

# FRANK NORRIS STUDIES

No. 7  
Spring, 1989



The Norris Family House  
(at right)  
10 Park Row  
Chicago, before 1871  
*(Courtesy of The Chicago Historical Society)*

## Frank Norris And The Eighth Grade

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In 1883-1884, when he was thirteen-going-on-fourteen, Frank Norris attended The Harvard School for Boys in Chicago, one mile south of his home. The school, still in existence today at a different location and now coeducational, has not kept its records from the 1880s. But thinly scattered about Chicago lies buried information about The Harvard School, and the people, courses, and books Frank Norris encountered there.

The Norris home from 1882 to 1884 was at 10 Park Row, off Michigan Avenue at the foot of what now is Grant Park. In the accompanying photograph, No. 10 is the separate house nearest the camera.<sup>1</sup> Today the site is a parking lot, but when Frank Norris lived there, before the greater part of Grant Park was created from landfill, his home looked north up Michigan Avenue, then a residential street, and out upon sparkling Lake Michigan, at that time only 135 yards distant from his front door.

Park Row may have been considered "one of the most fashionable enclaves in the city,"<sup>2</sup> but in fact railroad tracks ran between it and the lake, which meant noise and soot. And when in 1893 the Illinois Central built its massive Central Station immediately against the east end of Park Row the enclave stopped being fashionable. A later photo shows Park Row's buildings fallen into a shabby depot strip, with the Norrises' once-handsome No. 10 now hidden behind a fruit-store and billboards, with a six-story electric sign on their roof flashing out for Miller's High Life.

To get from Park Row to The Harvard School, if his papa's coachman did not drive him or if he did not walk, young Frank could go out his back door, catch the Indiana Avenue horse-car, and ride nine blocks south to 21st Street. There, at 2101 Indiana, across the intersection from two big churches, was his school, housed in a former mansion converted into classrooms. In the summer of 1883 it had been enlarged and refitted, so that on Frank's first day of classes, 19 September, it must have smelled of new paint and varnish.<sup>3</sup>

The Harvard School had been established in 1867 by Edward Stanley Waters, a graduate of Harvard College. One of its earlier locations had been 70 East Congress Street, the precise spot where Norris laid the opening scene of *The Pit*. The school had moved often to escape the spreading business district and to follow the movement southward of the affluent residential neighborhood from which it drew most of its students. Today, 2101 Indiana Avenue is a spark plug shop, just around the corner from the hotel which was Al Capone's headquarters. But in 1883 The Harvard School sat in the center of the wealthiest neighborhood in town, the "Prairie Avenue District," which a historian playfully dubbed "the very Mecca of Mammon, the Olympus of the great gods of Chicago."

Three of the gods, in fact, sat on the school's Board of Directors: George M. Pullman (railroad cars), Marshall Field (department store), and Philip D. Armour (worth \$50,000,000 from grain and meat-packing). Frank Norris's classmates included their sons George, Marshall, and Philip, Jr. (until the latter was expelled

in 1884).

In sending Frank to The Harvard School, did his parents have an eye to certain advantages of growing up in an old-boy network of millionaires' sons? Perhaps they put Frank into The Harvard School simply because it was the best local preparation for college (the Chicago Latin School and the University of Chicago Laboratory School not yet being in existence).

In either case they must have examined with interest the school's brochure of June 1883, a neatly printed booklet of twelve pages.<sup>4</sup> There they saw the list of Trustees; then the faculty, ten in number (including primary grades 1-7), of whom apparently only four were college graduates; followed by the roster of the previous year and their "patrons," including (on p. 5 of the 1884 edition) the names of "Norris, Benjamin Franklin, Jr." and Mr. B.F. Norris.

The brochure gives practical information for prospective parents. Harvard being a day school, it makes clear its accessibility via certain streetcar lines. It prides itself on good lighting, and boasts that "the system of ventilation renews the air in every room at least three times per hour."<sup>5</sup> School hours are 9-12:40 and 1:40-3 (long morning, short afternoon), but "pupils who are deficient in their lessons will be detained after these hours for further instruction." Other brochures specify the hours of homework necessary, apparently only one hour for Frank's eighth grade. The school sends a postcard report to parents weekly and a detailed report every six weeks.

The subjects Frank Norris studied at The Harvard School depended upon which curriculum his parents chose for him. Each was a five-year program, grades 8-12:

In the *Classical Course* students will be carefully prepared for the best colleges.

