

The Editor's Un-Easy Chair:

Welcome to the inaugural issue of *ALN: The American Literary Naturalism Newsletter*. Everyone here at ALN (yes, we have a staff of thousands) hopes that this issue finds you well and that you enjoy issue number one.

For many years I have wished for a place where scholars of American literary naturalism could go for call-for-papers, bibliographic updates, and news-related items. I usually had that wish each fall as I searched for call-for-papers for the annual ALA conference. Some societies e-mailed their cfps to a discussion list, others mailed them with dues notices, and still others seemed to keep their cfps a well guarded secret, fearing, I believe, government reprisal or worse. *Wouldn't it be nice if we could create a centralized location for all things naturalism?* I thought to myself in December 2005, *a veritable Wal-Mart of naturalism?* Thus ALN was born, but we eliminated the doorway greeters with the happy-face buttons.

I knew that I couldn't produce ALN without help, so I enlisted the aid of Steven Frye as Associate Editor with false promises of fame and financial reward, and we called a meeting of the relevant power brokers at the 2006 ALA conference. After a productive hour, we broke for lunch with a plan in place and cross-society cooperation established. Now, five months and much fretting later, ALN is a reality, with an initial distribution of about 500 copies.

My thanks to everyone who helped in the production of this issue. Special thanks to Steven Frye for his able assistance, to Joseph Garfield and Cindy Lloyd for helping me with numerous technical matters, and to Clare Eby, James R. Giles, and Donna Campbell for their fine contributions to this issue.

Naturally,
Eric Carl Link

In This Issue:

Features

Naturalism in the Classroom

Teaching the Contemporary Naturalism of Cormac McCarthy's *Outer Dark* 2
James R. Giles

Naturalism, Transcendentalism, and the American Landscape: An Undergraduate Course in American Nature Writing 7
Steven Frye

Interview

Ten Questions with Clare Eby 11

Departments

Five on Fourteen 14
Read these books. Now.

Naturalism News 14
Things Brian Williams is afraid to tell you

The Call of the Papers 19
Meet me at the Spouter Inn for Chowda

The Bibliographic Update 21
Ask yourself: have I earned tenure yet?

From the Archives 26
Old stuff you should probably care about

In Memoriam 30
Frank Norris Remembered

A Fistful of Websites 31
Indoor Surfing for Heliophobes

Teaching the Contemporary Naturalism of Cormac McCarthy's *Outer Dark* James R. Giles

As dramatically as any single text, Cormac McCarthy's *Outer Dark* (1968) illustrates the complexities of contemporary American literary naturalism. The defining naturalistic qualities of McCarthy's second novel are a multilayered determinism, a focus on illiterate characters existing on the margins of a repressive society, the incorporation of extreme plot elements dominated by violence and taboo subject matter, and the narrative voice of a detached spectator. The determinism of *Outer Dark* exemplifies the distance that contemporary American naturalism has traveled from its late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century origins. As Steven Barza, among other critics, has pointed out, the external forces that mold the lives of characters in late-twentieth-century naturalism are predominantly "unnamed, unknown, [and] inscrutable" (p.142). In the opening of *Outer Dark*, Culla and Rinthy Holme, brother and sister, are isolated in a brutal and decadent landscape, seeming to exist in a primitive state cut off from any recognizably civilized community. The sheer isolation of their existence is one of the central deterministic elements of McCarthy's novel.

As is true of much contemporary naturalism, a strong degree of existential guilt is present in *Outer Dark*. Culla and Rinthy have committed incest, an act that results in Rinthy's giving birth. The incest further divorces them, and Culla especially, from the hope of meaningful redemption. Yet the sheer isolation of their lives, never explained by McCarthy, makes the incest seem almost inevitable. Culla and Rinthy are virtually reincarnations of Adam and Eve trapped from the first in a decidedly fallen world. Moreover, the incest has occurred before the

novel opens and seems as much an inevitable condition of their lives as a choice they have made. The relationship of *Outer Dark*'s existential overtones to the text's dominant naturalism would be a profitable topic for classroom discussion, especially in the context of the issue of choice. In fact, *Outer Dark* provides a unique springboard for a discussion of the extent to which individual choice can logically exist in a naturalistic text.

Unlike Rinthy, Culla is overwhelmed by guilt, which he augments by deciding to kill the baby. Unable to carry through on his decision, he abandons the unnamed child in the woods, an act that results in the baby's kidnapping by a depraved, pornography-peddling tinker and sets in motion the period of wandering exile that he experiences for the rest of the novel. Before taking this drastic action, Culla goes to the nearest settlement to obtain food for Rinthy only to find the only store closed because it is Sunday. When he attempts to gain entrance to the store, a voice "from an upper window" calls down, "we still christians here. You'll have to come back a weekday" (p. 26). As signaled by McCarthy's use of the lower-case "c," Christianity in *Outer Dark*, rather than providing spiritual assistance to desperate characters, functions as an agent of harsh judgment as is most evident in a scene late in the novel involving a "parson or what looked like one" (p. 221) who almost brings about Culla's death. In part, McCarthy is intent upon satirizing Protestant fundamentalism here, but more importantly he is emphasizing that a forgiving, supportive god is absent from the world inhabited by Culla and Rinthy.

Sexuality in the world of *Outer Dark* is exemplified by the tinker's crude pornography, "a sorry drawing of a grotesquely coital couple." When Culla pushes the pamphlet back at him, the tinker observes, "I just thought I'd let ye take a peek. Don't hurt nothin' do it?" (p. 8). In fact, it does hurt something: it reduces sexuality, and the body, to the level of a grotesque biology. Culla does not reject the

pornography on moral or aesthetic grounds, but because, like his sister's constantly lactating body, it evokes the guilt he feels over his incestuous relationship with Rinthy. He is, in fact, haunted by, and terrified of, his own sexuality. As in Norris's *McTeague*, sexuality in *Outer Dark* is a debased construct resulting in guilt and suffering. A comparison of Norris's and McCarthy's approaches to sexuality would perhaps lead to a consideration of other important aspects of the two texts. Students could be asked to consider the degree to which each writer incorporates sexuality in his novel for the purpose of sheer sensationalism or whether they envision it as a manifestation of a fallen and degenerate world.

After the tinker discovers the infant abandoned by Culla in the woods and kidnaps it, Culla and Rinthy, illiterate and lacking any knowledge of the world outside their limited experience, embark on separate journeys to recover the child. What Culla finds instead is a landscape so saturated with violence as to be almost surreal. This unrelenting, extreme violence is so inescapable in *Outer Dark* that it functions as the central external determinist force in the novel; its origins are certainly unnamed and inscrutable. Still it takes on human shape in the form of the "grim triune" that haunts the landscape through which Culla travels, bringing brutal, horrific death to everyone with whom he comes in contact. As much as any aspect of *Outer Dark*, McCarthy's treatment of the murderous trio exemplifies the distance his aesthetic has traveled from classic American naturalism. While to a degree undeniably human, the grim triune seem on one level to be personifications of random, murderous violence, of obscene death. The reader encounters them even before Culla and Rinthy, and they possess a supernatural knowledge of the secrets of Culla's life, of his incest with Rinthy, and even of his dreams. In a key exchange with Culla, the bearded leader of the three tantalizes Culla concerning his identity:

[the bearded man]: I guess you'd like to know [my name] . . . , wouldn't ye?

Yes, Holme said.

The man's teeth appeared and went away again as if he had smiled. Yes, he said. I expect they's lots would like to know that.

.....

Some things is best not named, the man said. (174-175)

The crimes of the triune (mass murder, cannibalism, grave robbing) constitute horrific violations of the most universal of social taboos.

Characters who, to some degree, transcend traditional realism are not unknown in classic naturalism, as in, for instance, Vanamee, the mystic, and S. Behrman, the personification of capitalist greed in Norris's *The Octopus*, as well as the transformed Buck, who attains mythological stature in the conclusion of London's *The Call of the Wild*. But even these characters, unlike McCarthy's grim triune, are envisioned as acting within a dominant fictional realism. The plane of unreality inhabited by *Outer Dark's* three wandering killers is foreshadowed by Culla's nightmare that opens the novel's central plot. In it, Culla listens to a "prophet" exhorting "a delegation of human ruin who attended him with blind eyes upturned and puckered stumps and leprous sores." Abruptly Culla finds himself to be a pariah even among this "delegation of human ruin": "they grew seething and more mutinous and he tried to hide among them but they knew him even in that pit of hopeful dark and fell upon him with howls of outrage" (pp. 5-6). As Jay Ellis points out, "instead of giving us a soothsayer looking into the future, the nightmare . . . passes judgment on Culla's past misdeeds" (p. 115); and, to a degree, the grim triune functions in the novel as the enforcers of that judgment.

Still there is a human dimension to their characterization, and their undeniable humanness adds to the sheer horror they embody. At one point, they rob graves and

steal the clothes of the buried and then pose the corpses in obscene positions. When the denuded corpses are brought to town on the back of a wagon, an unidentified man says to Culla: "I hate knowin they is such people, don't you" (p. 88). What the man means is that he hates being reminded of the depravity of which "people" are capable. A teacher of *Outer Dark* should consider McCarthy's mixture of allegorical and realistic elements in the characterization of the triune, especially in the context of the customary role, if any, of allegory in classic naturalism. Can allegory, for instance, be related to the naturalistic obsession with atavism and "the beast within"?

A dominant thrust of McCarthy's aesthetic is the exploration of the irrational extremes, the violent excesses, of which human beings are capable. Since Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* and Norris's *McTeague*, such exploration has been a central aspect of American literary naturalism. Naturalism's emphasis on excess, on violent passions, on human behavior existing outside the customary boundaries of civilized society were the primary considerations for Frank Norris when he insisted, in "A Plea for Romantic Fiction," that the movement should be understood in the context of its relationship to romanticism, and specifically the romanticism of Emile Zola, rather than middle-class realism. *Outer Dark*, as well as McCarthy's other fiction, might be discussed as particularly grim examples of "romantic naturalism."

Marginalized human beings, the socially outcast and exploited, have traditionally populated naturalist texts; and one would need to look hard to find fictional characters existing more completely on the fringes of society than Culla and Rinthy Holme. Until Culla's ill-fated journey to town to find help for Rinthy, one wonders whether they have ever known anything like an established human society. Brian Evenson argues that all McCarthy's protagonists exist in such an isolated state, and he divides them into three categories: "One

group might be called tramps, and would consist of characters who, despite wandering elements, retain (sometimes reluctantly) a sort of moral code with some correspondence to the codes of society. Another might be referred to as spirited unfortunates, those who struggle against the world to escape fortune's woes. . . . A third type could be called nomadic" (p. 41). Culla Holme belongs to the first of Evenson's categories; and his barely intact moral code, which manifests itself primarily through guilt, only serves to intensify his moral suffering. The grim triune are perhaps McCarthy's ultimate depiction of the nomadic character, wandering through a depraved landscape, bringing death to virtually everyone they encounter. The vulnerability of the social outcast is seen in Culla's two encounters with squire figures, landed patriarchs with the power to threaten Culla with jail if he does not follow their orders. Culla and Rinthy are every bit as powerless to control their destinies as is Crane's Maggie Johnson or Norris's McTeague.

