying pictures from the *Home Book of Art* while recuperating from a broken arm he had sustained playing football at a private school in Belmont. Gertrude Norris, a former actress and admirer of Robert Browning, encouraged his interest in art. But his father, B.F. Norris, was more interested in preparing his son for business and enrolled Frank in the Boy's High School. Two months later, art prevailed: he entered San Francisco's Art Association school in 1886. In the still-life class, he spent hours drawing onions and stone jugs. His preference, however, was to work outside the studio, sketching live models, especially dogs and horses.

His work was so promising that his parents decided to further his art studies in Europe. In 1887, the family accompanied Frank to London, where he worked at the South Kensington Museum. Perhaps because it specialized in industrial design and required students to spend hours drawing from the "antique"—lithographs and plaster casts—the school proved unsatisfactory; late in 1887 the family moved once more, this time to Paris where Frank was to spend the next two years studying art at the Académie Julian, famous for instruction in anatomical draughting, the hallmark of nineteenth-century French academic painting. As a member of master artist Guillaume Bouguereau's *atelier*, Norris devoted much of his time drawing from the nude.

No creative project in which the young artist was involved has taken on greater significance than the enormous "Battle of Crécy" canvas that he began in 1889. Frank was living at the *pension* of M. Quatremain, a frescoer whose occupation, of course, involved the production of works encompassing entire walls. Possibly, art of this scope and size inspired in Norris the desire to expand the scale of his art-work: "A great idea came to Frank—he would do something big and grand, a huge picture of the Battle of Crécy for the Salon. He brought a huge canvas which completely covered one end of his room and began to outline his composition with charcoal."[3] Apparently, Norris was unable to complete the initial charcoal drawing, an extremely complex task in which large numbers of figures must be placed in perspective and massed harmoniously; he never put a brush to the canvas. That he tried to initiate such a work, however, says something about the serious kind of *student* he was. Since the purpose of this ambitious undertaking was to create a painting that would launch his career at the Paris *salon*, those writing on Norris's Paris sojourn have accepted the conclusion put forth by Franklin Walker, that the abandonment of this project dramatically marked the end of "his desire for an artistic career."[4] This conclusion, however, is problematic. Walker tacitly assumes the point of view that artist and painter are synonymous terms, identifying one who seriously pursued a career in the "fine arts." But, in fact, Norris himself ridiculed those who took this elitist attitude toward art in his satirical portrait of "An Art Student": "Art with him is *paint*. He condescends to no other medium than oil and colored earths. Bouguereau is his enthusiasm; he can rise no higher than that, and he looks down with an amused smile upon the illustrators, the pen-and-ink men, Gibson, Smedley, Remmington [*sic*], and the rest." After years of painting "stone jugs and bunches of onions," the struggling artist "grows older." Now, ironically, "he tries to make his 'art' pay. . . . If he's lucky he is taken on a newspaper and does the pen-and-ink work that he once affected to despise."[5]

Norris does not appear to share the art student's point of view or Walker's. For example, he greatly admired the draw-

ing ability of such illustrators as Frederick Remington and Charles Dana Gibson.[6] In point of fact, although he did relinquish his early aspirations to become a *salon* painter, Norris continued to work as an draughtsman and illustrator, producing drawings well into, if not throughout, his adult life.

Most of these drawings and illustrations were, it seems, destroyed in the great San Francisco fire. Fortunately, however, like the draughtsman who grew older in "An Art Student," Norris "made his art pay" by drawing pen-and-ink illustrations for newspapers as well as magazines and his university yearbook. Largely as a consequence of such publications, reproductions of a number of Norris's pen-and-ink drawings are available for scrutiny.