In the *Scientific Course* students will receive thorough preparation for the Polytechnic or Scientific Schools, or for the active duties of life. In this course Modern Languages, Natural Sciences and Mathematics take a prominent part.

Did the artistic mother prefer the Classical and the self-made father like the part about the active duties of life? Whichever program Frank entered, he began Latin at once (8th grade). If he was in the Classical Course he also began—and it seems too much—either French or German: French with Mr. F.A. Vollmer or German with Miss Clara Heinrichs (who had recently succeeded Mrs. Carl Schurz as German teacher).

If Frank was in the Classical program, the faculty overseer of his days and weeks was John C. Grant, 35, a Yale M.A., called by his admirers "perfectly just" but a "strong disciplinarian," whose "piercing blue eyes struck terror into the hearts of evil-doers, and even of innocent bystanders."<sup>6</sup> If Frank registered instead for the Scientific Course, his monitor was the headmaster himself, John Jacob Schobinger, 37, a Swiss graduate of the Federal Polytechnic in Zurich and student at the University of Lausanne, whose

memoirs at eighty sound conscientious but kindly.<sup>7</sup>

Both curricula are outlined in a two-page chart which lays out the five years of courses, grades 8-12. Frank Norris's eighth grade English was comprised of Reading, Spelling, Declamation, Composition, and Penmanship. He was also drilled in Arithmetic, where we suspect he did not shine, in "Geography of America and Europe," in U.S. History, and, under Natural Science, something called "Object Lessons in Plants & Stones." That was his menu for those nine months.

Recent brochures had specified that students would be "writing abstracts daily." We know what that admirable discipline means for the teacher who has to correct them, but classes were small at The Harvard School. In grades 8-12 during Frank Norris's year there, the student-faculty ratio was 12:1. Hence the rather stiff tuition, \$200 per year.

Had Frank Norris remained at the school four more years, the classical curriculum would have advanced into Caesar, Ovid, "Latin at Sight," Virgil, Cicero, and "Writing Latin." He would have begun Greek in the tenth grade, age 15, and continued through Etymology, Xenophon's *Anabasis*, "Writing Greek," Homer, Herodotus, and "Greek at Sight." It seems a curriculum well suited for one boy in Frank's class, Burton Holmes, who became a professional traveler and lecturer.

In the Scientific program, which I think we rather doubt Norris entered, there was less Latin and no Greek, but solid-sounding studies in the physical sciences, plus one of the school's special emphases, Drawing, which Frank might have liked. Alumni records show that many of his classmates in the 1880s entered M.I.T. and Yale's Sheffield Scientific School, for example a boy only one year ahead of him, Howard Van Doren Shaw, who became Chicago's leading society architect.

But what of Frank Norris's reading that year? In 1883 many schools were using the Appleton or Harper textbook anthologies, or the 1879 edition of *McGuffey's Sixth Eclectic Reader* ("for advanced pupils"), excellent in its way, but composed of 138 short bits and pieces by 111 authors. In contrast, The Harvard School used real books:

Attention is called to the course of instruction in the English Language. Readers have been discarded, except in the lowest grades, and books of permanent value substituted. Reading is practiced daily, as well as Composition Writing [*sic*] and Spelling. The subjects for the compositions are generally suggested by the reading; spelling is practiced on words selected by the teacher from the pages read at the time. Experience has proved that this method will, more than any other, awaken in the scholars love for reading, develop their taste, and give them ease and fluency in the use of their mother tongue.<sup>8</sup>

School catalogues have been known to make it sound good. So exactly which were the books of permanent value which the future Boy Zola encountered at age 13-14? There were ten titles on the reading list that year, some of them no doubt intended only for juniors and seniors:

Edward Everett Hale, *Stories of Discovery Told by Discoverers*. [DeGama, Drake, et al.] Edition not specified, but probably Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1882. 290 pp.

Walter Scott, *The Lady of the Lake*. Edition not specified, but perhaps Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1880. 63 pp. First canto only.

Robert Burns, "*The Cotter's Saturday Night*" and *Other Poems*. Perhaps New York: J.B. Alden, 1883. 27 pp.

George Eliot, *Silas Marner*. Edition not specified.

Washington Irving, *The Sketch Book*. Edition not specified.

Shakespeare, *Henry V*. Edition not specified. The play lent itself to history studies below.

Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Young Folks' History of the United States*. Probably New York: C.T. Dillingham, 1882. 383 pp.

