

# Frank Norris Studies

Edited by Joseph R. McElrath, Jr.

©1996, The Frank Norris Society

## Frank Norris's *The Pit*: "A Romance of Chicago" and "A Story of Chicago"

Gwendolyn Jones

Thomas College

*The Pit* was serialized in the *Saturday Evening Post* from 20 September 1902 through 31 January 1903, concluding at approximately the same time that it was formally published by Doubleday, Page & Co. The book proved the best seller of his career, but Frank Norris did not see either version of the novel in its complete printed form. He died on 25 October 1902, when the serial's sixth installment appeared and while the book was yet in production. The remaining 14 parts of the serial as well as the first American printing, then, were posthumous publications; and there is no record of how Norris felt about the ways his editors were handling the serial, the setting-copy for the book, or the Doubleday proof which was possibly available by late summer. (Norris had submitted copy to Doubleday as early as June 1902 and copies of *The Pit* were bound before 20 November 1902; i.e., the *Post* may have set type from a modified form of the Doubleday proof.)<sup>1</sup> Further complicating the question of how well Norris's intentions were respected is the extraordinary number of variants between the serial and book versions. In the serial, one finds that numerous large sections in the book were either condensed or eliminated entirely. A yet more perplexing development will be noted if one assumes a conventional pattern of textual transmission in which a *Post* editor, concerned about space limitations, chopped down on his or her own a holograph, a typescript, or Doubleday proof for setting-copy. For, the *Post* version complicates the scenario by including significant passages that do not appear in the book, and literally could not have appeared, since they resulted in major alterations of both characterization and theme. Indeed, a consequence of such deliberately fashioned variants is that one cannot, finally, continue terming the two publications "versions" of the same thing or attribute their discrete identities to mere editorial interference.

The *Post* serialization subtitled "A Romance of Chicago" proves itself an integral work with its own separate identity as its variations consistently effect a romance radically different from the novel subtitled *A Story of Chicago*. One thus hazards an inference concerning Norris's compositional activities when he was making arrangements concerning the two publications: Norris appears to have fashioned a "serious," naturalistic novel for Doubleday, as the second volume of his "Epic of the Wheat" trilogy; he also produced in revised typescript and/or proof a more conventional tale for serialization in a popular magazine typically featuring lighter fare. Both were undoubtedly altered by their respective editors. But the nature of the excisions and revisions in the *Post* require, at the least, reconsideration of Donald Pizer's conclusion that there "seems little doubt . . . that the published book represents [Norris's] text and that the *Post* version was heavily cut by the magazine's editors in order to shorten the novel."<sup>2</sup> The evidence instead suggests that, as was the case with "Miracle Joyeux" in 1898, Norris on his own and working in collaboration with an editor was responsible for the conventionalization of a work that might very well disturb genteel readers.

In both works the major constant is the centrality of the heroine, Laura Dearborn who becomes Mrs. Curtis Jadwin. Norris, it turned out, remained true to the plan he announced in 1901 to his St. Louis journalist friend, Issac F. Marcossou: "the story is told through Laura Dearborn. She occupies the center of the stage all the time, and I shall try to interest the reader more in the problems of her character than in any other human element in the book."<sup>3</sup> At this time, most likely, Norris already had in mind the "split personality" problem that looms so large in the book text. There Laura wildly vacillates between the desire to be a good housewife figure and a compelling urge to play the romantic heroine in the manner of Shakespeare's Juliet, Gounod's Marguerite, or Schiller's Mary Stuart. When Laura is not deliberately conforming to John Ruskin's model for Ruth-like, ideal Victorian womanhood, she positively lusts for high passion in the manner of Flaubert's Emma Bovary, and she seeks ecstasy in love as a sister to Chopin's heroine in *The*

