

Frank Norris Studies

Edited by Joseph R. McElrath, Jr.

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"Rediscovering" Frank Norris's "A Salvation Boom in Matabeleland"

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At first glance, the term "rediscovery" seems a clear oxymoron; after all, once something has been "discovered" it is known and can no longer be newly found. Yet in the case of Frank Norris's short story "A Salvation Boom in Matabeleland," the term is in fact paradoxical and quite appropriate. For many years it has been known that in 1899 this story was distributed by S.S. McClure's Associated Literary Press syndicate for publication in multiple American newspapers. First published in *The Wave* on 25 April 1896, it was included in a McClure publicity circular dated 12 November 1899 that Joseph Katz located at the Lilly Library of Indiana University and reproduced in his 1973 article, "The Shorter Publications of Frank Norris: A Checklist." The problem up to now, though, has been finding in which newspapers "Salvation Boom" was actually published. In preparation for the 1973 article, Katz and a number of research assistants, including now-noted Norris scholars Joseph R. McElrath, Jr., and Jesse S. Crisler, searched 14 newspapers and six magazines for this story, but could find no printings. Almost twenty years later the situation remained the same; in *Frank Norris: A Descriptive Bibliography* (1992) McElrath was able to include only its appearances in *The Wave*, *Collected Writings* (1928), and *The Works of Frank Norris* (1983-84).¹

The search for this story's newspaper appearances has finally yielded some results. Recently, during the course of researching a book on the history of newspaper syndicates in the United States, I was able to locate four printings of "A Salvation Boom in Matabeleland." Using material in the McClure Collection at the Lilly Library as a guide for where to look, I examined a number of newspapers known to be receiving McClure-syndicated materials at the time and found that the story was published by the *Boston Globe*, *Atlanta Constitution*, and the *New York Sun* (morning edition) on 12 November 1899; further, it appeared in the *Syracuse Evening Herald* on 10 December 1899. Such a list should in no way be considered

complete, however. McClure at this time was typically distributing individual works to 50 or more newspapers, and finding all the printings of "Salvation Boom" could take years. Thus a comment Katz made in 1973 is as valid today as it was then: "what they all were [newspapers publishing his work] for any of his pieces, nobody knows—and nobody is likely to know."²

Norris's relationship with S. S. McClure and his duties in the McClure offices in New York City from early 1898 to December 1899 remain one of the least understood areas of Norris's career. Even how Norris first became involved with the company is uncertain. Jeannette Gilder asserted in 1909 that McClure, a vociferous reader, had noticed Norris's *Moran of the Lady Letty* as it was serialized in *The Wave* and "immediately sat down and wrote to the author and told him to come to New York and he would publish his book, and that he wanted him to write for *McClure's Magazine*." Norris himself, though, told Isaac Marcossou at the time that he was the one who initiated contact with McClure by submitting *Moran of the Lady Letty* for publication only "after its completion" in *The Wave*, which came on 8 April 1898. Yet in fact it was John S. Phillips, McClure's partner in both *McClure's Magazine* (founded in 1893) and the Associated Literary Press syndicate, who made the initial contact with Norris. Norris was sending the first installments of *Moran of the Lady Letty* as they appeared in *The Wave* in early 1898 to "the McClure Company," probably to gain a hearing with the Doubleday, McClure and Co. book publishing firm. Such an approach was not unusual, and Norris would almost certainly have been aware that just a few years before this Stephen Crane had used newspaper clippings of *The Red Badge of Courage* (syndicated by McClure's competitor Irving Bacheller) as an entrée to D. Appleton and Co. publishers. On the basis of what Norris sent, Phillips wrote to him in St. Louis on 11 February and invited him to come work for the McClure organization. Norris replied on 14 February that he "would most certainly take advantage of your offer to write for your syndicate [the Associated Literary Press] and for the magazine [*McClure's Magazine*]."³