J.R. Gardiner, *History of England*. I have not identified this title. It is possible that the school continued with a book from the previous year: Edward Moulton Lancaster's *A Manual of English History for the Use of Schools* (Chicago: A.S. Barnes & Co., 1877; new preface 1883). 324 pp.

Elizabeth S. Kirkland, *A Short History of France for Young People*. (Chicago: Jansen McClurg & Co., 1879). 7th printing. 398 pp.

*A Brief History of Greece with Readings from Prominent Historians*. (New York: A.S. Barnes & Co., 1883).

It was a proper Victorian list which would not have looked old-fashioned in 1883. We remember the disdain of Stephen Crane and Norris for the literature held up to them in college. But as Jesse Crisler has shown, Frank Norris did find at least two of these books to be of permanent value. When he died, the histories of France and Greece were still in his library, full of schoolboy inscriptions (and adolescent-like signed with his name in no fewer than six of its possible permutations).<sup>9</sup>

J.J. Schobinger had been educated in the sciences, and his main emphasis in brochures for years had been the pragmatic view that Chicago schoolboys needed modern languages a lot more than they did Latin and Greek. He put it rather defensively, perhaps fearing alarm in some parents. But a few years after Frank Norris's time there the senior class magazine still reflected a classical stamp on studies: in a student translation from the *Iliad*; in an essay on the necessity of Greek (which has the earmarks of a dutiful theme); and in a humor page sprinkled with Latin puns and Greek-flavored slang.

There is also news of two groups of seniors: those preparing for admission to Harvard College and those preparing for Yale. By the 1890s the school's brochure (the reading lists now much longer and more sophisticated) emphasized its graduates' regular ac-

ceptance into Ivy League colleges. Had his family not moved to San Francisco in 1884, Frank Norris would have been in the graduating class of 1887. Seven of the boys in that crop entered Yale, four entered Harvard, and two entered M.I.T.<sup>10</sup> Not bad.

In *The Pit* Norris called Chicago "arrogant in the new-found knowledge of its giant strength." Its newness is relevant here. For when young Frank had hopped the horse-car down to The Harvard School every day and returned afternoons to the fine house on Park Row, Chicago was a raw mercantile metropolis so new, and still so young, that old citizens remembered when it was only a muddy Indian village. The "great gods of Chicago" had mostly been poor boys from the East; Park Row and the Prairie Avenue District represented new money, and The Harvard School was not Groton. But a need had been felt and a beginning had been made. At a time when it was uncommon for boys even to attend high school, the fact that Frank Norris's classmates went on to Yale and Harvard spoke well for headmaster Schobinger's western prep school. The evidence presented here suggests that Frank's parents got good value for their \$200.<sup>11</sup>

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Chicago Historical Society, negative 04613. "Park Row" was officially Lake Park Place, later 11th Place. Prior to the Norrises, No. 10 had been occupied by Henry M. Scovel, Associate Editor of the *Chicago Tribune*.

<sup>2</sup>David Lowe, *Lost Chicago* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975), p. 22.

<sup>3</sup>For the Norris log: classes began Wednesday, 19 September 1883 (a fair day, temperature 64° at 2:30, wind north 9 mph); Thanksgiving Recess 22-23 November; and Christmas Vacation, 22 December to 3 January 1884. The new term began 4 February 1884, with a holiday on 22 February, Easter Vacation from 6 to 13 April, a holiday on 30 May, and the last classes on 20 June.

<sup>4</sup>The editions of June 1883 and June 1884 are, by rare good luck, the only copies now accessible: Chicago Historical Society, call number F38QG/H2.

<sup>5</sup>Diphtheria epidemics closed public schools periodically in the 1880s, which conceivably was why Frank Norris was changing schools. "Great attention is given to the health and comfort of the pupils," says a Harvard School ad in the *Daily Tribune*, 10 September 1883, p. 12.

<sup>6</sup>Elsie Schobinger's memoir in the 1965 "Centennial Edition" of *The Harvard School Review*, p. 4. A few years later another Harvard boy was "scared to death" of Mr. Grant. (Edgar Rice Burroughs, "When 'Tarzan' Went to Harvard," *Ibid.*, 1940 "Anniversary Issue," p. 17.)

<sup>7</sup>J.J. Schobinger, *Fifty Years in the Harvard School* (1925), p. 6, with photos of Grant and Schobinger, a privately printed pamphlet in Chicago Historical Society, F38QG/H2.

<sup>8</sup>Brochure of June 1881, p. 7, and repeated annually with variant wording.