*Awakening*. Laura, in short, is a frustrated actress who has a repertoire of personas adopted from her favorite novels, poems, plays, and operas. In virtually every one of the numerous crises through which she passes, this would-be tragedienne embraces as her identity a "role" she has learned from the realm of aesthetic experience to which she is devoted. Manic confusion is not uncommon in that she plays vulnerable Juliet as fully as she embraces the aggressively dominating behaviors of Bizet's *Carmen* and Racine's *Phèdra*. Indeed, she is frequently the embodiment of a staple of grand Romantic art, the individual seized by the madness that makes possible the emotion-suffused lyricism of a Lucia de Lammermoor or a Franz Liszt whose music affects Laura in the way Frédéric Chopin's does Kate Chopin's Edna Pontellier. Put simply, the book text offers the reader full immersion in the experience of a classical neurotic and the detailed observation of a naturalistically-imagined individual who, while striving to control her life, is being controlled by the consequences of environmental determinants and her own immaturity.

The Laura of the *Post* is similar—but merely similar. She too is clearly influenced by Romantic role-models and is sometimes emotionally overwrought. This Laura, though, is a more wholesome, level-headed Gibson Girl who, with much less difficulty, stands as a more acceptable version of the good "housewife." The Laura of the book was largely "healed" by Norris for the *Post*. Viewed another way, this Laura becomes an obsessively egocentric individual as she moves from the environs of the *Post* to the more complicated ethos of *Doubleday, Page & Co.*

In the first chapter of the book and first installment of the serialization, the major difference between the two Lauras is dramatically manifest. We first meet Laura as she is about to attend an opera in Chicago. It is the young woman's first experience of this kind, and she is emotionally overcome by the splendor of it all—the scenery, costumes, and fantastic lovers on the stage. In the book, Laura, with tears pouring down her cheeks, is inspired to a grand fantasy about herself and the three new men in her life—Curtis Jadwin, Sheldon Corthell, and Landry Court:

All this excitement, this world of perfume, of flowers, of exquisite costumes, of beautiful women, of fine, brave men. . . . How easy it was to be good and noble when music such as this had become part of one's life. . . . Nobility, purity, courage, sacrifice seemed much more worth while now than a few moments ago. All things not positively unworthy became heroic, all things and all men. Landry Court was a young chevalier, pure as Galahad. Corthell was a beautiful artist-priest of the early Renaissance. Even Jadwin

was a merchant prince, a great financial captain. (20-21)

At this point her vision assumes a peculiar, even bizarre, necrophilic quality, perhaps suggesting the influence of Poe or Gabriele D'Annunzio:

And she herself—ah, she did not know; she dreamed of another Laura, a better, gentler, more beautiful Laura, whom everybody, everybody loved dearly and tenderly . . . and who should die beautifully, gently, in some garden far away—die because of a great love—beautifully, gently in the midst of flowers, die of a broken heart, and all the world should be sorry for her, and would weep over her when they found her dead and beautiful in her garden, amid the flowers and the birds, in some far-off place, where it was always early morning and where there was soft music. And she was so sorry for herself, and so hurt with the sheer strength of her longing to be good and true, and noble and womanly, that . . . the tears ran down her cheeks again and again, and dropped upon her tight-shut, white-gloved fingers. (21)

In the truncated *Post* text, she merely feels "cradled and lulled" by the opera and finds herself wanting to "drift off into the past. . . through rose-colored mists and diaphanous veils." She is not carried away to a vision of her own "noble" death in an "idyllic" world. Also not in the serial is the Laura who craves to be "loved by everybody," as a *châtelaine* in a courtly love tale. That is, excised in the *Post* is the first manifestation of her persistent need for an all-consuming love that, later, will create and exacerbate problems in her marriage with Curtis Jadwin. When these problems surface in the serial, they will instead be mainly the fault of Curtis rather than equally rooted in Laura's impossibly high expectations of love experience.

Readers of the book soon come to understand, in chapter 2, that her bizarre behavior has a great deal to do with her youth in a small, New England town, where the Puritan spirit prevailed and repression accounts for Laura's adolescent fantasies. The *Post*, however, does not include such information about life in Barrington, Massachusetts, where "literature become for her an actual passion" (42). Ignoring "almost completely" novelists of the day and thus a means of imaging love experiences in a more realistic way, she consumed purveyors of grand passion such as Racine and Shakespeare, as well as "high culture" Victorian poets such as Tennyson and the idealistic essayists of New England, all of whom had a hand in shaping her romantic view of life.