Norris subsequently moved East in early 1898 and began working at the McClure offices, where he understood he

would "write" for McClure's newspaper syndicate and magazine. According to Franklin Walker, though, Norris assumed a variety of duties, "one day editing syndicate material, the next reading proofs of magazine articles." Working only half days for \$50 per month, Norris was supposedly able to "spend his major effort in completing the several novels on which he had been working." Despite such assertions, however, there is little evidence of Norris's actual work, and Jesse Crisler is correct in stating that "no one . . . really knows precisely what Norris did at McClure's." In the spring and summer of 1898 the syndicate probably helped arrange serial newspaper publication of *Moran of the Lady Letty* (*The Wave* 8 January—8 April 1898) in the *New York Evening Sun* (4 May—19 May) and the *Chicago Inter Ocean* (22 August—4 September). Almost a year later, in the summer and fall of 1899 Norris also published *A Man's Woman* serially in the *New York Sun* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Until further research is done and more printings are found, however, it is unknown whether *A Man's Woman* was in fact "syndicated" by McClure or whether Norris, possibly with the help of the McClure syndicate, made individual arrangements with each newspaper. Norris himself wrote to Mrs. Elizabeth Davenport on 22 March 1899 that *A Man's Woman* was "to be syndicated this summer," and Katz lists this work as "syndicated," but true "syndication" involved publication in many more than two newspapers. McClure's Associated Literary Press was definitely not in the habit of syndicating works to only two newspapers, for such an arrangement would not have allowed the firm to recoup the costs of purchasing the work's serial rights.⁴

"A Salvation Boom in Matabeleland," on the other hand, was clearly syndicated, as evidenced not only by the publicity circular but also by the four widely disseminated newspaper printings found thus far. This story, seldom read or commented upon, is of interest to Norris scholars for a number of reasons. On one level, for instance, it exhibits Norris's questioning of the Manifest Destiny rationale of imperialism as early as 1896, well in advance of most Americans, who became interested in the topic only after the *Maine* exploded in Havana harbor in January 1898. Otto Marks, a Salvation Army sergeant from Toledo, Ohio, ventures to the remotest parts of Rhodesia or Matabeleland with a transport rider, West, and a young Zulu boy as companions. In their wagon they carry two organs from Boston which are intended to accompany hymns and help convert the native tribespeople to "civilized" Christianity. Enroute to their destination they are forced by a flooded river to make a detour across a barren landscape, using "the line of telegraph poles as their guide." Subsequently, the party is stopped by a large group of threatening-looking Matabele engaged in a ritual called "Mahunda indaba." West

believes they are intoxicated with "cape smoke" and tells Marks to "Pray [to] your God for a miracle now." In a desperate attempt to avoid massacre, West also orders Marks to open up one of the crates containing an organ and commence playing. "The little American organ stood out under the African sun, shining bravely with veneer and scrollwork and celluloid," and it is clear that this symbol, as well as Marks's Salvation Army affiliation and the telegraph poles they are using as navigational guides, are meant to represent imperialism and its underpinnings: the belief that less "advanced" peoples of the world should be converted to "true" religion and that they should be so impressed with modern technology that they will surrender and defer to the authority of their superiors. Shaking with fear, Marks plays "the only kind of music he knew, the Moody and Sankey gospel hymns that he had learned in Toledo, O., and that he had found effective in the Salvation barracks at Cape Town and at Mafeking." For a short time the music helps spare Marks, West, and the boy from their fate, as the Matabelele only dance around the wagon. In an ironic twist, they even begin "to sing, catching up the tunes [of the hymns] with the quickness and facility of savages, singing to the airs of these gospel hymns the words of the war song of 'Moselekatse,' the chant of the Black Bull." At last, though, Marks breaks down and stops playing the organ; now "the spell was broken" and the Matabelele attack the party, killing Marks and the Zulu boy, himself a symbol of those natives who had thrown in their lot with imperialists. Under the wagon West tries to shoot himself but is dragged out and "crucified upon a telegraph pole—by the arms only."⁵

Thus, the "well-meaning" imperialistic designs of Marks are mimicked and rejected by the Matabelele. Instead of deferring to Marks and the white man significantly named "West," they assert the primacy of their own religious ritual, the "Mahunda." Western technology, too, fails in its intended effect, losing its power when the human using it—Marks—is found to be too weak. Christianity and manufactured goods are thus clearly incapable of dazzling and conquering these supposedly primitive people.