<sup>9</sup>See Jesse S. Crisler, "Norris's 'Library,'" *FNS*, No. 5 (Spring 1988), p. 2. The above reading list was announced in the June 1884 brochure, and, since Norris owned two of its books, was probably the one in force during his year at the school. The booklist announced in the June 1883 brochure, the edition which his parents would have seen prior to his enrollment, was longer and rather more interesting. Crisler's item 6 shows that E. (not Ella) S. Kirkland's *Short History of France* was presented to "B. Frank Norris" (presumably the son, but if so when he was only eight years old) in 1878 by "Cousin Ella and W. Alister." The inscription is not very legible. William M. Allister [*sic*] was business partner of B.F. Norris, Sr., and Ella was perhaps his wife or daughter. Elizabeth Stansbury Kirkland (1828-1896), whom J.J. Schobinger knew and admired, was a Chicago schoolmistress who published several textbooks with similar titles. She was the sister of Major Joseph Kirkland, Chicago lawyer and novelist. The Harvard School had cited him as a character reference in its circular of 1877.

<sup>10</sup>The tally is in the brochure of June 1899, p. 4.

<sup>11</sup>I am indebted to Anne Tyskling, former Director of The Harvard School, for generously lending me her collection of school booklets, and to Zeus Preckwinkle, faculty member of the present-day Harvard School, for his enthusiastic help. I also thank archivists Galen Wilson, Chicago Public Library; Richard Popp, University of Chicago Library; and Corey Seeman, Chicago Historical Society.

#### Norris in South Africa

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Recently, 28 October 1895 was established as the date of Frank Norris's departure for Cape Town as special correspondent for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, thereby solving a minor enigma related to one of the murkiest chapters in Norris biography.<sup>1</sup> Now, additional clarification of the South African escapade so long described in the most general terms is possible, thanks to a series of four articles appearing in the *Chronicle*. We find therein that, on his way to Cape Town in late 1895, Norris seemed to have disappeared from the face of the earth, to his mother's great distress. The *Chronicle* knew a story when it saw one, and these articles document Gertrude Norris's excited concern over her son's whereabouts after 4 December 1895, when the *Norham Castle* arrived in Cape Town from Madeira and when she should have heard from her son.<sup>2</sup> It was not until 8 February that she finally received a letter dated 6 January.

Happily, the articles illuminating the peculiar situation include as well new particulars regarding Norris's involvement in the "Jameson expedition," and they help chart his movements in South Africa. Further, they offer contemporaneous perceptions of Norris's personality at 25—or, more accurately, his reputation in San Francisco as an "erratic" individual of the "uncertain, artistic temperament." Given Gertrude's aesthetic orientation, the imagery may have originated with her; if, however, the image that Norris was still projecting was that of a "dilettante,"

it would soon be modified by his performance as a correspondent.

How "erratic" he remained must be measured against the professionalism he displayed shortly. Despite rapid translocations, postal uncertainties, and ill health, he produced eight essays for the *Chronicle* and another published in *Harper's Weekly*.<sup>3</sup> Hardly dilatory, he began writing the series only days after his arrival at Cape Town.<sup>4</sup> The South African period thus suggests itself as a transitional one in Norris's life. In later years, he further developed this practice of meeting deadlines regardless of personal inconvenience and exigencies. As he had hoped, the belletristic experience in South Africa had marked a beginning.

December 25, 1895, p. 16.

#### FRIENDS OF FRANK NORRIS ANXIOUS.

He Failed to Cable From Cape Town.

HIS MOTHER MUCH WORRIED.

DAILY MESSAGES ELICIT NO RESPONSE.

A Sudden and Unannounced Change of Route  
May Have Caused His Silence

The friends of B.F. Norris, always called Frank Norris, the talented young writer, who left San Francisco for South Africa about six weeks ago, are very much worried by his failure to communicate with them from Cape Town, as he promised to do, immediately upon his arrival. Mrs. B.F. Norris, the mother of the young man, who resides at the Hotel Pleasanton, is almost prostrated with grief and anxiety, and her friends fear for her health unless the present strain of uncertainty is relieved.

Mr. Norris, who is exceedingly well known in San Francisco, Oakland and Berkeley as a writer and a society man, left here in November for South Africa. He went directly to Southampton, sending his mother, to whom he is devoted, several letters on the way. She received two from Chicago, two from New York, and a long one, in journal form, written on the Berlin during the voyage from Southampton to Madeira. In this letter Mr. Norris said that he was about to draw some money on his letter of credit and would embark on the Northam for Cape Town in a few days. He also cabled from Southampton and Madeira.