The *Post* also omits the especially telling reason for her

*The best selling book in the United States*

# THE The Epic of the Wheat PIT

*The Story of a Woman's Love and its Entanglement with a Great Speculation*

**By Frank Norris**

**BOSTON:**

"It is all so strong and vital, so filled with varied interests, so absorbing and compelling, that it is one of the year's books which one cannot afford to miss."—*Herald*.

**NEW YORK:**

"It is the skilled work of the mature artist rising at last to fine and triumphant achievement that brings the reader to his feet and leaves him in the realization that a big book—a bit of real literature—is in his hands."—*The Bookman*.

**PHILADELPHIA:**

"It is a rapidly moving story, and the dramatic episodes are handled with that rare power which comes from genius. 'The Pit' is certainly a great American novel."—*Press*.

**CHICAGO:**

"It came nearer to setting forth the atmosphere of Chicago . . . than anything any other man has written. . . . It shows he was a genius."—*Inter-Ocean*.

**SACRAMENTO:**

"It has a most delightful and tenderly told love story, weaving in and out as a golden thread amid its incidents of bustle and trade, financial triumphs and bankruptcy."—*Bee*.

*Books by* **FRANK NORRIS**

**THE PIT \$1.50      The Octopus \$1.50**

Just Published.

A tale of the California wheat ranches.

*"The Epic of the Wheat."*

**McTEAGUE \$1.50**

A story of San Francisco

**BLIX \$1.25**

A literary man's love story.

**A MAN'S WOMAN \$1.50**

A novel turning upon the search for the North Pole.

**MORAN OF THE LADY LETTY \$1.00**

A sea tale of adventure.

**Doubleday, Page & Company, 84 Union Square, East, New York**

leaving Barrington. Therein we are led to believe that she came to Chicago upon the insistence of her relatives, her sister Page and Aunt Wess', and her friends the Cresslers. While they did plead with her to come, her motives are not that simple in the book, where we learn that the already quite histrionic Laura, who "chose to see herself . . . playing the roles of Shakespeare's heroines," felt compelled to flee from her community because of her affinity for the "immoral" stage:

The crisis came when Laura travelled alone to Boston to hear Modjeska in "Marie Stuart" and "Macbeth" and upon returning full of enthusiasm, allowed it to be understood that she had a half-formed desire of emulating such an example. A group of lady-deaconesses, headed by the Presbyterian minister, called upon her, with some intention of reasoning and labouring with her.

They got no further than the statement of the cause of this visit. The spirit and temper of the South, that she had from her mother, flamed up in Laura at last, and the members of the "committee," before they were well aware, came to themselves in the street outside the front gate, dazed and bewildered . . . stunned by the violence of an outbreak of long-repressed emotion. . . .

At the same moment Laura, thrown across her bed, wept with a vehemence that shook her from head to foot. But she had not the least compunction for what she had said, and before the month was out had said good-by to Barrington forever, and was on her way to Chicago, henceforth to be her home. (44-45)

Here a Thespian on the stage of real life, Laura reveals herself a woman who is not only searching for a profession but an identity impossible in prosaic Barrington. She is also a truculent child, controlled by powerful emotions. These same desires and frustrations, seen in the Barrington setting, inform her manic response to the opera in Chicago when she was vicariously identifying with both the heroine of Gounod's *Faust* and the *prima donna* who played her. None of this, of course, is apparent in the serialization.