All the examples under discussion are in pen and ink, and they fall into three categories, differing in subject matter, method, and purpose: (1) anatomical drawings from live models in the academic tradition; (2) illustrations for fiction published in the University of California's yearbook, *The Blue and Gold*, and in the *Overland Monthly*; and (3) illustrations of newspaper articles appearing in the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

In the 1933 article "Romanticist Under the Skin,"[7] the *salon* painter, muralist, and art illustrator Ernest Peixotto emphasized the fact that Norris's "particular interest seemed to center in the study of animals." The impression that this type of drawing made upon Peixotto clearly dominated his initial recollections of Norris's early art work as evidenced in the first three sentences of his letter to Charles dated 28 June 1930: "I first knew Frank Norris at the school of the S.F. Art Association, where he was studying drawing & painting as I was. He was very fond of drawing animals—dogs & horses in particular & I remember—going with him many times to the Presidio, where we drew horses in the cavalry barracks: studies of legs, rumps, hoofs, heads. I had a number of these drawings at one time, particularly of dogs' heads."[7]

Figure 1

In Peixotto's estimation, "the drawing of a dog's head" reproduced in his article (Figure 1), "shows that [Norris] had already mastered a fairly good pen and ink technique and knew his animals well." This profile of the head and upper body selected by Peixotto represents a simple type of pen and ink drawing made from a live model, rather than from imagination. The contour line is not continuous. Instead, broken contour lines have been sketched out in a series of discontinuous movements which reflect the sequential observations that Norris made as he worked with his model. Also, in the work in question, the initial lines of Norris's preliminary sketch are still visible, indicating how Norris corrected a mistake in judgment in the top of the nose and the underside of the muzzle; the correct line has been given emphasis by its greater weight. Good technique is evident in two areas: the contour line at the bottom of the ear is left open to indicate lighting, and patches of white remain in the areas of dark value on the head and ear to establish an illusion of texture. Norris knew what he was doing, in short.

Figure 2

Figure 2, the "drawing of his dog Monk," was reproduced in Charles Norris's 1914 promotional tract, *Frank Norris: 1870-1902* ([Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Page & Co.]). It reveals considerably more technical sophistication than Figure 1 and appears more formally and pictorially complete. The prominent position of the bold signature upon the page functions in two ways: it indicates that the work may be viewed as an independent, finished drawing; and, within the "independent form," the placement of the signature gives balance to the drawing as a whole. The cast shadow extending from Monk's right leg to the underside of his belly distinguishes this work from the dog's head in that it effectively obliterates the two-dimensionality of the physical medium on which Norris drew, effecting the illusion of depth. As in Figure 1, the silhouette of the object pictured forms the boundary of Norris's inquiry: both subjects are handled as object-entities confirming Peixotto's assertion that Norris had developed "fairly good pen-and-ink technique."

In stark contrast to Peixotto's favorable assessment of

Norris's evident talent, an article published in The University of California's *Chronicle* by "a very dear college friend," Harry M. Wright, offered the following critique: "Quite frequently [Norris] used to illustrate his own earlier stories; the *Blue and Gold* of the different years of his college life and later the *Overland Monthly* show some of his work. It was not very good; his figures were apt to be wooden and the whole effect rather amateurish."[9] Wright's tone here, differing dramatically from Peixotto's, is heard in most subsequent commentaries on Norris-as-visual-artist. Wright is justified, however, given the illustrations he saw. Unfortunately, he was remembering only the works in which Norris's drawing ability was obfuscated—due to a poor choice of methodology when composing them.

That is, Norris's most successful, academic works were drawn from life and were representations of single figures, object-entities, executed without attention to the environments in which they stood (or sat in the case of Figure 2). Norris apparently had much experience with and excelled in this type of drawing, and—given Peixotto's testimony—he appears to have created numerous works of this kind.

On the other hand, many of his other works which do survive reveal him employing a different approach that did not work so well for him. Charles spoke of his brother's notebooks and of academic drawings which Norris took with him to the University of California; and, as an illustrator, it is clear that Norris utilized them, rather than live models, as a source of figurative drawings. Here is where he made a mistake similar to the one literary realists of the time discovered in romantic fiction that failed to pass the test of being true-to-life. One finds repeatedly that Norris faltered when he made the same mistake of not drawing from life: in the illustrations that Wright evaluated, Norris *assembled* pictures from other pictures—or, as Howells put it, attempted to reproduce prefabricated "grasshoppers" rather than real ones. By using tracing paper, he all-too-obviously "lifted" a figure from his notebook and placed it in combination with another or others.