That is the last that has been heard of the traveler. Advices to a local banking-house show that he drew £5 (\$25) at Madeira. The Northam arrived at Cape Town on December 4th, but no cablegram, which according to the promise made by Mr. Norris to his mother, should have been sent, has been received.

The anxious woman waited for a week. She thought that, perhaps, he might have missed the Northam or decided to wait for the next steamer, though this was scarcely likely, as Mr. Norris was desirous of making a quick trip and expected to be back in San Francisco in February. So anxious was he to

make close connections that he took a tug at Southampton in order to catch the Berlin, which was already out in the stream. Even if he had missed the Northam, or decided to explore Madeira more thoroughly, there are weekly steamers between Madeira and Cape Town, and he should have arrived at the latter place on the 11th.

Mrs. Norris waited, growing more anxious daily, until last Wednesday. Then she began to send daily cablegrams to Cape Town. She has received but one answer, that in reply to a cablegram sent to the African Bank at Cape Town, upon which Mr. Norris had a letter of credit. Her message said, "Has Norris arrived?" The answer was horribly brief, "No."

So far Mr. Norris has not drawn any money in Cape Town, which would have been his first errand there, as the \$25, drawn at Madeira, was merely for spending money. Until it was known that the Northam had arrived at her destination, Mrs. Norris hoped that the steamer had been delayed by some accident to her machinery.

Every effort will now be made to find out if Mr. Norris left Madeira on the Northam. In that way his movements may be traced.

Mr. Norris went to South Africa partly for pleasure and partly as the "Chronicle's" special correspondent. Though a young man of wealth and leisure he has a strong literary bent and has published a number of poems and stories, as well as two books. He is also an artist of no mean ability, and has illustrated much of his own work. His style is unique, finished and mature. Though a good deal of a dilettante [*sic*] he has done considerable serious work for a man whom circumstances had placed beyond the necessity of labor.

Those who know him best flout the idea of his having fallen a victim of foul play. He is loosely built, but tall, strong and athletic, and is an excellent traveler. He spent four years in Europe, and is an accomplished linguist. On his return from Europe he entered the University of California, graduating in 1894. The next year he spent at Harvard, and had only been his mother's guest for a few months when the desire to roam again took possession of him, and he left for South Africa.

Norris has had a good deal of experience for a man of 30, which leads his friends to expect that he will turn up in time safe and sound. He has always been considered erratic, and a good exponent of the uncertain, artistic temperament. He is absent-minded and forgetful—except where his mother is concerned. That is why she finds it so hard to explain his silence.

Norris' friends are very sure that no mischance has befallen him. They consider it almost certain that he has stopped off somewhere on the way from Madeira to Cape Town, probably in search of material for his special letters, and has so far been too distant from the coast to communicate with his friends. They believe that he has seen fit to depart from his itinerary for good reasons, which will be duly explained.

Unless he has reached Cape Town by this time he is unaware of the consternation his silence has caused at home. He had letters of introduction to a great many prominent men at Cape Town and Johannesburg, but it is not known yet whether he has pre-

sented any of these.

Some of his friends are inclined to believe that he passed through Cape Town without stopping, except to mail letters, and is now on some long inland journey by ox team or at the mines blissfully unaware of the expensive and fruitless messages that are traveling over land and under sea in search of him.

Mr. Norris is an only son, his younger brother, Lester, having died when a lad. Half the banks in town are engaged in trying to devise means by which Mrs. Norris may gain some definite information of her son. Meanwhile there will be a daily cablegram sent by the round-about London route, until definite news of some kind is received.

*December 28, 1895, p. 12.*

### NORRIS REACHED CAPE TOWN

#### HIS MOTHER RECEIVES A CABLE-GRAM.

There His Trail Is Lost—

News Telegraphed by the Bank of Africa.

In response to a cablegram sent by Mrs. B.F. Norris of this city to the Bank of Africa, at Cape Town, regarding the whereabouts of her son Frank Norris, the following cablegram was received yesterday by Mrs. Norris: "Arrived; cannot trace afterward; will advertise." This cable was in response to a message sent by Mrs. Norris the day previous, which said: "Cable fate of Norris, due on Norham Castle December 9th."