In the book, Laura's neurotic tendencies become more pronounced as she faces each new obstacle or traumatic event in her life. In a passage not duplicated in the *Post*, her aberrant proclivities become increasingly noticeable after Jadwin bullies her into a premature engagement. The narrator in the book tells us: "During this time Laura was never more puzzling. Her vivacity seemed suddenly to have been trebled, but it was invaded frequently by strange reactions and perversities that drove her friends and family to distraction" (165). One of these "strange reactions"—also absent from the serialization—is

triggered by her fiancé's impending arrival at Laura's house for a simple dinner. For several pages of the novel, Laura is repeatedly collapsing under the stress of being engaged to a man she does not love. Several hours before Jadwin's arrival, she is "moved by an unreasoning caprice, . . . [preparing] an elaborate toilet. Not since the opera night has she given so much attention to her appearance" (171). She will be a *grande dame*, wearing a black, "décolleté" gown with "sleeves of lace," and she decides to don "all her rings"; further, she "secured the roses in place with an amethyst brooch, caught up the little locks at the back of her head with a heart-shaped pin of tiny diamonds, and even fastened the ribbon of satin that girdled her waist, with a clasp of flawed turquoises" (171). At this point, Laura is in the "gayest spirits," but depression follows mania. Her "humour changed again, and again, for no discoverable reason" (171). Laura becomes "moody," begins to speak in "monosyllables," and then declares to Page that she will not come down to dinner with Jadwin: "Tell him I'm gone to bed sick—which is the truth, I am going to bed, my head is splitting" (171-72). Then she initiates an argument with Page and accuses her sister of not loving her. Laura's mood changes again, and the tiff ends with her apology for being "excited and nervous."

Although Laura claims to be suffering from neuralgia, she suddenly appears after dinner as the coffee is being served—in an outfit that once more marks her penchant for extreme mood swings:

All her finery was laid off. She wore the simplest, the most veritably monastic, of her dresses, plain to the point of severity. Her hands were bare of rings. Not a single jewel, not even the most modest ornament relieved her sober appearance. She was very quiet, spoke in a low voice, and declared she had come down only to drink a glass of mineral water and then to return at once to her room. (174)

In the *Post*, there is no mention of Laura's polar moods, elaborate costume changes, or regimen appropriate for a neurasthenic; instead, there is only one line stating that Jadwin came to dinner at her house. To become married to a man she does not yet love is not so insuperable a problem in the *Post*.

After her marriage to Jadwin, Laura's mental condition deteriorates in a yet more dramatic fashion. In both works, Laura quixotically makes an about-face immediately following the wedding ceremony, delivering with all sincerity an astounding proclamation to an ecstatic Jadwin who has heretofore received *no* affection from her: she announces that she has loved him all along, whereupon she becomes love-struck Juliet or Marguerite and remains that way—for three years.

Eventually, however, Jadwin tires of playing the part of her intoxicated swain. After three years of marriage, Laura remains the ecstatic lover, but he does not. He begins to seek new titillations in the Chicago wheat pit.

Soon addicted to speculation, Jadwin's increasing neglect of his insatiably attention-hungry wife is made fully apparent in both works; but, in the book Jadwin is not so brutish as in the *Post*. In the book, he occasionally surprises her with presents and small keepsakes. Because such shows of affection are missing from the *Post* serial, its readership is markedly more critical of the recharacterized Jadwin. The *Post*, consequently, maintains its more positive portrait of Laura, and this remains the case in subsequent scenes featuring Mrs. Jadwin and her would-be seducer, Sheldon Corthell.

Shortly after Jadwin begins to abuse his wife, Corthell arrives in Chicago after an extended trip to Europe. The seduction attempts begin immediately. Many details in the book's scenes in which Corthell tries to have his way with Laura are omitted from the *Post*. So, too, are Laura's apparently encouraging responses to him. The Laura of the book, who is starving for romantic love experiences and who finds an attentive audience in Corthell, deliberately plays the role of the pitiable, unhappy wife. Evoking Corthell's sympathies, Laura brings forth "all her histrionic power at fullest stretch, acting the part of a woman unhappy amid luxuries, who looked back with regret . . ." (294). Corthell is thus encouraged by a pathetic coquette to continue playing the Lothario, despite his palpable failures at precipitating an adulterous liaison. If, on the other hand, Laura is not wholly conscious of her effect upon this susceptible male, Norris has provided yet more indications of the degree to which the neurotic heroine has loosened her hold on reality.