The quality of the images fabricated thus, especially their anatomical correctness, depended largely upon the extent to which Norris relied upon his imagination (rather than a three-dimensional, real-world model) to modify them appropriately once they had been transferred. And where he really ran into trouble was in situations in which he combined various figures or objects, attempting to place multiple, separately generated object-entities in a harmonious spatial relationship, within a single perspective and in the same style.

In Figures 3-5 we can easily see how this compositional technique was employed. Figure 3 is an illustration in the *Blue and Gold* for "Two Pair," a one-act farce written by Norris that was performed by Berkeley's Junior Class on 18 December 1892.[10] Note how the female silhouette is not placed on the picture plane in an upright manner, but is tilted slightly toward her male partner in order to create the illusion of a relationship between the two figures. One is hardly convinced by this crude expedient that either figure occupies space in reality as we are used to seeing it.

Although a certain proficiency in the execution of the male figure's head, facial features, and upper torso indicates correspondence to a model, faulty drawing becomes evident in areas where Norris used his imagination to effect modifications: (1) "wooden," kneeless, straight legs (whose only connection to the figure seems to be the bottom of the overcoat); (2) boots drawn from the wrong point of view (so that the figure appears to stand on the tips of his toes); (3) a right hand which is impossibly contorted to accommodate a hat; and (4) a cane, drawn *through* the thumb and fore-finger of a relaxed left hand which was not modified to grasp the object or acknowledge its weight.

In Figure 4, from "Outward and Visible Signs: II," *Overland Monthly*, 23 (May 1894) 502-06, Norris "lifts" the drawing of the dog named Monk (Figure 2) and places it in a second composition with Norris's self-portrait (linked by a poorly drawn leash) and a female figure that rests upon a different picture plane. Chaos.

Figure 5 is captioned thus: "IT WOULD PAUSE, SIT BACK UPON ITS HEELS, OBSERVE THEM LONG AND UNWINKINGLY." It appeared in "Lauth," *Overland Monthly*, 21 (March 1893), 241-60; and Lauth—the naked figure on the far left—epitomizes the error that can result from transposing a figure drawn from one perspective onto a background drawn from another perspective at another time. Instead of resting on the ground, his lower right leg, from the knee down, appears to pass vertically through the plane of the floor.

In 1895, Norris traveled to South Africa. Without, of course, sketchbooks from which to derive images suitable for what he saw there, and deciding not to draw from nature, he resorts to a similar "solution" to the problem of quickly generating passable drawings that many famous artists and illustrators of his day relied upon: the camera. The stringent standards of accuracy and simplicity in place for non-fictional illustrations appearing in newspapers such as the *San Francisco Chronicle* prompted Norris to bypass the time-consuming process of drawing from life by copying directly from photographs.

Figure 3

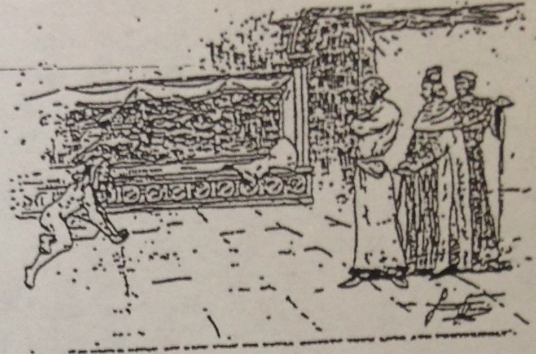
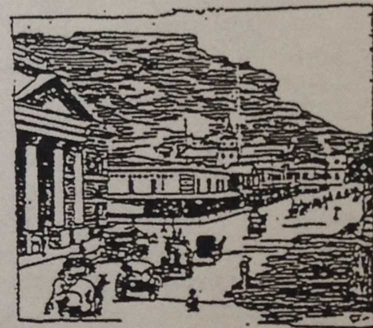


Figure 5

Figure 4



ADDERLEY STREET, CAPE TOWN, LOOKING SOUTH.