On a broad scale the story thus possibly reflects Norris's own apprehensions about the imperialist project as practiced in South Africa by Britain and the Boers and, elsewhere in the late 1890s, by the United States itself. But this story also helps support Jesse Crisler's assertion that "As [Norris] had hoped, the belletristic experience in South Africa had marked a beginning" and that this was a "transitional" period in Norris's career. Crisler writes that from this journalistic experience abroad Norris learned to be a better professional writer, "meeting deadlines regardless of personal inconvenience and

exigencies."⁶ "Salvation Boom" also indicates, though, that Norris grew in other ways during his South Africa trip. For instance, it demonstrates Norris's early skillful use of symbolism and his interest in a theme to which he would return in many later works: how a thin veneer of "civilization" is seldom adequate to disguise and contain the human animal beneath it. Otto Marks's organ, like Marks himself, is covered with a thin veneer but eventually, pressed in a way he had never been before, his instinctual fear for his life takes over and "All at once his nerves crisped and recoiled like the broken ends of an overstrained harp string, and he leaped into the air, suddenly seized with hysteria, shrieking and banging his fists upon the keys." West tries to calm Marks down and have him keep playing, but instead Marks "was waving his fists above his head. His eyes were as the eyes of a fish, and he was bleeding at the nose." Marks, the symbolic "civilized" Westerner, cannot maintain his civilized attitude and, when this happens, his animal-like side reveals itself.

Marks is not the only one whose inner, animalistic nature is displayed. The Matabele, regarded as savage warriors, are temporarily placated by the gospel hymns and music that Marks provides for them: "Otto's music caught them and held them and they danced and danced as though they would never tire, dazed and bewildered, leaping and shouting aloud without knowing why." Yet such an expedient can last for only as long as the music continues. When it stops, the more savage parts of their natures appear to take over, and the result is the murder of Marks and the Zulu boy and the crucifixion of West. Yet the Matabele cannot be easily dismissed as Philistine-like savages intoxicated with "cape smoke" who crucify their true saviour; instead they can be seen as staunch, powerful defenders of their lands and rituals against the encroachment of weak outsiders. By showing how both Marks and the Matabele have their own cultures and are capable of animalistic behavior, Norris collapses the comfortable distinctions usually made between "civilized and "uncivilized," "mad" and "sane"; Marks and the Matabele are part of the same human race.

Norris had certainly glimpsed the thin divide between "civilized" and "savage" behavior before his trip to South Africa. In 1893 he had read about the brutal San Francisco murder of a kindergarten teacher, Mrs. Collins, and was inspired to begin crafting *McTeague* during the 1894-95 academic year at Harvard. Curiously, *McTeague* himself is similar to Marks and the Matabele, a man kept calm and "civilized" for a long time by his pipe and daily bucket of beer but whose savagery begins to be awakened when his simple pleasures are withdrawn (no analogous sexual motivations for the transformation, though, are provided in "Salvation Boom"). Norris would continue to explore this theme of civilized savagery in a number of later

works after he returned to the United States in 1896. But it is possible that his glimpses of what was commonly regarded as "savage" life in South Africa, recorded at least partially in "Salvation Boom," inspired him to see that the theme he was wrestling with was a universal one and thus worthy of great art and intense consideration.

Besides its text, "Salvation Boom" is also of interest because of its publication history. First, due to the unique textual distribution system of the syndicates, its newspaper appearances highlight a variety of unique bibliographical problems. I have written about this system and the attendant difficulties in more detail elsewhere, but a brief overview will suffice here.⁷ McClure's Associated Literary Press syndicate regularly purchased fictions from authors, edited them, and had illustrations of the fictions made. The texts were then typeset and galley proofs printed; in 1899 this work was done for McClure by the *Boston Globe*, usually in return for receiving the syndicate service for free. These galley proofs would then be sent by U.S. Mail to one newspaper in each market across the country that had purchased the rights to such works. At the individual newspaper offices the texts could be edited again and typeset to match the newspaper's own typeface. This complex system of textual transmission, as one can imagine, created numerous accidental—and occasionally substantive—variations in the texts themselves. In the case of "Salvation Boom," the texts as they appeared in newspapers are almost identical to the text as it appeared in *The Wave* in 1896 under Norris's personal supervision.⁸ What is quite different, however, is that these texts appeared amidst a multiplicity of news articles, features, and advertisements.