In both works, Laura's self-absorption is a problem to be brought under control. In varying degrees in the two works, then, Laura is not the ideal type of woman Norris had developed in full in an earlier novel, *Blix* (1899). Unlike Travis Bessemer with her beau, Condry Rivers, Laura does not devote herself to understanding and helping Jadwin with the addiction that drives him to wheat speculation at the Chicago Board of Trade. She thinks instead of her own predicament and the means of solving her problem only. Having unwittingly seduced him once, she now consciously attempts the same, deciding that she must project a more titillating presence that will draw him back to her side. On one of the rare evenings she has alone with Jadwin, Laura suddenly appears dressed as playwright Victorien Sardou's Queen Théodora. In the *Post*, we see a woman in this one costume, and the "show" ends there. In the book, however, Laura manically loses control of herself, and the show goes on. She continues the seduction,

dressing as more wildly eccentric characters and giving performances that only serve to confuse her husband, who does not know how to react to her manic behavior. In the passage omitted from the *Post*, Laura leaves the room and re-enters in the guise of Racine's murderous Old Testament queen, Athalia:

"This is Athalia—the queen in the Old Testament, you remember."

"Hold on," he protested. "I thought you were this Theodora person."

"I know—but never mind. I am anything I choose. Sit down; listen. It's from Racine's 'Athalia,' . . . It's French, but I'll make you see." (310)

She then recites a hair-raising, violence-suffused declamation from the play. Jadwin is frightened, even without understanding the French:

"Well, well," murmured her husband, shaking his head, bewildered even yet. "Well, it's a strange wife I've got here."

"When you've realised that," returned Laura, "you've just begun to understand me."

Never had he seen her gayer. Her vivacity was bewildering.

"I wish," she cried, all at once, "I wish I had dressed as 'Carmen,' and I would have danced for you." (311)

In fact, she does, soon returning costumed as Bizet's whore with a heart of ice to dance before Jadwin the way Carmen did to seduce Don José: "Her yellow skirt was a flash of flame spurting from the floor, and her whole body seemed to move with the same wild, untamed spirit as a tongue of fire." In the *Post* Laura seems to be a slightly insecure young wife who would like to catch her husband's attention with one splendid costume; in the book, it is wholly another matter as she frantically changes "masks" in hopes of finding the right role to please her husband. In both works, she fails; but in the book the failure is that of a near-lunatic.

In the book alone, Laura's unstable nature soon grows so pronounced that it becomes apparent to all who know her, and her mood as well as her identity shifts from one day to the next. The consequences verge upon madness as Laura turns inward in the face of her more recent frustration. In a passage omitted from the *Post*, Laura's neurosis becomes heightened as she frantically searches for the right persona:

For a few days a veritable seizure of religious enthusiasm held sway over her. She spoke of endowing a hospital, of doing church work among the "slums" of the city. But no sooner had her friends readjusted their points of view to suit this new

development than she was off upon another tangent, and was one afternoon seen at the races . . . in her showiest victoria, wearing a great flaring hat and a bouquet of crimson flowers. (292)

Alone in her mansion, she then turns to Shakespeare as the means of acting out her agony, "as a new fad took possession of her the very next day":

She memorized the rôle of Lady Macbeth, built a stage in the ballroom at the top of the house, and, locking herself in, rehearsed the part, for three days uninterrupted, dressed in elaborate costume, declaiming in chest tones to the empty room:

"The raven himself is hoarse that croaks the entrance of Duncan under my battlement."

Then, tiring of Lady Macbeth, she took up Juliet, Portia, and Ophelia; each with appropriate costumes, studying with tireless avidity, and frightening Aunt Wess' with her declaration that "she might go on stage after all." She even entertained the notion of having Sheldon Corthell paint her portrait as Lady Macbeth. (292)

Her self-pity spent in this manner, Laura again becomes aggressive, demanding that Jadwin give her one evening, that of her birthday—at which point sister Page reenters the story in a significant manner.