This cablegram made Mrs. Norris very anxious, as it destroyed the hopes she had previously entertained that her son had possibly stopped off at some intermediate point, or had gone to St. Helena from Madeira, at which place he would have been cut off from cable communication and might have had to wait a fortnight for a way steamer.

Mrs. Norris knew that her son would have been obliged to go to the bank at Cape Town at once to draw money, and felt alarmed that he had arrived in Cape Town and then disappeared.

It is known, however, that he traveled with an English mining engineer, who had letters of introduction to the same people as had Mr. Norris. This man was bound to a point beyond Johannesburg, and Mr. Norris' friends think that the American probably went directly to Johannesburg with his newfound friend. In this case, the cable which he undoubtedly ordered sent was never put on the wires. Mrs. Norris has been advised to cable the African bank not to advertise, as it might impede Mr. Norris' work. In a few days she will send a message of inquiry to Johannesburg in search of tidings.

*January 12, 1896, p. 18.*

#### A CABLE FROM CAPE TOWN.

### NORRIS IS NOW BELIEVED TO BE SAFE.

The Bank at Cape Town Wires  
an Opinion as to His Safety  
—With Dr. Jameson.

The friends of Frank Norris, who arrived at Cape Town, South Africa, some days ago, and from whom nothing has been heard, have reason to believe that he joined the Jameson expedition—merely as a spectator, of course.

In a letter written on the Norham Castle, when she was on her way from Southampton to Madeira, Mr. Norris said that there were 400 young Englishmen in the cabin. The Jameson expedition waited for these re-enforcements before starting for the Transvaal. Mr. Norris' mother conjectured that it would be like her son; and very natural, considering his position as a newspaper correspondent for the "Chronicle," as well as for Harper's Weekly, for him to join this expedition. She only hopes that he was not wounded, but is a prisoner with the rest of the party. Even if so, she fears that the privations to which they were subjected has made him ill. She expects to receive a letter before many days, but probably this will not throw any light on Mr. Norris' movements in regard to the Jameson party, as the letter would probably be mailed directly upon his arrival at Cape Town, after having been written en voyage. Mrs. Norris thinks he cabled, but that the message was misdelivered or never sent.

Twelve days ago Mrs. Norris cabled to Cape Town and Johannesburg. No response was ever received from the latter, and probably the cablegram never got through, as Johannesburg was then in a state of siege. Yesterday an answer was received from Cape Town. It was not very lucid.

The message was, "Believe Norris right." From the cablegram received by the bank there was reason to believe that Mr. Norris had gone with the Jameson party. Mrs. Norris' message was sent through the First National Bank of this city, ordering that a search be made for Norris, the bank to bear the expenses.

The supposition that Mr. Norris went with the Jameson party would explain his long silence and also his failure to draw money on his letter of credit. As he had letters of introduction to all the men who are in trouble over the Jameson matter, Mrs. Norris is afraid he will have difficulty in getting away from Johannesburg, if he is there. So far Mr. Norris has not cabled to any of the papers for which he was to act as special correspondent, but the impossibility of sending the news, except through official channels, would account for that.

*February 9, 1896, p. 17.*

### NORRIS COULD NOT CABLE.

The Boers Refused to Forward His Messages.

Mrs. Norris received a letter yesterday from her son, Frank, dated Long's Hotel, Johannesburg,

January [sic] 6th. In it he reviewed [sic] briefly the events described in his letter to the "Chronicle" and added:

"I endeavored to cable to you and the 'Chronicle' at the time of the insurrection, but the Boer Government refused to take all dispatches." He explained why he did not receive mail, and said: "The steamer Scott, which was carrying the English mails and at the same time some Maxim guns for the Boers, broke down most opportunely and conveniently, and had to put into Vigo." He expressed great regret that he was not able to go up the coast, as he had outlined, to Bulawayo, as the Boers had stopped all travel up the coast. In closing he refers to the Tillmans and Hammonds returning to Johannesburg. Tillman recently married Captain Merry's daughter. The wedding reception was at the Hammond home.

Mrs. Norris said: "Unless something has transpired to give Frank the desired opportunity to go up the coast, I expect him home early in March. I have a vague suspicion that he may have come under the ban with other Americans, and been told that his room was preferred to his company. A cable from him saying that he was 'all right again' might imply that he had been ill or in some trouble."

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Jesse S. Crisler, "Norris's Departure for Johannesburg," *Frank Norris Studies*, No. 3 (Spring 1987), pp. 4-5.