Nevertheless, McCarthy limits the degree of the reader's sympathy with his protagonists by describing them through a spectator narration that is reminiscent of, but even more extreme than, that described by June Howard in *Form and History in American Literary Naturalism*. Howard argues that naturalist texts tend to be narrated by privileged spectator figures who are exempt from the external forces that control the lives of the dominant characters and are thus "slumming." This privileged exemption from naturalistic control makes any genuine identification with the naturalistic victim impossible; thus the observing character can only pretend such identification. This narrative distance, Howard argues, extends to the writer and the reader, who are also exempt from control by external forces. Such exemption, she believes, is necessary to preserve the reformist aspect of naturalism. While the characters cannot alter their fates, the writer must retain the ability to

convince the reader that society itself can be changed.

McCarthy, however, denies the possibility of such change from the beginning. The world of *Outer Dark* is so fallen, so depraved, so plagued by violence that it exists outside the possibility of change or reform. McCarthy chooses not to observe the essentially demented landscape of his novel through the privileged vantage point of an educated character like Norris's Presley in *The Octopus* or Jack London's Humphrey Van Weyden in *The Sea Wolf*. Nature itself is set in opposition to Rinthy and especially to Culla. In fact, a kind of primitive nature has assumed the spectator position in an early scene in the novel:

When [Culla] crashed into the glade among the cottonwoods he fell headlong and lay there with his cheek to the earth. And as he lay there a far crack of lightning went bluely down the sky and bequeathed him in an embryonic bird's fissured vision of the world and transpiring instant and outrageous from dark to dark a final view of the grotto and the shapeless white plasm struggling upon the rich and incunabular moss like a lank swamp hare (p. 17).

This ornate language, bordering deliberately upon excess, functions as the only mode of narrative mediation in the passage. Culla's very existence is bequeathed through the fissured vision of an embryonic bird; he is thus described as the creation of a primordial, pre-human evolutionary stage of nature.

Thus, the civilized middle-class reader can only contemplate Culla, and the landscape in which he exists, from an extreme distance that makes any close identification with him impossible. McCarthy positions the reader as a distanced spectator of Culla's doomed search for his lost son. This perspective produces a kind of evolutionary, rather than socioeconomic slumming—it is as if McCarthy is providing a glimpse of a world that exists only in the reader's racial memory. Though

McCarthy's method of producing it is uniquely his own, this effect is not unlike the obsessive search for the primordial that runs throughout Jack London's fiction. A classroom comparison of McCarthy's evolutionary slumming and London's search for the primordial would provide important insights into the aesthetics of the two writers.

Yet despite severely limiting reader identification with Culla, McCarthy's narrative demands reader recognition of his essential humanness and of the human dimension of the violent landscape through which he travels. Perhaps the demented serial killer Lester Ballard of *Child of God* (1974) best illustrates a fundamental implication of McCarthy's aesthetic. Though the acts committed by Lester seem inhuman, McCarthy demands reader acknowledgment that he is finally a "child of God much like yourself perhaps" (p. 4). John Lang writes that "Lester's crimes would not place him beyond a human continuum on which we find John Wayne Gacy, Ted Bundy, and Jeffrey Dahmer" (p. 93). Of all McCarthy's creations, *Outer Dark's* grim triune comes the closest to existing in a realm outside the human. McCarthy's determination to explore violence and other modes of excessive behavior inevitably raises questions about the degree to which his readers can feel any genuine sympathy for his characters. The degree of sympathy readers feel for the characters of *Outer Dark*, Culla and Rinthy Holme especially, would be a profitable subject for classroom discussion.

As Jay Ellis, among others, has pointed out, McCarthy appears in one scene in the novel to be pushing taboo subject matter to an almost unbearable extreme. In it, Culla is forced to witness the hideous sacrifice of his already mutilated child by the bearded leader of the triune:

Holme saw the blade wink in the light like a long cat's eye slant and malevolent and a dark smile erupted on the child's throat and went all

broken down the front of it. The child made no sound. It hung there with its one eye glazing over like a wet stone and the black blood pumping down its naked belly. The mute one knelt forward. He was drooling and making little whimpering noises in his throat The man handed him the child and he seized it up, looked at Holme with witless eyes, and buried his moaning face in its throat (p. 236).

Ellis perceptively discusses McCarthy's employment of meiosis in the scene (p. 125); and this device allows McCarthy to narrate such an almost unimaginable brutal scene while simultaneously distancing the reader from it. Moreover, as is true throughout *Outer Dark*, the sheer excess of the scene gives it surrealistic overtones. A teacher of *Outer Dark* will need to reconcile the text's surreal elements with its dominant naturalistic mode. In addition, the sacrifice scene raises genuine questions concerning McCarthy's attitude toward his readers. Is the scene merely intended to shock, or does McCarthy have valid aesthetic reasons for incorporating such excessively brutal detail?

Perhaps the most outrageous element of the sacrifice scene lies in its echo of Christian communion. Thus, McCarthy emphasizes the horror of what takes place while the church ritual of the partaking of the blood of Christ. There is no savior in the world of *Outer Dark*; instead, one encounters only desperately fallen and spiritually mutilated human beings who can look only to each other in their desperate search for redemption. McCarthy's fiction is, in fact, filled with Christian allusions (the climactic scene with the hog drovers in *Outer Dark*, with its echoes of the New Testament book of Mark, is one example), but the landscape of his fiction is a spiritual "waste land" perhaps even more depraved than T. S. Eliot's.

Outer Dark is an important text in part because of its incorporation of such classic naturalistic elements as determinism, the

treatment of marginal characters trapped in a hostile environment, the depiction of extreme plot elements foreign to the experience of a middle-class reader, and the embracing of taboo subject matter. It is necessary to remember though that it was written a century after the classic texts of Norris, Crane, London, and Dreiser, and the years that intervened between their fiction and McCarthy's text were marked by repeated outbreaks of previously unimaginable violence. World War II and the Holocaust especially demonstrated the horrific violence of which human beings are capable. *Outer Dark* and all of McCarthy's work should be seen as part of the naturalistic project to bear witness to a century of violent excess that inspired the novels of Nelson Algren, Joyce Carol Oates, Hubert Selby, and Dorothy Allison. A comparison of *Outer Dark* to a classic naturalistic text, for instance, Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, Norris's *McTeague*, or London's *The Call of the Wild* will illustrate the twentieth-century evolution of American literary naturalism.

Works Cited

- Barza, Steven. "Joyce Carol Oates: Naturalism and the Aberrant Response." *Studies in American Fiction* 7 (1979):141-42.
- Ellis, Jay. *No Place for Home: Spatial Constraint and Character Flight in the Novels of Cormac McCarthy*. New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Evenson, Brian. "McCarthy's Wanderers: Nomadology, Violence, and Open Country." *Sacred Violence: A Reader's Companion to Cormac McCarthy*. Ed. Wade Hall and Rick Wallach. El Paso: Texas Western P, 1995. 41-48.
- Howard, June. *Form and History in American Literary Naturalism*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1985.
- Lang, John. "Lester Ballard: McCarthy's Challenge to the Reader's Compassion." *Sacred Violence*, 87-94.

McCarthy, Cormac. *Child of God*. New York: Random House Vintage, 1973.
 ----- . *Outer Dark*. New York: Vintage, 1968.

James R. Giles is a Presidential Teaching Professor of English at Northern Illinois University. He is the author of nine books including *The Spaces of Violence*, *Violence in the Contemporary American Novel*, *Understanding Hubert Selby, Jr.*, *The Naturalistic Inner-City Novel in America*, *Confronting the Horror: The Novels of Nelson Algren*, and *Irwin Shaw: A Study of the Short Fiction*. He is the co-editor of six other volumes including *Approaches to Teaching Louise Erdrich* and five volumes of the *Dictionary of Literary Biography on American Novelists Since World War II*.

Naturalism, Transcendentalism, and the American Landscape: An Undergraduate Course in American Nature Writing

Steven Frye

In the last three decades, as the environmentalist movement has taken on a new urgency, courses dealing with the representation of nature in literature have multiplied in university curriculum. The impulse among faculty to make texts relevant to student's lives as well as to contemporary ecological issues has motivated a variety of approaches to this material, and modern and postmodern critical paradigms, specifically ecofeminism, have enriched this field of inquiry and the teaching domain that accompanies it. Further, an increased preoccupation with American regional literatures, specifically the literature of the American West, has encouraged an interest in the figurative dimension of "place," and in this context "nature" and "nature writing" has become more than a mirror phenomenon, more

than an act of mimetic literary representation. Writing is now recognized as a means by which to create evocative symbolic systems, with nature as its raw material, that explore questions which transcend the contingencies of history and culture. These courses are varied, reflecting a host of complimentary and disparate concerns, and to be frank, as is often the case with new curriculum, they are often taught by faculty who are not directly trained to teach the classes they design. Certainly, professors teach authors and works they are intimately familiar with, but the context within which these authors are considered is new. This lack of uniformity is both rich and problematic, since two courses in "American Nature Writing," taught by different faculty in the same institution, may have little or no overlap in terms of the authors, poets, or essayists considered. There is a certain spice in variety, so long as students and faculty embrace this diversity.

However, the most common paradigm involves a focus on modern environmentalist concerns using modern and contemporary writers of the American West, writers ranging from Mary Austin to Edward Abbey. This model offers particular advantages, insofar as it encourages engagement in one of the most pressing issues of our time. Also, it invites students to read authors they are more likely to identify with, since both the themes explored and the style employed is recognizable. For all of its intellectual depth and value, this approach has its limitations, and for those of us trained in the nineteenth century, another possibility presents itself, one that I have employed in a course I have taught recently at my home institution, California State University, Bakersfield, both to English majors, General Studies majors, and as a part of our Environmental Resource Management Program. My particular design traces the complex history of American nature writing from the early nineteenth century to the present, with a focus on both the literary and

philosophical underpinnings of our varied conceptions of nature and its representation in language. My purpose is not to avoid pressing issues of environmentalism, but to explore the densely textured historical process and the trajectory of evolving values that provide the environmentalist movement with its sense of urgency and purpose.