There is one other aspect of the newspaper publication of "Salvation Boom" that was different from its publication in *The Wave*: a single, two-column wide pen and ink illustration accompanied the text as it appeared in all of the papers listed above, except for the New York *Sun* (see figure 1). Typically, syndicate illustrations appear to have been executed in the McClure offices in New York, photoengraved, and then sent to subscribing newspapers in galley-proof form; newspapers could then photograph this, make photoengravings, and then produce their own stereotype plates. It would be exciting to report that this illustration is the work of Norris himself. As David Teague has written recently in "Frank Norris and the Visual Arts," Norris made many pen and ink drawings while in South Africa in 1895-6, and since "Salvation Boom" takes place there, it is conceivable that Norris might have been called on by McClure's to execute the illustrations. However, this drawing bears little resemblance to Norris's sketches of South Africa as presented in Teague's article. Unlike the sketches he did in South Africa, for example, the

illustration for "Salvation Boom" is unsigned. Furthermore, the style of the newspaper illustration is very similar to the style evident in the illustration of another McClure-syndicated work that appeared on 5 November, just one week before "Salvation Boom." If Norris had taken the opportunity to create an illustration for his own story but not for any others (and McClure had a large in-house staff of professional illustrators that usually handled this work), there would be a marked difference between the two, but there is not. Teague's hypothesis that Norris "made no attempt to illustrate it ["Salvation Boom"] or many other *The Wave* short stories of the same kind" thus is not at all refuted by the discovery of this illustration.⁹

Although it was not executed by Norris, however, this illustration would nonetheless have been rather important to contemporary readers and shows how a work's meaning for readers can be greatly affected by non-textual materials. The story itself focuses on Otto Marks (the narrator even states that "the matter must be told from Otto's point of view"), but significantly, the illustration is of the dancing Matabele tribesmen. This is probably due to the syndicate's and newspapers' desire to attract the attention of newspaper readers eager to experience the "exotic" world vicariously and safely through the pages of their newspapers. In this way the illustration appears to support the reader's assumption of a superior, imperialist observer position, and thus it works against Norris's attempt in his story to subvert such a position. The contradictory messages are also highlighted in the caption provided by the McClure syndicate: "They Danced Fiercely About." As noted before, in his story Norris avoids making the Matabele completely culpable for what occurs and means the reader to see the tribesmen in a more nuanced way; he even describes them in the first paragraph as "the music-mad, magnificent, brave, unspeakably cruel Matabele." The caption, however, precludes empathy with the Zulu warriors who storm Otto Marks's Salvation Army wagon and kill him and his party. Readers are told unequivocally that the tribesmen dancing in this illustration—who, from all appearances might simply have been celebrating—are "fierce." This label clearly implies their savagery and guilt, as well as the victim status of Marks, West, and the boy. It should be added that syndicate caption-writers were not the only ones who made it difficult for readers to adopt Norris's attitude towards the Matabele; an editor at the *Syracuse Evening Herald* subtitled the story: "Showing that Although Music Has Power to Calm the Savage Mind, Its Effects Soon Wear Off and the Savage Mind Is Worse Than It Was Before."

Only about a month and a half after "A Salvation Boom in Matabeleland" was syndicated, Norris made the decision to

THE CONSTITUTION JR.
Salvation Boom in Matabeleland

A Tale of Music That Temporarily Charmed in South Africa By Frank Norris. Author of "McTigue" and "Bill."

It happened, 1898, in Frank Norris's story, "A Salvation Boom in Matabeleland," that the music of the Salvation Army wagon was heard in the heart of the Matabele. The music was heard in the heart of the Matabele, and the Matabele were charmed by it. The music was heard in the heart of the Matabele, and the Matabele were charmed by it. The music was heard in the heart of the Matabele, and the Matabele were charmed by it.



THEY DANCED FIERCELY ABOUT.