<sup>2</sup>The ship's name is reported as *Northam Castle* in the first article; another inconsistency to note is the date of the arrival in Cape Town, cited as 4 December in the first article and as 9 December in the second.

<sup>3</sup>Joseph Katz lists six in "Shorter Publications of Frank Norris," *Proof*, 3 (1973), 178-79. The seventh, "The Uprising in the Transvaal," was identified by Joseph Gaer in *Frank Norris (Benjamin Franklin Norris): Bibliography and Bibliographical Data* (Berkeley: California Literary Research Project No. 3, 1934), p. 15. The eighth, "A Steamship Voyage with Cecil Rhodes," was located by Robert A. Morace, "A Critical and Textual Study of Frank Norris's Writings from the San Francisco Wave," Dissertation, University of South Carolina, 1976, p. 134.

<sup>4</sup>Norris's first article, "A Californian in the City of Cape Town," published in the *Chronicle* on 19 January 1896, is datelined "Cape Town, December 9, 1895" (p. 19).

Review: *The Art of Frank Norris, Storyteller*  
By Barbara Hochman (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1988), 149 pp. \$22.00  
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Although books like June Howard's *Form and History in American Literary Naturalism* (1985) and Walter Benn Michaels' *The Gold Standard and the Logic of Naturalism* (1987) have brought critical discussion of Norris into the climate of the 1980s, it has been a full decade since the publication of the last full-length critical

study of Norris, Don Graham's *The Fiction of Frank Norris: The Aesthetic Context* (1978). Barbara Hochman's *The Art of Frank Norris, Storyteller* is thus a welcome sight, and Hochman demonstrates the continuing viability of Norris's work in the postmodern world with this eminently readable study.

As with most Norris scholarship of the past twenty years, Hochman works to distance Norris from traditional naturalistic categorizations, and she does so by observing that "the imaginative force of Frank Norris's work is . . . to be sought in . . . a cluster of preoccupations that center on the vulnerability of the self." Norris's characters are "afraid of change, loss, and human contact," struggling "for a measure of equilibrium within the relentless flow of internal and external pressures." They seek to stabilize their existence in the face of flux through "the power of memory, language, and art" (p. 1). Hochman also distances Norris from deterministic doctrine by exploring his connections to Romantic authors like Wordsworth and Keats, giving credence to Norris's claim that he was interested in "Romance," though his definition of such was idiosyncratic.

One of the main strengths of Hochman's argument is its ability to focus upon the psychological core of the fictions and, at the same time, account for the overt statements of naturalistic doctrine which have long been viewed as the essential. Indeed, since such ideological pronouncements appear contradictory to concepts generated in the plot, reconciling what the narrator declares with what the stories actually reveal is a *sine qua non*. Hochman argues that such discursive ideological passages are not the primary thematic statements, but are one of several kinds of stabilizing responses to the flux of human experience discernible in the novels. Norris's works depict many ways in which characters wrongly attempt to shield themselves from the instability of these processes, such as refuge in the stasis and permanence of art, obsessive storytelling, and calcified memories. And in one respect, Norris shares this trait with his characters: the naturalistic formulae were his means of imposing order upon the "flow" that he pictured, until he began to come to terms with the fact that experience cannot be "frozen" thus. To Hochman, the diminution of the role that the discursive, naturalistic narrator played in the later works is the measure of Norris's own maturation.

Hochman's analysis is particularly successful in the resolutions of many of the apparent contradictions in *Vandover and the Brute*, and it furthers current critical attempts to recognize the value and complexity of that book. To her, *Vandover* portrays a dismal failure at integrating the self, just as *The Pit*, which exhibits Norris's maturity as a thinker and a writer, portrays more successful attempts at doing so. (In this way, Hochman's argument is similar to Donald Pizer's in seeing Norris progressively working through various stages of failure and success at aligning the self with world processes.)

In fact, Hochman's argument is most illuminating when applied to *Vandover* and *The Pit*. The thesis suits *McTeague* as well, but I was sometimes troubled by the fact that it almost works better in the Maria Macapa/Zerkow and Grannis/Baker subplots than it does for Trina and *McTeague*. The diffuseness of *The*

*Octopus* makes argument for its comprehensive vision difficult and unwieldy, but Hochman integrates much of the novel's disparateness with surprising aplomb. Though Norris's other novels do not receive their own chapters, *Blix* is discussed at length and is designated an important example of characters' successful integration into life processes. Hochman has little use for *A Man's Woman* and especially *Moran of the Lady Letty*. But, she discusses *A Man's Woman's* place in the Norris canon sufficiently to confirm that it is quite relevant to the thesis she pursues: its hero and heroine succeed in life by embracing, rather than continuing to resist, change—seeing the opportunities for progress available to those who will abandon loyalties to past patterns of experience and capitalize upon new configurations. Indeed, while the succinctness of Hochman's book is a virtue, I longed for a fuller discussion of these novels—even the absurd *Moran*—since *Vandover* and *The Pit* gain so much from the analysis that is provided.