Page is Norris's means in the book of identifying Laura's flaw of extreme self-absorption: articulating the value system established by Norris's *Blix*, she judges her sister as an egotist suffering the consequences of her selfishness:

". . . and I can tell you this, Laura Jadwin, if you did care a little more about [speculating in] wheat—about your husband's business—if you had taken more of an interest in his work, if you had tried to enter more into his life, and be a help to him. . . . Just think; he might be fighting the battle of his life down there in La Salle Street, and you don't know anything about it—no, nor want to know. . . ."

"What business—" began Laura; but Page was not to be interrupted. "And if he did leave me alone sometimes. . . do you think I would draw a long face, and think only of my own troubles. . . . If my husband had a battle to fight, do you think I'd mope and pine because he left me at home; no I wouldn't. I'd help him buckle his sword on, and when he came back to me I wouldn't tell him how lonesome I'd been, but I'd take care of him and cry over his wounds. . . ."

Laura's first sensation was one of anger only. As always, her younger sister had presumed again to

judge her, . . . to annoy her. She gazed an instant at the closed door, then rose and put her chin in the air. She was right, and Page, her husband, everybody, were wrong. (399-400)

In the book, proud Laura does not show to advantage.

Meanwhile, in the *Post*, where Page does *not* confront her for disregarding her husband's problems, Laura is concerned for Jadwin's welfare in essentially the way that Page would be were she married to him. In the serial, Laura is instead a devoted wife who becomes quite concerned about her husband's well-being. There, without prompting from Page, she decides to call Curtis. Not having heard from him on her birthday, she is the embodiment of wifely concern in this passage added by Norris:

. . . Laura paced the floor for another quarter of an hour. Then, going into her husband's apartments, she rang up the office of Gretry, Converse & Co. Twice the central station responded that the "line was busy," but on the third attempt Laura succeeded in getting the connection.

"Is Mr. Jadwin there?"

"He can't see no one," came the reply in the thin tones of an office-boy. "He can't see no one this afternoon."

"Tell him Mrs. Jadwin—his wife—wants to speak with him."

There was a long wait; then the same voice . . . replied:

"He can't see no one this afternoon, ma'am."

"Did you say Mrs. Jadwin wanted to speak to him?"

"What—hey? . . . Hello! He can't see no one this afternoon. Yes'm. I told him."

"Is he there? Is he in the office there? I want to know how he is."

"No, he ain't here. He's out."

In despair Laura turned away and went back to her own room again, throwing herself down upon the couch, her chin supported on her palm.

Once more, then, Jadwin is the greater brute in the *Post*, and Laura is the greater victim. He was there in the office, as the office-boy's slip made clear.

A final noteworthy difference between the two Lauras concerns the variant relationships with the would-be adulterer, Sheldon Corthell. In the *Post*, Laura positively responds to Corthell's advances in an overt manner only after her husband has refused to take her phone call on the day that he is defeated by his enemies at the Board of Trade, and thus the uniformly more rational and comparatively less self-centered

heroine appears justified to a greater degree for her momentary dalliance. In both works, Laura, impatiently awaiting Jadwin's arrival and what she thinks will be her final triumph over his affections, is visited instead by Corthell. She is stunned to discover that it is he, and not Jadwin, who *has* remembered her special day and has brought her a bouquet of violets. In the *Post*, however, the ensuing love-making scene is not only truncated but dramatically revised. To Corthell's avowal of constant love, Laura laments the fact that he did not pursue her more ardently when she was single: "Why did you not make me love you then?" Then, after agonizing silently, sobbing so that her words are almost incoherent, she declares, "It is too late!" She then becomes disoriented as Corthell and she note the sounds of her husband's carriage arriving; when Corthell refers to her "husband," she turns on him for making her remember the cause of her grief, declaring that she hates Corthell for doing so. When Corthell bends down to give her a quick good-by kiss, he invites her to elope with him the following evening, and she still seems disoriented when she agrees to be ready—disoriented enough that the reader of the *Post* will later be able to interpret the moment as one in which Laura did not really intend to run away with him. This is essential, given the more positive character assigned to Laura in the serial.