Although I am concerned with the inherent limitations of periods and movements, I am convinced that the ideas that dominate a particular age, its *zeitgeist* so to speak, exert an incalculable influence on both intellectual and popular culture, and this is particularly true in America when we consider the often complimentary but sometimes disparate movements of American transcendentalism and American naturalism. Both movements resonate in our culture with ever-increasing force and with no observable signs of diminishing, although they are reconceived and reinvented as each generation confronts the complexities of contemporary experience. My course involves a selection of writers who explicitly thematize nature in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Anyone interested in the approach that I have taken may modify the readings to their own taste, without departing significantly from the purpose I have identified. I begin with selections from Thoreau's *Walden* (specifically "Economy," "Spring," "Higher Laws," and "Brute Neighbors"), followed by Whitman's "Song of Myself," "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking," and "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd," continuing with Jewett's "A White Heron." Of course, all of these works are generally associated with transcendentalism. I then transition into representative works of literary naturalism, beginning with London's *The Sea Wolf* or *The Call of the Wild*, followed by Frank Norris's *The Octopus*. After exploring these signature works of transcendentalism and naturalism, I move into the modern and contemporary periods, with an explicit focus on writers and poets with a distinct and personal approach to

nature, artists who also manifest the tension created when the two philosophical perspectives collide and blend. This leads me to a selection of poetry from Robert Frost ("Mending Wall," "Birches," "Design") Willa Cather's *My Antonia*, and in the contemporary period Norman Maclean's *A River Runs Through It* and Cormac McCarthy's *All the Pretty Horses*.

These selections chart a complex evolution of perspective on the role, value, and identity of nature, and they present some of the most powerful and incisive inquiries into the continuities and discontinuities built into transcendentalism and naturalism as philosophical systems. The later works involve attempts to integrate and sometimes complicate the movements, and in doing so demonstrate the extent to which these ideas resonate in our own time, shaping even our unconscious assumptions regarding the natural world and its relationship to human identity and the human soul, however conceived. In this way, I encourage students to inquire into the source of our preoccupation with environmental issues, and I hope to dispel the notion that ecological concerns are merely pragmatic, that we desire to preserve nature only because we depend upon it materially, that in Emerson's terms, we value it only as "commodity."

I begin by introducing students to transcendentalism as a cultural, political, and aesthetic movement, always emphasizing its diversity, but attempting to outline certain central features. Though I don't ask students to read Emerson's (1836) *Nature*, I discuss it in broad terms before we move into a detailed discussion of sections from Thoreau's *Walden*. "Economy" allows me to position Thoreau in the evolving tension present in the Western industrialized world, one that pits the forces of mercantile capitalism against an ethos of simplification that has historically held technological modernity in check. It becomes quite easy at this point to posit similarities between Thoreau's concerns and those

expressed by the counterculture of the 1960's, by certain strands of the contemporary environmentalist movement, as well as by popular quasi-religious movements such as New Age. I am careful not to argue for a clean and unbroken line of influence, and I acknowledge the possibility of polygenesis, but I also point out that "hippies" often made direct reference to Emerson and Thoreau, that these two authors appear often on bookstore shelves in potpourri shops in New Age coastal communities in California such as Big Sur and Carmel, and that Thoreau's *Resistance to Civil Government*, a work of social theory which emerges directly from a transcendentalist framework, was a foundation for the social reforms initiated by Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King. Other sections of *Walden* allow me to introduce and complicate Thoreau's view of nature, especially the "Brute Neighbors" chapter, which anticipates the darker conceptions of literary naturalism and initiates a practice central to American nature writing, the use of landscape and natural imagery as symbol and metaphor.

This last technique forms my central focus in our discussion of Whitman's poetry. We explore "Song of Myself" as perhaps the most comprehensive poetic expression of the Emersonian ideal, and in doing so we point to some of the philosophical conundrums inherent in Emerson, his difficulty in reconciling the Mind/Body problem, specifically his desire to integrate and unify the two, which results in an ascetic impulse that in the end privileges the traditional idealist and Cartesian concept of Mind. I point directly to section six, the symbol of the grass, and we explore the possibility that in Whitman's hands the symbolic use of natural imagery allows for a rhetorical integration of Mind and Body, a reconciliation that philosophical discourse cannot achieve. Other Whitman poems allow us to further examine the poet's figurative use of nature, and we begin to see that Whitman, like Thoreau, begins at least to engage some of

the concerns that are fully explored by naturalists. In this context, Jewett's "A White Heron" is particularly useful. By this time, students are pleased that we have moved into fiction; they are almost universally enraptured with Jewett's descriptions and her characterization, and the figure of the ornithologist becomes in some sense the symbolic entrance of scientific positivism into a natural world dominated by optative, quasi-religious, romantic conceptions.

Given what I hope is a fair and nuanced treatment of the complexities of transcendentalism, which involves an emphasis on the manner in which some writers begin to anticipate later literary naturalism, our move into London and Norris is generally quite smooth. I have alternated between London's *The Call of the Wild* and *The Sea Wolf* for often selfish reasons, depending on what I feel like re-reading, and the general model of the course allows for this, since many texts in both movements serve the same or a similar purpose. *The Call of the Wild* involves a more conventional natural setting, is full of adventure and incident, and is a popular world classic. It gives us a variety of descriptive passages to explore, and Buck as a character may be scrutinized as a powerful symbol of nature in a Spencerian and Darwinian context. London's personification of the great animal offers the opportunity for fruitful discussion of the naturalist propensity to blend the human and the beast, portraying the naturalist challenge to conventional notions of Western humanism. At the same time, it arguably suggests London's sympathy with that older tradition, since personification and humanization becomes a powerful means by which to create sympathy for Buck's character. *The Sea-Wolf* is in many ways a more enriching treatment of philosophical naturalism, and in this sense is perhaps a better choice for classes primarily made up of English majors. Wolf Larsen's novella length debate with Humphrey Van Weyden allows us to explore the philosophical

formulations around which naturalism functions, as well as the implications in identity formation that a materialist worldview involves. Though the text is less preoccupied with descriptions of nature, I am able to engage students in compelling inquiries into the dehumanizing potential built into the more extremist assumptions of scientific positivism, and we see a powerful example of London's own ambivalence to the ideas that compel him.

Frank Norris's *The Octopus* is the perfect transitional text to employ in displaying the evolving and even escalating tensions inherent in the culture at large, as transcendentalist and naturalist conceptions of nature and human identity become ubiquitous. The novel is programmatically naturalist, at times excessively so, as Norris, through the voice of various characters and his third person narrator, pronounces in polemical terms an extreme scientific naturalist position. As the evolution of Presley's character finally concludes in a fascinating blend of consciousness with the mystic Vanamee, we see the influence of LeConte's theistic evolution. Vanamee's pantheistic vision owes, it seems to me, an undeniable debt to Norris's transcendentalist forebearers, which is confirmed by Norris's expressed sympathy for Romanticism and the romance genre. This beautiful novel allows us to experience an epic rendering of a conflict between an optative, divinized nature and a darker positivist conception, and together as a class we begin to see a vivid picture of the polarities and contradictions built into our collective view of nature and our role within it.

These tensions are clearly apparent in the poetry of Robert Frost. I resist the tendency to reduce the poet to a cipher that channels pre-existing ideas, and I make certain to foreground his originality in terms of poetic technique, aesthetic assumptions, and themes. But I also point out that Frost was rooted in the poetic traditions of the British Romantics, and many of his poems display a preoccupation with naturalist concepts. This appears vividly in

"Mending Wall" in the symbol of the wall itself, in "Birches" in the dominant image around which the persona's vision is orchestrated, and most notably in "Design," a vivid rendering of a natural image which centers around important ontological questions, such as the nature of origins and the reality of evil--recalling in particular Stephen Crane's "A Man Said to the Universe." We explore the various ways in which Frost's poetry blends the presuppositions of transcendentalism and naturalism, sometimes with a remarkable degree of integration and synthesis and at other times in tensely rendered polyphonic terms.

Three novels round out my course. Willa Cather's *My Antonia*, in the wake of a series of great migrations, foregrounds an adapted form of eighteenth-century agrarian associationism. In Cather's hands, nature becomes the source of vitality and energy, while at the same time embodying a grand mystery. In this case, a distinctly American landscape becomes a mosaic of symbolic texture that is as much a refracted mirroring of human psychology as it is a literal rendering of place. This same symbolic landscape appears in Cormac McCarthy's *All the Pretty Horses*. This bildungsroman involves a character who journeys into a landscape that is simultaneously geographical and psychic, typological and mythic, objectively physical and intensely personal. It is a landscape that involves elements of transcendentalism and naturalism and establishes a context within which a young man seeks spiritual and personal identity. *A River Runs Through It* concludes the course as we explore what some consider a programmatic work of late twentieth century romanticism, especially in its direct inquiry into the relationship of nature and art, its unambiguous assertion of the *form* embodied in the act of fly-fishing, and in its emphasis on the "words" beneath rocks that inscribe a primordial language. But I invite students to explore the darker themes implicit in the story's tragic main character: the suffering artist who is

himself nature's work, and who occupies a land that is simultaneously beautiful, awe-inspiring, and beyond knowing, a nature that in the end seems violent and indifferent.

The course, then, involves an exploration of a historical trajectory that can't be charted in linear terms, but reveals itself in the kind of paradox and mystery that is always a part of our intellectual history rightly considered. A careful discussion of selected texts that either "represent" movements and periods or simultaneously embody and contend with them, provides students with a deeper sense of the shaping influence of ideas as they appear in literary art. More specifically, studying works from the transcendentalist and naturalist movements, and tracing their influence in the literary of political culture of the twentieth century, confirms the relevance of literature and the arts in a culture dominated by material pursuits and the cult of expediency. My continued hope, especially in this particular course, is to convince students of the confluence and compatibility of aesthetics and history, beauty and social relevance, thus arguing, implicitly at least, that a life of reading, intellectual endeavor, and critical self-inquiry is not only a responsibility but a pleasure.

Steven Frye is a professor of American literature at California State University, Bakersfield. He has published essays, articles, and reviews in *American Studies*, *Modern Fiction Studies*, *The Southern Quarterly*, *The Centennial Review*, *The Midwest Quarterly*, *The Kentucky Review*, *Leviathan*, and elsewhere. His forthcoming article on the naturalist aesthetic in Cormac McCarthy will appear in 2007 in *Studies in American Naturalism*. He has also published a book tracing theories of historical change entitled *Historiography and Narrative Design in American Romance: A Study of Four Authors*.

Ten Questions with Clare Eby



Clare Eby is a Professor of English at the University of Connecticut. Author of *Dreiser and Veblen, Saboteurs of the Status Quo*, editor of the Norton Critical Edition of *The Jungle* and the forthcoming Dreiser Edition of *The Genius*,

she is currently working on a study of Progressive era marriages.

ALN: Teachers and scholars of late nineteenth-century American literature are familiar with the usual suspects (McTeague, Sister Carrie, Red Badge), but, in your experience, what are some under-read or under-taught texts in the field?

When I read Frederic's *The Damnation of Theron Ware* in graduate school, it floored me. I went back to it about a year ago and still find it wonderful. I also thoroughly enjoy David Graham Phillips. While *Susan Lenox* (which Wharton adored) is magnificent, I love all the marriage novels, especially *Old Wives for New*, *The Husband's Story*, *The Price She Paid*, and *The Hungry Heart*.

ALN: How do you approach teaching American literary naturalism? What are some of your teaching strategies?