I would say the same regarding Norris's other writings which receive little or no attention. Hochman aptly demonstrates the pertinence of some short stories and essays to the Norris canon, which only makes one wish for more discussion of Norris's lesser known writings. Along the same lines, and given the psychological focus of the writings examined, more discussion of Norris's concerns in the light of both turn-of-the-century and current psychological theory could help to further his standing as a writer worth serious consideration.

In the end, the book does greatest service to Norris by discounting the notion that, as a deterministic naturalist, he is obsolete. Hochman's book continues the work of demonstrating that, in fact, writers like Norris were perhaps the vanguard of twentieth-century literature rather than the last sputterings of the nineteenth century. Further, although Norris's vision is ultimately optimistic regarding humanity's ability to integrate self into life processes, his concern with ideas like flux, instability, and chaos in the world make him a legitimate figure for study in the post-modern-age context. *The Art of Frank Norris, Storyteller*, with lucidity and without jargon, demonstrates how such a study can be done.

#### Current Publications: Update

Thomas K. Dean  
University of Iowa

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

Filler, Louis. *The Unknown Edwin Markham: His Mystery and Its Significance*. Yellow Springs, Ohio: Antioch Press, 1966, pp. 127-28. Filler relates that Markham was impressed by Norris's *The Octopus*—not surprisingly since he had been the model for the poet Presley. Filler also gives a brief description of a poetry contest won by Markham's friend, John Vance Cheney:

Collis P. Huntington had established a competition for the best poetical response to "The Man with a Hoe."

Woodress, James. "Norris." In *American Literature to 1900*. Ed. James Vinson and D. L. Kirkpatrick. London: The Macmillan Press Limited, 1980, pp. 247-249. Provides a biographical sketch, a list of works by Norris, and a brief critical assessment.

Dover, Linda A. "Frank Norris' *A Man's Woman*: The Textual Changes," *Resources for American Literary Study*, 13 (1983), 165-183. Describes the textual variants between the newspaper serializations of *A Man's Woman* and the first book edition. Concludes that Norris did not significantly alter the novel, thus suggesting his satisfaction with it.

Baender, Paul. "Megarus ad lunam: Flawed Texts and Verbal Icons," *Philological Quarterly*, 64 (1985), 439-457. Focusing on the concept of "authorial intention" in light of editorial/authorial revision, Baender discusses the alteration of August's accident scene in *McTeague*, arguing that the revised text in which McTeague searches for his hat is consistent with the aims of the novel (see 449-51).

Graham, Don. "Remembering the Alamo: The Story of the Texas Revolution in Popular Culture," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, 89 (1985), 35-66. Negates Norris's claim in "A Neglected Epic" that the story of the Alamo had been neglected in literature (see 42-43).

Meldrum, Barbara Howard. *Under the Sun: Myth and Realism in Western American Literature*. Troy, N.Y.: Whitson Publishing Company, 1985, p. 26, *passim*. "In his portrayal of the artist Presley in *The Octopus*, Norris caught the immensity of the western imagination and mythical consciousness."

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*Frank Norris Studies* is a publication of the Norris Society and is issued twice per year for the members. Membership for individuals and institutions requires the payment of dues of ten dollars per year to The Frank Norris Society Inc., Dept. of English, Florida State University, Tallahassee FL 32306-1036. Manuscripts should be addressed to either of the editors: Jesse S. Crisler, Communications, Brigham Young University—Hawaii Campus, Laie, Hawaii 96762; or Robert C. Leitz, III, English, Louisiana State University in Shreveport, Shreveport LA 71115. Members of the Editorial Advisory Board include: Don L. Cook, Indiana University; Charles L. Crow, Bowling Green State University; William B. Dillingham, Emory University; James D. Hart, The Bancroft Library; Donald Pizer, Tulane University; and Barbara Hochman, Tel Aviv University. Joseph R. McElrath, Jr., Florida State University, is the managing editor.