In the book, much of the same dialogue is included but it appears amidst much more impassioned conversation between the two, and some of the important details are radically different. For example, Laura is considerably more over-wrought in this lengthier book scene, and in a pique she even questions the artiste's virility: "Oh, why weren't you a man, strong enough to know a woman's weakness?" (408). "Quickly he bent and kissed her"—the reading in the *Post*—is not quite what is seen in the book when he displays his passion in a more manly way, *i. e.*, in a veritable assault. "You love me! I tell you, you love me!" he cried, passionately, and before she was aware of it she was in his arms, his lips were against her lips, were on her shoulders, her neck" (409). After pleading again that he should make her love him, this Laura gives a clear indication that he is making progress in this regard. "Please, please," she entreated, breathlessly. Then, taking the leap: "Ah, I love you, I love you!" Next, after threatening to kill Corthell if he does not make her forget the cruel past, the book's Laura suddenly offers an insightful self-diagnosis which does not so exactly apply to the *Post's* Laura: "I don't know what I am saying. I am mad, I think. Yes—I—it must be that." She pulled back from him, looking into his face with wide-opened eyes" (409). But again she lapses, whispering as she clings to his arm, "love me always, always, with all your heart and soul and strength" (410).

In both works, Jadwin arrives home in a timely manner. Worn down by their respective crises, they find solace in each other, and Laura does not run off with Corthell the next evening. Now a financially ruined man, Jadwin will have plenty of time to give her attention, and he at last wants to do so as much as she wants him to be with her. Thus, the marital problem is solved, and both works end happily—but with another difference. In the closing scene of the serialization, Jadwin alone assumes the onus for what has come to pass. The long-since convicted brute of the *Post* has been brought to heel, now keenly aware of his abusive neglect. Laura only vaguely acknowledges that she *may* have committed a peccadillo. As he is apologizing, she interrupts him, indicating that she is much less worthy of blame than her sister in the book:

"We were never to speak of those days again, never. They belong to the past. We were both different then. How do you know?—maybe I, too, 'lost my head.' But never mind all that now," she added hastily.

The reader may conclude that she is, in fact, shading the truth in a way that the Laura of the book does not. But, in the *Post*, the conclusion is altered in such a way that one is encouraged to infer that Laura told Corthell she would run away with him only to get him out of the mansion before Jadwin entered the front door.

In the book, Laura's admission of a possible, mild mistake in judgment on her part would appear ludicrous, but in the serial it does not. In the book, the happy ending is hard won, requiring not only Jadwin's repentance for treating Laura the way he has but Laura's full disclosure of what transpired in her frenzied love-scene with Corthell. When Jadwin, still recuperating from his mental breakdown at the Board of Trade, asks in the book whatever became of Corthell, Laura reminds him that he went way, adding "You remember—I told you—I told you all about it" (417). When Jadwin, looking squarely into her eyes, tells her then that understands why she behaved the way she did, this couple enjoys a triumph of *mature* love not seen in the serial where adulterous possibilities are minimized. In the *Post*, Corthell receives a final reference in a markedly different way:

"[Corthell]—came to call the day after your—your failure—and several times since."

"Why, what a lot of people came to ask how I did!" exclaimed Jadwin. "There are a lot of decent people in this world, Laura. I don't deserve to have such good friends. Corthell, too, hey? Who would have thought that, now? Sorry I didn't see him before he went away. What did he have to say?"

"When he called, you mean?" She shook her head. "I didn't see him. I think," she said quietly—"I think he is a little tiresome at times. Oh, there's the carriage."

The topic of conversation in the *Post* is then changed, and a chastened Jadwin makes the trip to the train station with his guilt-free wife, leaving Chicago for their new life together.

In the book, that is, Jadwin could refer their shared guilt: "we both have been living according to a wrong notion of things" (417). In the *Post*, Laura much less warrants inclusion in the "we."