On the right hand, and the other hand... The music was heard in the heart of the Matabele, and the Matabele were charmed by it. The music was heard in the heart of the Matabele, and the Matabele were charmed by it. The music was heard in the heart of the Matabele, and the Matabele were charmed by it.

Figure 1.

Atlanta Constitution Illustration

leave the McClure organization and join the fledgling book publishing firm of Doubleday, Page, and Co. He did not do so, however, without regrets. In January 1900 he wrote to John Phillips, "I remember perfectly well that as far as 'getting on' is concerned I practically owe you everything. From the time of your first letter to me in St. Louis asking me to come on to N. Y. and try it with you . . . you have been the very best friend I've had outside of California. I owe my start to you and whatever measure of success I have achieved so far. You have made it so easy for me that I shall always remember my first experiences in New York as some of the pleasantest years of my life—whereas they might have been the hardest."¹⁰

In this letter Norris served notice that was leaving the company that afforded him the break all writers of the period longed for, a move to New York, and that he was moving on to the next stage of his career. During his brief stint as an employee there, the McClure organization had served him well. Like many other beginning authors of the time, including Stephen Crane and Jack London, Norris had recognized that at a time when having work accepted by the national magazines was extremely difficult, newspaper publication could represent an important first rung in the ladder of his literary career. For one thing, employment with McClure had provided him with a passably liveable wage for working only half days, leaving him free to spend time on his own writing. Further, McClure had magnanimously agreed to keep paying Norris's salary in the fall of 1899 while he went to California to do research for what would eventually become *The Octopus*. To some extent, too, syndication helped prove Norris's worth to book publishers and made them less wary of taking a risk on him as an unknown. This was certainly the case with Doubleday and McClure, who arguably might never have published *Moran of the Lady Letty*, *A Man's Woman*, and *McTeague* if Norris had not already demonstrated his popularity among newspaper audiences. Syndication also appears to have given Norris some needed confidence. On the basis of the syndication of *A Man's Woman*, for instance, Norris could open his letter of 4 October 1899 to the British publisher Grant Richards with the line, "Mr. S.S. McClure is syndicating a story of mine just now" and assume the posture of an author who had already arrived. For everything he did, McClure well deserves the label of Norris's "literary godfather" that Jeannette Gilder gave him.¹¹

Most important, Norris's newspaper publications, either facilitated by or syndicated by McClure, helped him move beyond the relatively small, regional audience of *The Wave*. According to Joseph R. McElrath, Jr., *The Wave* primarily "addressed the ladies and gentlemen of upper-middle class San Francisco" and had at most 20,000 readers concentrated in

northern California. With the help of McClure, though, by 1900 Norris's name was known by readers not only in the San Francisco region but also in, among many other places, Atlanta, Boston, New York, Syracuse, and Chicago. Because of their low price and extensive distribution systems, the newspapers in these cities that published Norris's fiction had large, socioeconomically diverse, regional audiences. One has only to compare the 20,000 or so readers of *The Wave* to the approximately 400,000 readers of the four papers in which "Salvation Boom" appeared to understand that in a relatively short time Norris's audience had greatly changed, not only in number but also in composition.¹² It is quite possible, too, that some readers of "Salvation Boom" were moved to purchase Norris's books on the basis of what they saw in "Salvation Boom" and his other serials. At least one editor, at the *Atlanta Constitution*, helped readers make the connection between Norris and his books, supplying the subtitle of "Author of 'McTigue' [sic] and 'Blix'" for its publication of "Salvation Boom";¹³ many other editors probably did the same.

Retrieved from the obscurity of microfilmed copies of nineteenth-century newspapers, "A Salvation Boom in Matabeleland" serves as a reminder of how important Norris's newspaper publications were to his career. In more ways than one, as Norris acknowledged in his letter to Phillips, he owed the McClure organization a great deal.

Notes

¹"A Salvation Boom in Matabeleland," *The Wave* 15 (25 April 1896), 5; Joseph Katz, "The Shorter Publications of Frank Norris: A Checklist," *Proof*, 3 (1973), 165; Joseph R. McElrath, Jr., *Frank Norris: A Descriptive Bibliography* (Pittsburgh and London: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1992), 217, 162.