While I offer an occasional naturalism-centered course, as a teacher I am more of a general Americanist, and realist-naturalist novels find their way into many courses I teach. For instance, *Sister Carrie* is always the first book on my "Reading the American City" syllabus. Although what I am about to say may be anathema to some readers of ALN, I don't find definitions of naturalism useful in the undergraduate classroom. Definitions let students put literature in a box, removing it from their lives. I concentrate on helping

students see the continuity of the novels with the world they inhabit. For instance, with *Sister Carrie* we always spend a lot of time on the scenes with Carrie in the department store. It doesn't take much prodding for students to admit they have experienced similar commodity lust, and to consider that living in a consumer culture may shape them as profoundly. I know that reading Dreiser always makes me want to go shopping. A few years ago, while teaching *Sister Carrie*, I decided I needed to upgrade my wardrobe and went to Nordstrom's. Although I couldn't afford to buy anything there, I felt like I was in a Dreiser novel because the advertising campaign, emblazoned in all the display windows, was "Reinvent Yourself." My students loved hearing about how Carrie was alive and well in the mall.

Students also grasp the relevance when prodded to engage with the controversies the literature dramatizes. For example, I enjoy starting battles in class by reading aloud some of the cutting things Carrie and Hurstwood say to each other as she assumes the breadwinner role--passages that go to the heart of how Dreiser destabilizes gender roles. Or when I teach *McTeague*, we look at the scene when Mac learns he can no longer practice, which culminates in his wonderful question, "Ain't I a dentist?" Since students are themselves pursuing degrees and various types of certification, and many are also concerned with the question of upward mobility, Mac's simple question can spark real debate. Or for *The House of Mirth*, I ask where students' sympathies lie during Lily and Selden's "Republic of the Spirit" conversation--that always gets them going.

ALN: You've done a considerable amount of work on economic issues in late nineteenth-century American literature. Your work with Veblen is of particular note. What attracted you to Veblen, and how can one use Veblen's

work as a springboard for teaching American literary naturalism?

I was actually underwhelmed when I first read *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. It was not until I read *The Theory of Business Enterprise* (while working on a dissertation chapter on *The Trilogy of Desire*) that I began to see how much Veblen's work illuminates the literature of the period. Whether you are interested in reform, economics, evolution, gender, or just about anything else, Veblen provides a tool kit that helps make sense of naturalist novels. Although I have successfully used *Leisure Class* in graduate classes, Veblen is a hard sell with undergraduates because of his irony, satire, and vocabulary. If I wanted to use Veblen with undergrads, I would either use snippets (probably focusing on men's and women's roles) or one of his brilliant stand-alone essays such as "An Economic Theory of Woman's Dress," which pairs well with *The House of Mirth* or *Sister Carrie*.

ALN: What drew you to the study of Dreiser?

Three years after graduating from college, I was living in Philadelphia and selling insurance. I was miserable by day, but happily gorged myself by night on naturalist novels. During this period I first read Dos Passos's *USA* trilogy, Norris, and the *Trilogy of Desire*. *The Financier* in particular blew me away--the story was so riveting, while the financial focus and Philadelphia setting made me feel like I was looking into a fun house mirror reflection of my life. *The Financier*, in fact, made me decide to go to graduate school.

ALN: Could you take us through the process of editing the *The Genius for the Dreiser Edition* at the University of Illinois Press? Any surprises? What are the hurdles for the editor of a Dreiser text?

Although I think it is, hands down, the most important work I've done, editing 104 chapters makes for some tedious moments, so I think the biggest hurdle is having sufficient patience. I was lucky that a transcription of the 1911 holograph (handwritten manuscript and basis for the new edition) had already been prepared. I first checked the transcription for accuracy by reading it alongside the holograph. During this stage I also compared the 1911 version with the novel we already know as *The "Genius"*, to get a sense of how the two differed. During stage two, the actual textual editing, I would email two edited chapters a week with my emendations to the General Editor of the series, Tom Riggio. Often this seemingly straightforward labor of editing would turn up grey areas--for instance, I might find a particular turn of phrase needed emendation while Tom would think it was fine idiomatically. Sometimes we would go back and forth six times on a single point. I also drafted the textual notes, tables of emendations, and the bulk of the historical notes during this stage. Stage three consisted of the most difficult and also the most enjoyable work. Determining the compositional history involved detective work and speculation; unlike anything I had done before, the compositional history was especially challenging. But writing the historical essay--particularly the material on the visual arts--was the most enjoyable scholarship I've ever done. The real surprise was how differently Dreiser depicts Eugene Witla in the 1911 edition, particularly in terms of his sexuality and his notions of morality, from the "tom cat" rebel we know from the 1915 edition. The women in the 1911 edition are more in charge of their own sexuality, while Eugene assumes more of a reactive position. There were also personal surprises, such as how much I enjoy writing historical annotations. Another surprise, although it shouldn't be one, is that I still like both versions of *The Genius*.

ALN: *Your edition of The Genius is forthcoming, and you've recently published The Cambridge Companion to Theodore Dreiser and the Norton Critical Edition of Sinclair's The Jungle. What new projects are on the horizon?*

I'm working on a book on Progressive Era marriages. Although the book will focus on several married couples, there will be spin-offs, such as an article on bachelor David Graham Phillips's views of marriage.

ALN: *When you aren't working on Dreiser, Veblen, Norris, or Sinclair, what gets your attention?*

I made it through almost half of *Gravity's Rainbow* last summer. I love to cook, especially to throw dinner parties. I used to be an avid gardener, but my relationship with the outdoors is now largely involved with the companion you ask about below in question 10.

ALN: *In your opinion, where is the study of American literary naturalism headed? What directions might the study of late nineteenth-century American literature take for the next generation of readers and scholars?*

Maybe I get this from Veblen, but I don't like to make predictions. I would hope that the next generation of scholars would study some of the lesser-examined authors.

ALN: *What's your favorite work of literature to teach?*

I have a number. I love teaching *Native Son* and *Invisible Man*, though they can be very challenging in the classroom as you never know how students will react. (*Native Son* in particular is a Rorschach blot--readers' reactions often reveal more about them than about the novel.) I also enjoy teaching *Light in August* and all of Morrison's novels. Some of

my favorite naturalist novels in the classroom are, in addition to *Native Son* and *Sister Carrie*, *An American Tragedy* and *The Custom of the Country*.

ALN: On your faculty information page at the University of Connecticut, there is a great picture of you with lovely black-furred poodle. We here at ALN are dog lovers, and Frank Norris was known for his love of dogs (especially Great Danes). What can you tell us about your dog?

Ah, Portia! Well, she doesn't think much of the dogs in Jack London; she has already written her first book, *The Truth about Poodles*, and she'd like ALN readers to know that standard poodles are among the smartest of all breeds of dogs.

Thanks, Clare!--ALN

Five on Fourteen

For each issue of ALN the editors ask someone in the field to share his or her favorite books. We aren't sure why we do this. Call it an obsession. For this issue of ALN, we asked **Donna Campbell**, associate professor of English at Washington State University. She is the author of *Resisting Regionalism: Gender and Naturalism in American Fiction, 1885-1915 and other works on naturalist authors*.

The Campbell Top Five

1. Theodore Dreiser *Sister Carrie*
2. Harold Frederic *Damnation of Theron Ware*
3. F. Scott Fitzgerald *The Beautiful and Damned*
4. Edith Wharton *The House of Mirth*
5. Frank Norris *McTeague*

The editors wish to thank Professor Campbell for her list, and we must insist that if you haven't read these book you do so immediately. There will be a quiz. Yes, it will count in the grade book. No, we will not be dropping the lowest quiz grade.

Naturalism News

ALN seeks to note all items of interest to scholars of American literary naturalism and related to the memberships of the Frank Norris Society, the Jack London Society, the Hamlin Garland Society, the Stephen Crane Society, the Theodore Dreiser Society, and beyond. If you have a newsworthy item, please send it to Eric Carl Link at elink@ngcsu.edu and we'll be sure to take note of it in a forthcoming issue of ALN. Did someone in your society win an honor or reach an important career milestone? We want to know. Do you know of a forthcoming volume that might be of interest to the ALN readership? Tell us about it. Is there an event related to American literary naturalism that you attended (or would like us to attend in the future)? Are there competitions, prizes, or grant opportunities that you have learned about? Let us know.

•ALN•

New Reprints of Garland's books:

The Book of the American Indian. Edited and introduction by Keith Newlin. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2005.

Rose of Dutcher's Coolly. Edited and introduction by Keith Newlin. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2005.

•ALN•

New London editions:

Jack London's Tales of Cannibals & Headhunters: Nine South Sea Stories by America's Master of Adventure, edited by Gary Riedl and Thomas R. Tietze and published by the University of New Mexico Press, 2006.

Martin Eden, annotated by Dennis Hensley, has been published by Taylor University Press.

The Collected Science Fiction & Fantasy of Jack London published by Leonaur in 2005. Separate volumes as follows: Vol 1: *Before Adam & Other Stories*; Vol 2: *The Iron Heel & Other Stories*; and Vol 3: *The Star Rover & Other Stories*.

Jack London: Six Novels. With an introduction by Eric Carl Link. New York: Barnes & Noble Press, 2006. This volume reprints *The Call of the Wild*, *The Sea-Wolf*, *White Fang*, *Martin Eden*, *The Valley of the Moon*, and *The Star Rover*. \$12.95 in hardback.

•ALN•

Forthcoming Garland editions:

A Son of the Middle Border. By Hamlin Garland. Introduction by Keith Newlin. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, forthcoming January 2007.

A Daughter of the Middle Border. By Hamlin Garland. Introduction by Keith Newlin. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, forthcoming January 2007.

•ALN•

New Dreiser Volumes:

Forthcoming from the University of Illinois Press in the Pennsylvania Dreiser Edition, Thomas P. Riggio general editor:

The Genius, edited by Clare Eby, is due out in December 2006. Two editions scheduled for 2007 are *New Dreiser Letters, Vol. I: General Correspondence*, edited by Donald Pizer, and *New Dreiser Letters, Vol. II: Letters to Women*, edited by Thomas P. Riggio. Well under way are *The Financier*, edited by Roark Mulligan, and *Theodore Dreiser's Political Writings (1895-1945)*, edited by Jude Davis.

•ALN•

New Norris reprint:

The Octopus. With an introduction by Eric Carl Link. New York: Barnes & Noble Press, 2005

•ALN•

Join Howells for Dinner:

At the American Literature Conference in Boston next spring, the William Dean Howells Society will sponsor a dinner at the historic Tavern Club on Friday, May 25, at 7 p.m. Located at 4 Boylston Place, the Tavern Club counts W. D. Howells among its presidents. The full dinner includes cocktails, appetizers, and wine; gratuities are included. The cost is \$80 per person in advance. Information about reservations will appear in the spring issue of this newsletter, in *The Howellsian*, and at the Howells Society site, <http://www.howellssociety.org>

•ALN•

The Edith Wharton Essay Prize

Deadline Extended to 30 October 2006

The Edith Wharton Essay Prize is awarded annually for the best unpublished essay on Edith Wharton by a beginning scholar. Graduate students, independent scholars, and faculty members who have not held a tenure-track or full-time appointment for more than four years are eligible to submit their work.