Figure 6

A JOHANNESBURG BULLOCK WAGON—FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.

Figure 7

Figures 6 and 7 are exemplary of such illustrations.[11]

These transcriptions are non-artistic drawings: they neither possess—and, to be fair, Norris did not expect them to display—the subjective qualities of individual expression, the artist's interpretation, which gives truly creative works of art their distinctive character and value. And they document an important development in Norris's self-conception: they indicate clearly Norris's loss of interest in pursuing a career in the realm of visual arts and his turn to the written word as his medium. While "A Salvation Boom in Matabeleland"[12] was written during or shortly after his sojourn in South Africa, and while its broad comedy invites the presentation of at least cartoon figures, he made no attempt to illustrate it or many other *Wave* short stories of the same kind—so far as can be determined. In fact, although Norris continued to draw, perhaps up until the time of his death seven and one-half years later, he ceased all attempts to combine the visual and verbal arts after his South African adventure.

To summarize, Norris, despite the predominantly negative image of him as a visual artist and the notion that art study was for him an excuse for larking, did demonstrate the fact that he was a serious art student and a capable draughtsman when working in a manner consistent with the academic tradition in which he was schooled. His pen-and-ink drawings of live models make clear his talent and his accomplishments when working with individual object-entities. Departure from this method, signalling his declining interest during the Berkeley years, caused the quality of his work to decline to the point that he was drawing from or merely tracing photographs in South Africa. What merits emphasis, though, is that Norris had the ability to be, and was trained to become, an empirical artist, one who draws what he *sees* as opposed to one who draws what he *does not see*. Although the written word came to dominate his creative activities, what he had learned about the methodology and theory of academic art were not discarded: his experience with the San Francisco Art Association, at the Presidio, and in Paris had their long-term effects. They contributed much to his development as a writer who rarely displayed weaknesses when picturing object-entities, arranging them in a true perspective, achieving three-dimensional "depth of field," and investing his characters and their environments with vitality.

NOTES

[1]17 (March 1907), 313-22; reprinted in Joseph R. McElrath, Jr., "Frank Norris: Early Posthumous Responses," *American Literary Realism*, 12 (Spring 1978), 61-69.

[2]1; reprinted in McElrath, 2.

[3]Franklin Walker, *Frank Norris: A Biography* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1932), p. 35. Much of the information presented above was, of course, derived from this biography.

[4]Walker, p. 41.

[5]"Western Types: An Art Student," *The Wave*, 15 (16 July 1892), 3-4.

[6]When reviewing Remington's drawings for a calendar, Norris wrote: "There is only one Remington—Frederick the Great—as one elects to call him, and there never will be another. . . . [One] is tempted to place him above Gibson, though comparisons between the men are impossible" ("Holiday Literature," *The Wave*, 16 [11 December 1897], 8).

[7]*Saturday Review of Literature*, 9 (22 May 1933), 613.

[8]The Frank Norris Collection, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

[9]"In Memoriam—Frank Norris," *University of California Chronicle*, 5 (October 1902), 240-45; reprinted in McElrath, 13-16.

[10](San Francisco: H.S. Crocker Co., 1893), pp. 183-92.

[11]Figure 6: "A Californian in the City of Cape Town," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 19 January 1896, 19 (caption: "ADDERSLEY STREET, CAPE TOWN, LOOKING SOUTH"); Figure 7: "In the Veldt of the Transvaal," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 9 February 1896, 17 (caption: "A JOHANNESBURG BULLOCK WAGON—FROM A PHOTOGRAPH").

[12]*The Wave*, 15 (25 April 1896), 5.

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