²"A Salvation Boom in Matabeleland," *New York Sun*, 12 November 1899: Morning edition, section 2, 7; *Atlanta Constitution*, 12 November 1899: *Constitution, Jr.*, section, 4; *Boston Globe*, 12 November 1899: Magazine section, 2; *Syracuse Evening Herald*, 10 December 1899: 30; Katz, "Shorter Publications," 157.

³Jeannette Gilder, "The Lounger," *Putnam's*, 6 (August 1909), 629; Frank Norris, letter to Isaac Frederick Marcossou, [1 December 1898?], letter 19 of *Frank Norris: Collected Letters*, compiled and annotated by Jesse S. Crisler (San Francisco: The Book Club of California, 1986), 58; "the McClure Company" quotation is also from the letter to Marcossou, 58; Joseph R. McElrath, Jr., writes that Norris was sending serial installments (*Frank Norris Revisited* [New York: Twayne, 1992], 21). Franklin Walker cites Charles Norris as telling him that Phillips first "brought Frank Norris to McClure's attention" (*Frank Norris: A Biography* [Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Doran and Co., 1932], 167); Walker restates this position in "Four Additional Frank Norris Letters," *Quarterly News-Letter* (Book Club of

California), 40 (Winter 1974), 4-5; Walker's statement that Phillips telegraphed Norris in St. Louis (*Frank Norris*, 168) has been proven incorrect by the recent discovery of Norris's letter accepting Phillips job offer (Joseph R. McElrath, Jr., and Sal Noto, "An Important Letter in the Career of Frank Norris," *Quarterly Newsletter* (Book Club of California), 15 [Summer 1990], 59-61).

⁴Walker, "Four Letters," 5; Crisler, headnote to letter 50, *Collected Letters*, 103; the *A Man's Woman* bibliographical information is in McElrath, *Descriptive Bibliography*, 236-37; Norris, letter to Mrs. Elizabeth Hewitt Davenport, 22 March 1899, letter 27 of *Collected Letters*, 69; Katz, "Shorter Publications," 193-4.

⁵The text I cite throughout this paper is "A Salvation Boom in Matabeleland," *Syracuse Evening Herald*, 10 December 1899, 30.

⁶Crisler, "Norris in South Africa," *Frank Norris Studies*, No. 7 (Spring 1989), 5.

⁷"Frank Norris's 'A Salvation Boom in Matabeleland': The Problems of Dealing with Syndicated Fiction," forthcoming in *Text*.

⁸This judgment is made based on the text reproduced in *Collected Writings Hitherto Unpublished in Book Form*, vol. 10 of *Collected Writings* (1928; Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1967), 21-26, which was derived from *The Wave*.

⁹Determining in what form illustrations were sent is extremely difficult. It is possible that stereotype plates, made from photoengravings, were sent to newspapers, but such a practice would have been prohibitively expensive. Judging by what McClure's competitor Irving Bacheller was sending to participating newspapers in 1896, it appears that usual practice was to print the text and illustrations together on a single sheet and send this sheet to subscribers (see "A Village Patriot," Houghton Library, Harvard University, pAB85 JS554 .896v); Teague, "Frank Norris and the Visual Arts," *Frank Norris Studies*, No. 19 (Spring 1995), 4-7; see C.E. Dingwall, "A Pay-Night Love Feast," *Boston Globe*, 5 November 1899: Magazine section, 2; "Visual Arts," 8.

¹⁰Norris, letter to John Phillips, 9 January 1900, letter 50 of *Collected Letters*, 102.

¹¹Walker recounts the way in which Norris's research proposal was approved by Phillips and McClure (*Frank Norris*, 243); see also Norris, letter to Harry M. Wright, 5 April 1899, letter 31 of *Collected Letters*, 75; Norris, letter to Grant Richards, 4 October 1899, letter 40 of *Collected Letters*, 87; Gilder, "The Lounger," 629.

¹²McElrath, *Frank Norris and The Wave: A Bibliography* (New York and London: Garland, 1988), ix; newspaper circulation figures are from an advertisement, *Boston Globe*, 1 November 1899, 1, and estimates in *American Newspaper Directory* (New York: George P. Rowell, 1900), 123, 703, 763.