The winning essay will be published in *The Edith Wharton Review*, a peer-reviewed journal, and the writer will receive an award of \$250.

All entries will be considered for publication in *The Edith Wharton Review* as well as for the Edith Wharton Essay Prize. Submissions should be 15-25 pages in length and should

follow the new 6th edition MLA style, using endnotes, not footnotes.

Applicants should not identify themselves on the manuscript but should provide a separate cover page that includes their names, academic status, e-mail address, postal addresses, and the notation "The Edith Wharton Essay Prize."

To submit an essay for the prize, send three copies by 30 October 2006 to either of the editors of *The Edith Wharton Review*:

Prof. Carole M. Shaffer-Koros
Dean, School of Visual and Performing Arts
VE-114A
Kean University
Union, NJ 07083

Prof. Linda Costanzo-Cahir
W 1091
Kean University
Union, NJ 07083

•ALN•

Jack London Symposium:

The next Jack London Symposium will be Oct. 10-11, 2008 at the Huntington Library, San Marino, CA. Contact Jeanne Reesman for more information (Jeanne.Reesman@utsa.edu)

•ALN•

Walker on London:

New installments of Dale L. Walker's ongoing series *Jack London: the Stories*, can be found on the World of Jack London web site www.jacklondons.net

•ALN•

Special Journal Issue on Jack London:

Eureka Studies in Teaching Short Fiction
(Fall 2004)

This issue features ten essays on London that offer practical pedagogical and critical approaches to works such as "The Mexican," "The Law of Life," "To Build A Fire," "A Piece of Steak," "Koolau the Leper," "The House of Pride," "Mauki," and *Martin Eden*. Editor Loren Logsdon invites interested London teachers, scholars, and readers who wish to purchase individual copies or who would like to subscribe to send their requests to the following address:

Loren Logsdon
ESTSF Editor
Eureka College
Eureka, IL 61530-1500

A single copy is \$6.00; a one-year subscription is \$12.00. Make checks payable to Eureka College—ESTSF for the amount and mail them to Loren, who will deposit the check and send out the copies.

London articles in this special issue include:

1. Miriam J. Shillingsburg, "Jack London's Boxing Stories: Parables for Youth"
2. Hal Blythe and Charlie Sweet, "Course Writing Objectives and London's 'Law of Life'"
3. John McKenna, "Jack London's 'Law of Life': A 21st Century Prophecy"
4. Carla A. Fellers, "Reading London: Searching 'The Law of Life' for Stylistic Principles"

5. Angela Glover, "Using Jack London's 'To Build a Fire' To Teach the Process of Revision"
6. Reinaldo Francisco Silva, "Jack London and Some of His Short Fiction: A Genuine Quarrel with Colonialism?"
7. Kenneth K. Brandt, "London's Fiction Technique and His Use of Schopenhauer as the 'Motif under the Motif' in 'The Law of Life'"
8. Bernard L. Ngovo, "Teaching Jack London's 'To Build a Fire' in a Self-Paced Instructional Mode to College Developmental Students"
9. Gordon Petry, "To Build a Story"
10. Tom Tietze, "Teaching Aesthetics: Art and the Artist in Jack London's *Martin Eden*"

•ALN•

The Call: The Newsletter of the Jack London Society publishes short articles on all aspects of Jack London's life and works. For more information, or to contribute, contact Ken Brandt (kbrandt@scad.edu).

•ALN•

The Chester Gillette Centennial

On June 22-24, 2006, several members of the International Theodore Dreiser Society took part in a conference in Herkimer, New York, commemorating the 1906 trial of Chester Gillette for the murder of Grace Brown, the originals for Clyde Griffiths and Roberta Alden. The conference, "Chester, Grace and Dreiser: The Birth of *An American Tragedy*," was hosted by Herkimer County Community College in its corporate and education center on a hilltop looking out over the Adirondacks. Conference director Jeff Steele and his colleagues made the event thoroughly

enjoyable and informative. Besides organizing a series of panels for the presentation of papers, they set up a display of artifacts relating to the Gillette-Brown case—Grace's famous letters to Chester written in the days before her death, the tennis racket Chester purportedly used to do her in, photographs of the principals in the trial, sensational newspaper accounts, and the like. They also organized a tour of the Herkimer County Courthouse, where the trial took place; the jail where Chester was held during the trial, across the street from the courthouse; and the site of Grace's drowning at Big Moose Lake, fifty-odd miles north of Herkimer in the lake country. Evening events included a showing of George Stevens's *A Place in the Sun*, the 1951 film based on Dreiser's novel and starring Montgomery Clift, Elizabeth Taylor, and Shelley Winters; and *The People vs. Gillette*, a reenactment of the Gillette-Brown trial written by Jack Sherman and performed by the Ilion Little Theater Company. Among the highlights the last day of the conference were multimedia presentations by authors of books on the case—Craig Brandon (on the murder and trial) and Joseph Brownell (on the early life of Grace Brown). The following is a list of presenters and their topics:

Panel 1

Mary Hricko—"From Crime to Culture: A Study of the Derivative Forms of the Gillette/Brown Murder Case."

Jerome Loving—"The Latest Return of Clyde and Roberta: The Opera *An American Tragedy* at the Met."

Roark Mulligan—"Dreiser's Murder Ballad."

Panel 2, Introduced by Clare Eby and Leonard Cassuto

Shannon O. Cotrell—"An American Tragedy and the Phenomenology of Crime."

Clara Elana Erdheim—"Is there a Place for Ecology in Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*?"

Larry Hussman—"The Impossible She."

Panel 3

Jillmarie Murphy—"A Small and routed Army: Clyde Griffiths and the Trauma of Religious Addiction."

Jude Davies—"Visualizing the Tragedy: Hubert Davis's Symbolic Drawings for *An American Tragedy*."

Panel 4

Stephen Brennan—"The Influence of *The New Criminology* on *An American Tragedy*."

John Cyril Barton—"Was Clyde Griffiths Guilty of Murder in the First Degree? Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* and the Cultural Rhetoric of Capital Punishment."

Panel 5

M. John Sherman, Dennis McDermott, and Patrick Kirk—A three-judge panel discussing the legal issues surrounding the Chester Gillette murder trial.

Panel 6

Craig Brandon, Joseph Brownell, Jerome Loving, and Judge M. John Sherman—An open discussion among the experts on the legal, literary, and historical impact of the story of Grace Brown and Chester Gillette over the last century.

More information on the conference is available online at <http://www.herkimer.edu/dreiser/index.htm>

•ALN•

Frank Norris on the Web

After many long years, the Frank Norris Society is finally going high-tech. Thanks to the able and generous assistance of Donna Campbell, the Frank Norris Society has a website. It's under construction, but we have a foundation laid. For the URL, see the list of websites later in this issue. Thanks, Donna!

•ALN•

In case you missed it...

Presentations of the 2006 8th Biennial Jack London Society Symposium, aboard the Celebrity *Mercury* (Seattle-Alaska-Seattle)

"*Burning Daylight* at the Business of Redemption" Donna Campbell, Washington State University

"Teaching 'To Build a Fire,'" Gayle Labor, Bossier Parish Community College

"'The Sun-Dog Trail': A Stereoscopic View," Sanford E. Marovitz, Kent State University

"The Problem of Agency in Jack London's *Burning Daylight*" Kenneth K. Brandt, Savannah College of Art and Design

"The Call of the Files," Sara S. Hodson, The Huntington Library

"From Queen Emma to Lepers: London's Hawaii," Tammi Andersland, Kaua'i Historical Society, John Lydgate, Kaua'i Historical Society

"Jack London's Palace of Fine Arts and 'The Hussy,'" Joe Johnson, Barrington, IL

"In After-Wisdom Spoken: *John Barleycorn*," Marinelle Ringer, Philander Smith College, North Little Rock, AR

"What Kind of Darwinian was London?" Lawrence I. Berkove, University of Michigan-Dearborn

"Twain and London: Recent Biography," Moderator: Sanford E. Marovitz, Kent State University, Participants: Earle Labor, Centenary College of Louisiana and Lawrence I. Berkove, University of Michigan-Dearborn

The Call of the Papers

2007 Popular Culture Association Conference

The Jack London Society

Call for Papers on any aspect of Jack London's life and works are invited for the 2007 Popular Culture Association Conference. The conference will be held at the Boston Marriott Copley Place in Boston, Massachusetts from 4-7 April. Please submit an abstract of 150-200 words by 1 November 2006 to:

Louise E. Wright
Area Chair, Jack London's Life and Works
3334 Midvale Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19129
lewright_at_dca.net

•ALN•

2007 ALA in Boston

The American Literature Association's 18th annual conference will meet at the Westin Copley Place in Boston on May 24-27, 2007 (Thursday through Sunday of Memorial Day weekend). For further information, please consult the ALA website at www.americanliterature.org or contact the conference director, Professor Lauri Ramey of California State University, Los Angeles at lramey@calstatela.edu with specific questions.

Audio-visual equipment: The ALA will normally provide the following: slide projectors and screens, VCR-DVD equipment, CD or cassette tape players, and projectors for PowerPoint presentations.

Conference Fee: For those who pre-register before April 15, 2007: \$75 (\$25 for Graduate

Students, Independent Scholars, and Retired Faculty). After April 15, the fees are \$85 and \$35.

1. The International Theodore Dreiser Society

The International Theodore Dreiser Society will sponsor two sessions at the American Literature Association's 18th Annual Conference, May 24-27, 2007, in Boston.

Papers on all aspects of Dreiser's writing and life are welcome.

Please submit proposals or papers via e-mail before January 12, 2007, to the vice president of the Dreiser Society:

Roark Mulligan
International Dreiser Society
105 N. Sulgrave Ct.
Williamsburg, VA 23185
757-229-3697
mulligan@cnu.edu

2. The William Dean Howells Society

The Howells Society will sponsor two sessions at the at the American Literature Association's 18th Annual Conference, May 24-27, 2007, in Boston.