The book makes it clear that Laura's "wrong notions" began in her obsession with a romantic ideal, what Norris and his realist contemporaries saw as a false view of life perpetuated by romantic art. Increasingly in the book, Laura is an unbalanced, egocentric woman who is savagely victimized by the ideology of romantic love. The Laura of the *Post* is a more commonsensical, well-adjusted woman who only had to wait for a sky of blue to follow stormy weather, as it frequently did in fiction suitable for the *Saturday Evening Post*. As readers of the Doubleday, Page & Co. *Pit* have long known, Frank Norris was a serious author given to insightful analyses of the perils of egotism and the dynamics of male-female relationships. But, as the work he published in the *Post* reminds us, he was a commercial artist as well, and compromises are sometimes necessary for one who chooses to live by the labor of words.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Here and elsewhere I am indebted to Joseph R. McElrath, Jr., for sharing his findings concerning the *Pit*'s textual-transmission history. For the publication specifics of the *Post* serialization, see his *Frank Norris: A Descriptive Bibliography* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1992), 245-46. Quotations of and references to the serial and book texts below are all keyed to the first American printing of the book, New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1903.

<sup>2</sup>*The Novels of Frank Norris* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1966), 166.

<sup>3</sup>*Frank Norris: Collected Letters*, ed. Jesse S. Crisler (San Francisco: Book Club of California, 1986), 173.

and the Brute: A Window on Naturalism"; and Jesse S. Crisler, "Frank Norris as Reviser: The Text of *McTeague*."

It will be of interest to Society members that the organizational meeting of a William Dean Howells Society will be held during the convention. The organizers are Jesse S. Crisler, Don L. Cook, Thomas Wortham, David Nordloh, Douglas Wilson, and Joe McElrath. Another to be formed during the convention has been announced by Ernestine Williams Pickens, a Charles W. Chesnutt Society.

The 1997 ALA sessions are now being planned. There will be one featuring three papers on various topics. The other will be a panel discussion of Norris's works published in *The Wave*, now available (hardcover and paperback) in *The Apprenticeship Writings of Frank Norris, 1896-1898*, ed. Joseph R. McElrath, Jr., and Douglas K. Burgess (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1996).

It is still not too late to participate in the Third Biennial Jack London Symposium, 2-5 October 1996, Santa Rosa, California. Those who would like to make presentations should contact Jeanne C. Reesman, Chair, Division of English, Classics & Philosophy, University of Texas at San Antonio, San Antonio TX 78249.

Clare Eby is now co-editing *Dreiser Studies*.

Lawrence Hussman has recently completed a Fulbright Teaching Fellowship in Poland. He is finishing his manuscript for *Harbingers of a Century: The Novels of Frank Norris*, which explores the concept that Norris's works anticipate many of the most significant developments in modernist and post-modernist literature.

Paul Sorrentino is enjoying a NEH University Teachers Fellowship. He is writing a biography of Stephen Crane.

Joel Myerson was recently interviewed by CBS, ABC, and a host of newspapers because of Daniel Shealy's and his transcription and editing of a previously unnoticed Louisa May Alcott novel. But the crowning glory was that no less prestigious a periodical than *People* magazine contacted him for information about the text sure to become the basis for a Hollywood blockbuster.

The new Oxford "World Classics" paperback of *McTeague* features an introduction by Jerome Loving who chastises a patrician Norris for displaying a condescending attitude toward his characters. *Plus ça change . . .*

\* \* \*

*Frank Norris Studies* is published twice per year for the Norris Society members whose dues are \$10.00, payable each November. Correspondence and manuscripts should be addressed to the Society at Department of English, Florida State University, Tallahassee FL 32306-1036. Manuscripts should be accompanied by a file in WordPerfect. Serving on the editorial board are Donald Pizer, Jesse S. Crisler, Robert C. Leitz, III, and Richard Allan Davison. E-mail should be addressed to mcelrath@garnet.acns.fsu.edu.

#### SOCIETY NEWS

At the American Literature Association convention, 30 May-2 June 1996, the session sponsored by the Norris Society will include presentations by Benjamin F. Fisher, IV, "Unrecorded Transatlantic Opinions of Norris"; Christine King, "Vandover