¹³See n. 2.

Norris in Cyberspace

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I was recently exploring the Netscape software that one of my university's computer support staff installed on my PC. In the on-line tutorial I had the option of clicking-on to the "Books On-line" site. I was then prompted to provide the name of the author I wished to investigate, so I entered "Norris." In a blink a window popped up which revealed that four Norris novels—*McTeague*, *Moran of the Lady Letty*, *The Octopus*, and *The Pit*—are available in electronic text (also called "hypertext") files; it also directed me to some Internet World Wide Web addresses that would provide critical commentary on Norris's works and issues related to them.

There are three major sources for the hypertext versions of the novels, The Internet Wiretap Electronic Editions, the Project Gutenberg Association, and the American Literature Survey Site. The first currently has only a version of *The Pit* prepared by John Hamm and released in December 1993; the second, constructed by Professor Daniel Anderson at the University of Texas in the spring of 1995, has the text of *McTeague*; the third has the Gutenberg texts of *McTeague*, *Moran*, and *The Octopus* that were electronically scanned (OCR) at Illinois Benedictine College. (Gutenberg's director, Professor Michael S. Hart, subtitles his project "The World of Plain Vanilla Electronic Texts.") And while these texts might not pass muster with an inspector from the Center for Scholarly Editions, they are reliable enough for a casual reader. In order to retrieve these "volumes" from the Internet, you must connect either through an institutional "server" provided, for instance, by a university or through one of the commercial servers such as Compuserve, Prodigy, and America On-Line. The following are their electronic addresses:

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<http://wiretap.spies.com/ftp.items/Library/Classic/pit.txt>

For the Project Gutenberg text of *Moran*:

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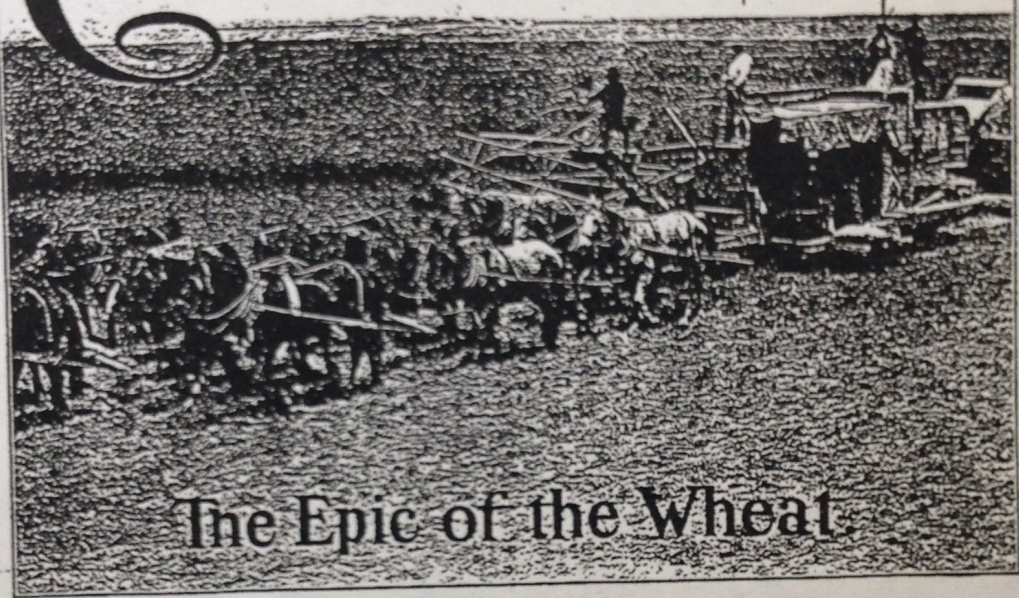
<ftp://uiarchive.cso.uiuc.edu/pub/etext/gutenberg/etext95/octop10.txt>

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From *The World's Work*, 1 (April 1901)

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For chapter-by-chapter accession of the table of contents of
McTeague:
<http://www.en.utexas.edu/~daniel/anderson/amlit/mcteague/mt.html>