Session One. Howells's Reviews. For a panel in the program of the 2007 American Literature Association annual convention, the William Dean Howells Society invites paper proposals that examine the work of William Dean Howells in reviews. Possible topics may include Howells's own publications as a book reviewer, other critics' reviews of Howells's work, or Howells's responses to the work of other reviewers. Please send by January 8, 2007 paper proposals no longer than 500 words and copy of cv to Claudia Stokes at

Claudia.stokes@trinity.edu or by post to
 Claudia Stokes, Trinity University,
 Dept of English, 1 Trinity Place, San Antonio,
 TX 78212

Session Two: Howells and Marriage.
 For a panel in the program of the 2007
 American Literature Association annual
 convention, the William Dean Howells Society
 invites paper proposals that examine marriage
 in Howells's life and work. Possible topics
 may include his literary depictions of marriage,
 his writings about marriage in literary criticism
 and reviews, Howells's own marriage, or his
 engagement in contemporary marital
 controversies. Please send by January 8, 2007
 paper proposals no longer than 500 words and
 copy of cv to Claudia Stokes at
 Claudia.stokes@trinity.edu or by post to
 Claudia Stokes, Trinity University,
 Dept of English, 1 Trinity Place, San Antonio,
 TX 78212

3. The Stephen Crane Society

The Stephen Crane Society will sponsor two
 sessions at the American Literature Association
 Conference at the Westin Copley Place in
 Boston on May 24-27, 2007.

Session One: Crane's Western Tales

Session Two: Open. Any aspect of Crane's
 work or life will be considered.

Presentations will be limited to 20 minutes.

Please email abstracts or papers of no more
 than ten double-spaced pages by 1 January
 2007 to the program chair:

Patrick K. Dooley
 pdooley@sbu.edu

4. The Hamlin Garland Society

The Hamlin Garland Society will sponsor one
 session at the American Literature Association
 Conference at the Westin Copley Place in
 Boston on 24-27 May 2007.

Papers may be submitted on any topic
 concerning Garland or his work.

Presentations will be limited to 20 minutes.
 Please email abstracts or papers of no more
 than ten double-spaced pages by 1 January
 2007 to the program chair:

Kurt Meyer
 Meyer6601@aol.com
 web: <http://www.uncw.edu/garland/>

5. The Frank Norris Society

The Frank Norris Society will sponsor two
 sessions at the American Literature Association
 Conference at the Westin Copley Place in
 Boston on May 24-27, 2007.

Session One: Issues in American Literary
 Naturalism. This session will focus on broader
 treatments of American literary naturalism
 (whether directly related to Frank Norris or
 not). Possible topics would include definitional
 studies, treatments of American literary
 naturalism in the context of late nineteenth-
 century culture and history, examinations of
 literary naturalism in the twentieth century, and
 related topics.

Session Two: Open. Any aspect of Norris's
 work or life will be considered.

Please email abstracts or papers of no more
 than ten double-spaced pages by 1 January
 2007 to the program chair:

Eric Carl Link
 elink@ngcsu.edu

6. The Jack London Society

The 2007 ALA London Society call-for-papers will be posted soon to the Jack London Website <http://london.sonoma.edu/Organizations/jl_society.html>. Please check the website for more information.

Bibliographic Update

For our first bibliographic update, we have traveled back as far as 2004. The lists below are comprehensive, but not exhaustive, and we undoubtedly missed a work here and there. If you wrote an article or book related to American literary naturalism in the past two years and it is not listed below, please let us know and we will make sure to note it in the spring issue of ALN.

General Studies

- Dudley, John. *A Man's Game: Masculinity and the Anti-Aesthetics of American Literary Naturalism*. Tuscaloosa, AL: U of Alabama P, 2004.
- Fleissner, Jennifer L. *Women, Compulsion, Modernity: The Moment of American Naturalism*. University of Chicago Press, 2004.
- Lamb, Robert Paul and G. R. Thompson, eds. *A Companion to American Fiction 1865-1914*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2005. Vol. 25 of the Blackwell Companions to Literary and Cultural Studies.
- Lehan, Richard. *Realism and Naturalism: The Novel in an Age of Transition*. Madison: University of Wisconsin, 2005.
- Link, Eric Carl. *The Vast and Terrible Drama: American Literary Naturalism in the Late Nineteenth Century*. Tuscaloosa, AL: U of Alabama P, 2004.
- Margraf, Erik. "Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* as a Naturalistic Novel." *American Literary Realism* 37.2 (Winter 2005): 93-116.
- Pizer, Donald. "Late Nineteenth-Century American Literary Naturalism: A Re-Introduction." *American Literary Realism* 38.3 (Spring 2006): 189-202.
- Tandt, Christophe Den. "American Literary Naturalism." *A Companion to American Fiction, 1865-1914*. Ed. Robert Paul Lamb and G. R. Thompson. Oxford: Blackwell, 2005. 96-118.

Theodore Dreiser

- Brown, Bill. "The Matter of Dreiser's Modernity." Cassuto and Eby 83-99.
- Cassuto, Leonard, and Clare Eby, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Theodore Dreiser*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge UP, 2004.
- Christensen, Peter G. "Sergei Eisenstein's Unfilmed Adaptation of Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*." *Taiwan Journal of English Literature* 2.1 (2004): 45-65.
- Davies, Jude. "The Struggle for Existence, the Struggle for Domination, and the Struggle for Justice: Animals and the Social in Theodore Dreiser's 'The Shining Slave Makers' and *The Financier*." *Animal Magic: Essays on Animals in the American Imagination*. Ed. Jopi Nyman and Carol Smith. Joensuu, Finland:

- Faculty of Humanities, University of Joensuu, 2004. 55-72.
- Dvorak, Jack. "May Calvert: Dreiser's Lifelong Teacher." *Dreiser Studies* 36:2 (2005): 3-29.
- Eby, Clare Virginia. "Dreiser and Women." Cassuto and Eby 142-59.
- . "Theodore Dreiser and the Force of the Personal." *A Companion to American Fiction, 1865-1914*. Ed. Robert Paul Lamb and G. R. Thompson. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005.
- Giles, Paul. "Dreiser's Style." Cassuto and Eby 47-62.
- Gross, Andrew S. "Cars, Postcards, and Patriotism: Tourism and National Politics in the United States, 1893-1929." *Pacific Coast Philology* 40 (2005): 77-97.
- Hriko, Mary. *The Genesis of the Chicago Renaissance: The Writings of Theodore Dreiser, Langston Hughes, Richard Wright, and James T. Farrell*. Diss. Kent State Univ. 2004.
- Jett, Kevin W. "Literary Soul Mates? Dreiser, Hervey White, and Quicksand." *Dreiser Studies* 35:2 (2004): 29-44.
- Jurca, Catherine. "Dreiser, Class and the Home." Cassuto and Eby 100-11.
- Lears, Jackson. "Dreiser and the History of American Longing." Cassuto and Eby 63-79.
- Lindquist, Barbara. "Theodore Dreiser, Thermodynamics, and the 'Manly Man': An Analysis of Gender Relations in the Cowperwood Trilogy." *Midamerica: The Yearbook of the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature* 31 (2004): 57-68.
- Loving, Jerome. *The Last Titan: A Life of Theodore Dreiser*. Berkeley, CA: U of California P, 2005.
- Lu, Jie. "Similar Phenomena, Different Experiments? A Study of Thomas Hardy's Literary Influence on Theodore Dreiser." *Midwest Quarterly: A Journal of Contemporary Thought* 45.4 (2004): 415-26.
- Niemi, Robert. "Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*." *American Writers: Classics*. Ed. Jay Parini. Vol. 2. NY: Scribner's, 2004. 19-35.
- Ouzgane, Lahoucine. "Dreiser and Sister Carrie's Kingdom of Greatness." *The Journal of Generative Anthropology* 10.1 (2004): [no pagination].
- Ovell, Miles. "Dreiser, Art, and the Museum." Cassuto and Eby 127-41.
- Pizer, Donald. "Dreiser and the Jews." *Dreiser Studies* 35.1 (2004): 1-23.
- Riggio, Thomas P. "Dreiser and the Uses of Biography." Cassuto and Eby 30-46.
- Robbins, Bruce. "Can There Be Loyalty in *The Financier*?: Dreiser and Upward Mobility." Cassuto and Eby 112-26.
- Rusch, Frederic E., and Donald Pizer, eds. *Theodore Dreiser: Interviews*. Urbana, IL: U of Illinois P, 2004.
- Smith, Roger W. "A Dreiser Checklist, 2000-2001." *Dreiser Studies* 35.1 (2004): 38-52.
- . "A Dreiser Checklist, 2002-2004." *Dreiser Studies* 35.2 (2004): 45-59.

- Tabor-Hann, Kellie E. *Naturalist Domesticity, Domestic Naturalism: Outside, Inside, and Floating among the Fictional Homes of Dreiser, Norris, and London*. Diss. U of Maryland, College Park, 2002.
- West, James L. W. III. "Dreiser and the Profession of Authorship." Cassuto and Eby 15-29.
- Whaley, Annemarie Koning. "Business Is Business: Corporate America in the Restored *Jennie Gerhardt*." *Dreiser Studies* 35.1 (2004): 24-37.
- Zaluda, Scott. "Opera Review: *An American Tragedy* at the Metropolitan Opera." *Dreiser Studies* 36.2 (2005): 30-41.
- Zimmerman, David A. "The Financier and the Ends of Accounting." *Dreiser Studies* 35.2 (2004): 3-28.
- Stephen Crane**
- Alonzo, Juan. "From Derision to Desire: The 'Greaser' in Stephen Crane's Mexican Stories and D. W. Griffith's Early Westerns." *Western American Literature* 38.4 (2004): 374-401.
- Cain, William E. "Sensations of Style: The Literary Realism of Stephen Crane." *A Companion to American Fiction, 1865-1914* Ed. Robert Paul Lamb and G. R. Thompson. Oxford: Blackwell, 2005. 557-571.
- Dingledine, Don. "'It Could Have Been Any Street': Ann Petry, Stephen Crane, and the Fate of Naturalism." *Studies in American Fiction* 34.1 (2006): 87-106.
- Fagg, John. "Stephen Crane and the Literary Sketch: Genre and History in 'Sailing Day Scenes' and 'Coney Island's Failing Days.'" *American Literary Realism* 38.1 (Fall 2005): 1-17.
- Goetsch, Paul. "Shipwreck with Spectator: Norris, London, Crane." *The Sea and the American Imagination*. Germany: Stauffenburg, 2004. 149-162.
- Huang, Jiaxiu. "Stephen Crane's Poetry of the Absurd." *Re-Reading America: Changes and Challenges*. 131-135. Cheltenham, England: Reardon, 2004.
- Lawson, Andrew. "Class Mimicry in Stephen Crane's *City*." *American Literary History* 16.4 (2004): 596-618.
- . "The Red Badge of Class: Stephen Crane and the Industrial Army." *Literature and History* 14.2 (2005): 53-68.
- Lentz, Perry. *Private Fleming at Chancellorsville: The Red Badge of Courage and the Civil War*. Columbia: U of Missouri P, 2006.
- Naito, Jonathan Tadashi. "Cruel and Unusual Light: Electricity and Effacement in Stephen Crane's *The Monster*." *Arizona Quarterly: A Journal of American Literature, Culture, and Theory* 62.1 (2006): 35-63.
- Sloan, Gary. "Stephen Crane: The Black Badge of Unbelief." *American Atheist* 42.3 (2004): 28.
- Shaefer, Michael W. "'I...Do Not Say That I Am Honest': Stephen Crane's Failure of Artistic Nerve in the 'Open Boat'." *Philological Review* 31.1 (2005): 1-16.

- Sorrentino, Paul. *Stephen Crane Remembered* Tuscaloosa, AL: U of Alabama P, 2006.
- . *Student Companion to Stephen Crane*. Westport, Ct.: Greenwood, 2005.
- Thalacker, Lisa. "Jack Potter: Fictional Sheriff and Legendary Cowboy." *American Literary Realism* 36.2 (2004): 180-183.
- Jack London**
- Adams, Jon-K. "Jack London: Sailors and Savages." *The Sea and the American Imagination*. Germany: Stauffenburg, 2004. 163-173.
- Berkove, Lawrence I. "Jack London and Evolution: From Spencer to Huxley." *American Literary Realism* 36.3 (2004): 243-255.
- Davidson, Avram. "How I Collaborated with Jack London, Ambrose Bierce, Sinclair Lewis, Elizabeth Taylor, Princess Margaret, & Others." *New York Review of Science Fiction* 17.8 (2005): 11-12.
- Emmert, Scott. "The Familiar Uncommon Spectator: Jack London's Female Watchers in *The Game* and the *Abysmal Brute*." *Aethlon: The Journal of Sport Literature* 22.1 (2004): 137-146.
- Glover, Angela. "Using Jack London's 'To Build a Fire' to Teach the Process of Revision." *Eureka Studies in Teaching Short Fiction* 5.1 (2004): 34-39.
- Hergenhan, Laurie. "Jack London and the Never Never." *Overland* 177 (2004): 88-89.
- McKenna, John. "Jack London." *Eureka Studies in Teaching Short Fiction* 5.1 (2004): 3-88.
- McKenna, John J. "Jack London's 'The Law of Life': A 21st Century Prophecy." *Eureka Studies in Teaching Short Fiction* 5.1 (2004): 20-25.
- Mitchell, J. Lawrence. "Jack London and Boxing." *American Literary Realism* 36.3 (2004): 225-242.
- Ngovo, Bernard L. "Teaching Jack London's 'To Build a Fire' in a Self-Paced Instructional Mode to College Developmental Students." *Eureka Studies in Teaching Short Fiction* 5.1 (2004): 67-73.
- North, Dick. *Sailor on Snowshoes: Tracking Jack London's Northern Trail*. Harbour Books, 2006.
- Saiz, Peter R. "Political Tyranny and the Master-Slave Paradigm in Selected Sea Tales of Herman Melville and Jack London." *Dissertation Abstracts International, Section A: The Humanities and Social Sciences* 64.11 (2004): 4052-4052.
- Shillingsburg, Miriam J. "Jack London's Boxing Stories: Parables for Youth." *Eureka Studies in Teaching Short Fiction* 5.1 (2004): 7-15.
- Silva, Reinaldo Francisco. "Jack London and Some of His Short Fiction: A Genuine Quarrel with Colonialism?" *Eureka Studies in Teaching Short Fiction* 5.1 (2004): 40-53.
- Swafford, Kevin R. "Resounding the Abyss: The Politics of Narration in Jack London's The People of the Abyss." *Journal of Popular Culture* 39.5 (October 2006): 838-860.

Tietze, Thomas R. "Teaching Aesthetics: Art and the Artist on Jack London's Martin Eden." *Eureka Studies in Teaching Short Fiction* 5.1 (2004): 78-88.

Frank Norris

Berte, Leigh Ann Litwiller. "Mapping *The Octopus*: Frank Norris' Naturalist Geography." *American Literary Realism* 37.3 (Spring 2005): 202-224.

Brandt, Maria F. "'For His Own Satisfaction': Eliminating the New Woman Figure in *McTeague*." *American Transcendental Quarterly* 18.1 (2004): 5-23.

Crisler, Jesse S. "Hamlin Garland's Relationship with Frank Norris." *Frank Norris Studies* 4 (2004): 5-12.

Goetsch, Paul. "Shipwreck with Spectator: Norris, London, Crane." *The Sea and the American Imagination*. Germany: Stauffenburg, 2004. 149-162.

Hsu, Hsuan L. "Literature and Regional Production." *American Literary History* 17.1 (2005): 36-70.

Johanningsmeier, Charles. "The Devil, Capitalism, and Frank Norris: Defining the 'Reading Field' for Sunday Newspaper Fiction, 1870-1910." *American Periodicals: A Journal of History, Criticism, and Bibliography* 14.1 (2004): 91-112.

Kreisel, Deanna K. "Frank Norris's *McTeague*." *American Writers: Classics, Volume II*. Ed. Jay Parini. New York, NY: Scribner's, 2004. 181-198.

Link, Eric Carl. "A Tale of Two Municipalities: O. Henry Responds to Norris's 'The House with the Blinds'." *Frank Norris Studies* 4 (2004): 1-5.

Lye, Colleen. "American Naturalism and Asiatic Racial Form: Frank Norris's *The Octopus* and Moran of the 'Lady Letty'." *Representations* 84 (2004): 73-99.

McElrath, Joseph R., Jr. "'The Wife of Chino': A Reconsideration of Frank Norris's Narrative Technique." *Frank Norris Studies* 4 (2004): 12-16.

---. and Jesse S. Crisler. *Frank Norris: A Life*. Champaign, IL: U of Illinois P, 2006.

Piep, Karsten H. "Love's Labor's Regained: The Making of Companionate Marriages in Frank Norris's *The Pit*." *Papers on Language and Literature: A Journal for Scholars and Critics of Language and Literature* 40.1 (2004): 28-56.

Rossetti, Gina M. "Out of the Gene Pool: Primitivism and Ethnicity in Frank Norris's *McTeague*." *CLA Journal* 48.1 (2004): 51-70.

Yang, Seokwon. "[The Naturalist Discourse of Force and Social Criticism: A Reading of Frank Norris's *The Octopus*]." *Journal of English Language and Literature/Yongho Yungmunhak* 50.3 (2004): 733-757.

Hamlin Garland

Martin, Quentin E. "Agricultural Awakenings: Hamlin Garland's *A Little Norsk* and 'The Land of the Straddle-Bug.'" *American Literary Realism* 37 (2005): 141-58.

Newlin, Keith. "Clouted by the Reviewers: The Texts of Garland's *Rose of Dutcher's Coolly*." *Documentary Editing* 27 (2005): 71-81.

---. "'I am as ever your disciple': The Friendship of Hamlin Garland and W. D. Howells." *Papers on Language and Literature* 42 (2006): 264-90.

Teorey, Matthew. "Escaping the Lion's Paw: Jungle Cat Imagery and Late-Nineteenth-Century Political Reform." *ANQ* 19 (2006): 42-47.

Tymn, Michael E. "Examining the *Mystery of the Buried Crosses*." *Journal of Religion & Psychical Research* 28.2 (2005): 62-76.

From the Archives

Two Uncollected Early Reviews of Norris's Work

*The two reviews reprinted below appeared in the Dallas Morning News on August 19, 1901, and August 26, 1901. The reviewer is not identified, but the same reviewer appears to have written both reviews. The first piece—a review of *The Octopus*—places the work in the category of "mercantile novels," notes Norris's thorough and detailed representation of large-scale American life, and criticizes the Vanamee subplot as a "highly mystical" bit of "romantic idealism" that lies outside the main theme of the novel.*

*The review of August 26th is a commentary—replete with considerable praise—on Norris's five novels to date: *Moran of the Lady Letty*, *Blix*, *A Man's Woman*, *McTeague*, and *The Octopus*. There's much of interest in this overview of Norris's novels, but*

*what stands out is the attitude the reviewer takes toward *A Man's Woman*. Commonly viewed by scholars as the weakest of Norris' efforts, the reviewer has nothing but high praise for the work, and ranks it above all of his other novels with the exception of *The Octopus*.*

*These reviews have not been collected, nor are they listed in *Frank Norris: A Reference Guide*. They are presented here for the first time since their original publication.*

I

[*Dallas Morning News*
August 19, 1901, page 10:]

NEW BOOKS REVIEWED

STORIES OF AMERICAN LIFE

A Love Theme Interwoven with the Commercial and Industrial Problems of the People of Today.

Of the novels which have been written this year, one of the strongest and at the same time one most thoroughly representative of American life, is "*The Octopus: a Story of California*," by Frank Norris (Doubleday, Page & Co.). It belongs to a class of novels that has just begun to come into prominence in the literature of today---"mercantile novels," they have been termed. These novels have undertaken themes woven out of the great commercial and industrial life of the American people and are by necessity often closely connected with politics, so intimate is the association between the commerce and politics of today. Several of these novels have already been reviewed in these columns, e.g., "*The Banker and the Bear*," distinctly a novel of finance, and "*J. Devlin—Boss*," a novel

primarily of politics but indirectly also of finance. "The Octopus" outranks these novels easily.

This novel is to be one of a trilogy entitled "The Epic of the Wheat," wherein is to be told the whole story of the production, the distribution and the consumption of American wheat. This is the first of the series; the second, "The Pit," is to be a tale of Chicago wheat speculation while the third story, "The Wolf," is to be concerned with a famine in the Old World.

It is well to consider too that the story is no mere piece of polemical fiction. To quote from the publishers' introduction, "The story of this remarkable novel is founded upon an actual piece of history almost unknown in the East—what is known as the 'Mussel Slough Affair'—when the wheat-growers of the San Joaquin Valley came into actual conflict with the railroad ('The Octopus'), which they believed was trying to defraud them of their lands."

The author has undertaken his work on a large scale, as befits the breadth of his theme. Well has he felt the tremendous character of the forces in conflict, and well has he conveyed this sense to his story. He is no friend of the trusts, and the picture that he makes of them is dark in the extreme. Futile is the endeavor of the agricultural and laboring classes to win their rights by law, and futile the resort to arms to which at last they are forced. The octopus, all powerful, in the end is supreme. The story is no hot-headed attack on trusts as such. It is a well-considered and faithful piece of work, depicting one of the grave problems of the day, and ought to command wide attention.

The characters of the story, taken altogether, are exceedingly well drawn, from the young poet with his idea of writing an epic of the great West, but forced at last into the consideration of economic problems, to the discharged and blacklisted railroad engineer. But there are some first-rate characters among them that need more than a word of praise. Magnus Darrick, the '49er, the great wheat-

grower of the San Joaquin Valley, is a splendid figure—a man of the "old school" politics and manners, weakly yielding, though, under tremendous pressure to the influences brought to bear on him to force him into fighting villains with their own weapons, and at last utterly crushed and broken through his acts becoming public. His is a fine example of the ruin of a great character through a single descent into impure politics. S. Behrman, the P. & S. W. agent, the gross, fat, conscienceless tool of the machine is a type very true to life. But the best of them all undoubtedly is the rancher, Buck Annixter of the Quien Sabe ranch, a rough and crude specimen of a ranch boss, a bitter denunciator of "fool feemale girls," and something of a fire-eater, but brave and resolute—a splendid fellow. He is at last captured by a pretty dairy maid. On him the author has lavished all his rich store of humor, yet never making him actually ridiculous.