In addition to primary sources, the American Literature Survey Site provides, according to its "home page," "student comments and analysis, transcripts of discussions, and student projects" for *McTeague* as well as for other canonical standards such as "Young Goodman Brown," "Bartleby the Scrivener," "Rip Van Winkle," "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," and "The Yellow Wallpaper." In this case, however, these additional attachments are a waste of cyberspace. For instance, the "Inter-Change on *McTeague*" discussion of the novel is chaotic. From Professor Anderson's initial unfocused comment, "I'd like for us to be able to discuss anything about the story today," to the closing question in his introduction to the topic, ". . . am I babbling?" we are subjected to ten pages of undergraduate observations. For instance, "While I haven't read the entire story, I think the first three chapters does [sic] a good job of setting up the theme of greed and Social Darwinism"; "Do you think the novel sheds light on spousal abuse and critiques it or perhaps encourages it by portraying Trina as 'loving' her mistreatment?"; "I think MT should have kicked the living CRAP out of Marcus when he threw the knife at him!" I did not muster the courage to read the on-line files dealing with projects undertaken by members of Anderson's class. Their titles include "Social Darwinism, Greed and Animal Imagery," "The Theme of Gold and the Movie Version of the Story," "Animalism, Social Darwinism, and Spousal Abuse," "This is *McTeague* Hell," and "In Gut Wrenching Heaves." Unfortunately, this sort of gibberish will continue to litter the Internet; worse, it accords it a legitimacy that it does not deserve and gives students—and in this case faculty—a misguided belief that no matter how vacuous their remarks, they merit world-wide dissemination. In time, this too will pass.

More recently, Netscape has added such search Internet guides as Lycos, Magellan, Excite, Infosearch, and Yahoo. The Norris material offered in their archives is negligible and uninteresting: They are mostly advertisements to buy and sell books by or about Norris. There is also the Phi Gamma Delta ("Fiji") Alumni Page (<http://snoopy.nettally.com/scott/pgd/gond.html>) advertising the March 3, 1996 Frank Norris Pig Dinner, and what seems to be part of an on-line syllabus for a course in American literature which includes Norris (<http://csustan.edu/english/reuben/pal/chap6.html>) taught by Paul P. Reuben. The title for this site is "Chapter 6. Late Nineteenth Century: Naturalism"; it includes a one-paragraph "Brief Assessment" of Norris ("The overriding theme in Norris' fiction is the impact of industrialism on peaceful agricultural communities and the consequent chaos in the lives of people who lived in these communities"; also, "The spirit of the turn-of-the-century San Francisco is impressively captured in *McTeague*. It's theme, that of a powerful man failing against unexpected adversity, typifies the thrust of the best of Naturalistic writing"), a "Selected Bibliography" of thirteen citations (beginning with Ahnebrink), and a list of "Major Works" (in which Reubens includes *Moren* [sic] of the *Lady Letty*).

The technology is fascinating, and surfing the Internet will introduce the user to a brave new world where the first blush of Norris's flourishing in hypertext heaven is growing more evident.

Society News

- Donald Pizer's second edition of the Norton Critical *McTeague* is now available (ISBN 0-393-97013-2). Six of the eight essays in "Criticism" are new, and four stills from *Greed* have been included. Added in a footnote on p. 206 is a previously unknown, authorially-cancelled manuscript passage made available to Pizer by Charles E. Kern, II, who owns the leaf on which it appears. When Mac was giving Trina her last beating on the page numbered 265, Norris originally pictured her being bounced off the kindergarten walls "with the vigor and elasticity of a rubber ball." Thank you Mr. Kern.

- The 1997 American Literature Association Conference, 22-25 May 1997 in Baltimore, will feature a session on how *The Apprenticeship Writings of Frank Norris, 1896-1898* modifies (or reinforces) our understanding of Norris's personality and the image of the author based largely upon his later-published novels. The participants are members Richard Allan Davison, Charles Crow, Stanley Wertheim, Christine King, Donna Campbell, and Jesse Crisler. In November *Apprenticeship* resulted in Joe McElrath being given the John Frederick Lewis Award of the American Philosophical Society.

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