There are a dozen scenes in the novel worth mentioning, but that of the great dance in Annixter's new barn and the subsequent formation of "the league," is a great piece of work, executed with the utmost care for detail and as spirited as can be. This, indeed, is a strong point with Mr. Norris—his painstaking care of detail. In all of his 650 closely-printed pages the execution and finish of his work is good. His style is very clear and concise. The epic of the wheat, he calls it, but it is rather amusing sometimes to see him adopting the certain traits of the Homeric phraseology, a character once introduced by a certain set of descriptive phrases bears with him one or more of these every time he appears again.

Yet the novel has, seemingly, one very weak point, and, strangely enough, both of the above mentioned novels, "The Banker and the Bear" and "J. Devlin Boss," have precisely the same trouble—a love story lying on the outside of the main theme, as it were, and not an integral part of the novel. Why the author of "The Octopus" permitted that piece of romantic idealism is hard to see—perhaps by way of

adding contrast to the intense and terrible reality of the story, but certainly it is no part of the main theme. It is highly mystical in character, having now and then an echo of Lytton's "Zanoni," and in itself perhaps worthy of some consideration, but not in its present place.

The book is a great novel, and is worthy of a much fuller consideration than can be accorded it here. It must be sufficient with this to call it to the attention of the public and to promise them that they will find in its pages much for their pleasure and much for their most serious consideration.

II

[*Dallas Morning News*
August 26, 1901, page 10:]

FRANK NORRIS' WORK

HIS FIVE BOOKS ARE MERITORIOUS AND SOME
SUBJECTS ARE HANDLED WITHOUT GLOVES.

OTHER STORIES
PROMISED

The Next Is to Be of the Chicago Grain
Pit and the Distribution of the Grain

"The Crisis," by Churchill, still keeps the lead of the book sales in Dallas. "Truth Dexter," by McCall, is still second, while "The Octopus," by Frank Norris, recently reviewed, is third. "The Puppet Crown," by MacGrath, is fourth, with "Jack Raymond," by E.L. Voynich, and "Every Inch a King," by Sawyer, fifth and sixth. For no accountable reason "The Helmet of Navarre," by Runkle, has fallen out of demand.

—●—

"Moran of the Lady Letty" (Moran is a girl, the Lady Letty a ship), "McTeague," "Blix," "A Man's Woman," "The Octopus;" these five books constitute the published work of Mr. Frank Norris. It is some time since William Dean Howells set his seal to Mr. Norris' naturalization papers in the republic of letters and announced that he had "arrived." "A Man's Woman" and "The Octopus" had not then been written. They give abundant evidence that he has come to stay; they form the stable foundation upon which should be built no mean dwelling on the "Nob's Hill" (to be Californian) of the capital city of the said republic.

"Moran of the Lady Letty" is a wild romance of the most adventurous kind. It is thrilling and sensational enough to hold the attention of any reader, and it shows an intimacy with the coast of Lower California and with the strange and repulsive life of those vermin of the Pacific Ocean, the Chinese beachcombers, that must have *some basis in personal experience*. At least that is what one would conclude if this were one's first acquaintance with Mr. Norris, but by and by when one has in as many strata of society as good grounds for the same conclusion about half a dozen diverse professions and callings one begins to doubt its accuracy.

"McTeague" is a strong book of a very unpleasant kind. It is the minute study of a low-grade life that sinks lower and lower under the stress of circumstances. Rather should it be said of two lives, husband and wife, for the drawing of the woman, her niggardliness that turns into fierce avarice by insensible degrees, that at length becomes bald miserliness, is wonderfully well handled. High as the claim may sound, the book is not unlike "Tess of the d'Urbervilles" in its realism and the power of delineation, and it is almost as disagreeable as a story.

"A Man's Woman" is a distinct advance in every way. It is indeed an astonishingly clever book, and it never fails for a moment in its

interest. And here one may pause to give expression to one's admiration of Mr. Norris' most remarkable grasp of technical detail. He works up his subjects to the finest possible point and then he polishes off all suggestion of research, carefully removes all the smell of the lamp.

Are you an amateur in polar exploration, acquainted with the voyages of Franklin and Parry and Ross, keeping up with all that is written on the subject: familiar with "Farthest North," "Northward Over the Great Ice," "A Thousand Days in the Arctic," having labored even through Cook's tedious "Voyage of the Beigiea," and Borchgrevink's more interesting "First on the Antarctic Continent?" You shall find no smallest note of ignorance, no unconvincing incident in the stirring narrative contained in "A Man's Woman" of the retreat of Capt. Bennett from the New Siberian Islands where the "Fraja" was crushed between two ice fleets [sic], toward Kalyuchin Bay in the extreme northeastern point of Asia. It might have been written by Nansen, if Nansen could give up mooning about the whyness of the wherefore and the vastness of the infinite long enough to write it. It might have been written by Peary, if Peary could write so vigorously. So vivid is that narrative that the polar amateur who reads it will find hard to erase Capt. Bennett's journey from among the actual sledge journeys that he has traced off on the map and endeavored to fix in his mind. Could there be a better test of artistic finish?

So, in the same book, a surgeon will tell you that the man who wrote the account of the operation for the exsection of the hip joint must have been a "second course" man at the least, that the details of the work of the professional nurse are exact and thorough and up to date, that the description of the fight for the life of the patient is as accurate as it certainly is absorbing, with no trace of the amateur in matter of phraseology. Thoroughness is the mark of everything technical that Mr. Norris writes. He might be a sailor so far as the

nautical parts of "Moran of the Lady Letty" are concerned. He might be a dentist for his familiarity with "hoe excavators, pluggers, forceps, corundum discs and burrs, 'blocks' to be used in large proximal cavities, 'cylinders' for commencing fillings," in that story of a sordid life, "McTeague."

In "Blix," which is assuredly autobiographical to a considerable extent, we get a glimpse of the nature of the man and his ways of work. A reporter on a San Francisco paper, he is always on the lookout for the material for a story, and he works up his details with affectionate care. The old sailor at the lifesaving station is his collaborateur in a nautical romance, and the keen joy of getting "inside" knowledge and the skillful use of it are a marked feature of that healthy, pleasant little novel. In it appears also very elaborately drawn the type of woman that appeals to Mr. Norris, the sturdy, healthy, robust, almost virile woman, the "Man's Woman," that dominates all his earlier work.

But technical [sic] masteries of the sort that attention has been called to are all of the nature of "tour de force." It is in "The Octopus" that Mr. Norris finds himself. The book is somewhat ambitiously announced as the first of a trilogy that shall deal with the world's bread supply, "The Epic of the Wheat." The first of the series is concerned with the production of the wheat, and like all his stories so far is Californian through and through. The next story is to be of the Chicago grain pit, and will deal with the distribution of the wheat, and the third, which one may hope and expect is yet years off, since no tour de force could carry him through its difficulties, will concern itself with the foreign famine in Europe for its "pivotal episode."

If Mr. Morris [sic] has grace and grit to carry his ambitious plan to successful issue; if, with the same loving thoroughness that his work displays so far, on this grander canvas, handling this commanding, conspicuous theme, he produces the two volumes that he has

pledged himself to, the prediction may be ventured that he will write his name larger than any name has yet been written in American fiction.

It has been said that “The Octopus” deals with the production of wheat. It deals with more than that, and with something else more intensely, more dramatically than that. It deals with the grip that a certain railroad has upon the State of California, and it deals with it without gloves. When one has read “The Octopus,” one wonders no longer at the extravagance of phrase that from time to time one has heard used by Western writers and speakers on this subject. One is convinced as no platform declamation can ever convince, as no arrays of figures can ever convince, of the tyranny, the grasping, self-seeking, cold-blooded, unscrupulous cupidity of the “Kraken” that has California in its grip, that controls the transportation of all its products and that has for its one motto: “All that the tariff will bear.” Such is the power of the novelist, if he will put upon himself the discipline and the restraint to wield it artistically and incidentally. The human passions are enlisted, the reader’s indignation is aroused: he can not sit still and see his friends, his friends of the book that he has grown to care for, robbed, dispossessed, ruined, shot down, without a wave of anger and resentment. Some Nemesis to this successful plundering there must be. It is not in the book. Most artistically the book ends with the triumph of “The Octopus,” the destruction of the community with whose interests the reader is identified. And ten thousand persons who never set foot in California will rejoice when the blow falls, as fall it must some day. Such is the power of the novelist. Annixter’s death must be revenged or the eternal fitness of things is outraged, the ruin of Dyke’s character and fortunes demands punishment, the untimely end of even “that goat Osterman” “pleads to the skies.” It sounds perhaps a little like “Waiting for the Sleary babies to develop Sleary’s fits,” but the feeling is genuine and

deep all the same and it is the ability to arouse such feeling that gives the novelist his power.

It is easy to pick faults in any book. Mr. Norris has certain pet words and phrases he is altogether too free with. “Obsessed” is a word and a condition that jars one in character after character, book after book. Little canyons that “tumble down” into arroyas, foothills that “tumble down” to the sea, houses on the hill that “tumble down” to the city, tumble too much. The “chick weed” that the rye bread was sprinkled with was surely caraway seed, and the odor of women’s hair is too prominent in all his early work. The immense strength, the wonderful full knowledge, the cleverness, and in his last book, the broad sympathy, the high purpose, the honest, inspiring hatred of greed and chicanery—these are qualities that shine so brightly that little faults pass unnoticed. And there has come to him a delicacy of perception, a clear, discriminating insight, that is a constant delight to the reader who has the feeling for language and the capacity for the vibrating of the finer chords of the mind and the heart.

In Memoriam

The Morning World-Herald, of Omaha, Nebraska, helps us remember the life and writings of a fine American author.

**Morning World-Herald [Omaha]
November 29, 1902
Volume 38, Issue 50, Page 4**

A Young Writer Dead

The World-Herald recently commented on the story [of] “The Pit,” by Frank Norris, now running [in] the Saturday Evening Post. Almost by the next mail came the news of his

death at the age of 32. Those who have read his fine writings will sincerely regret his loss. The Springfield (Mass.) Republican says he was undoubtedly one of the most promising of the younger American writers, to which the St. Paul Dispatch adds "America has, and has had, no one to measure up with this young man, and nowhere in Russia, in France, in Italy, is there anything being done with greater precision of truth and greater splendor of Imagination." His friend, Arthur Goodrich* of the World's Work, says in the Boston Transcript "It is hard to realize Frank Norris is dead. He seemed to always come out of the springtime, to carry with him the breath of eternal youth. He was the most virile, the most creative, the most broadly imaginative of the younger writers who were to make the American literature of the next quarter of a century. Whatever else may be said of his writing, it was living, pushing, human."

In literary circles the death of Mr. Norris calls forth the same general expression of regret as the demise of Frances Sargent Osgood and Charlotte Bronte in a former generation. Another was the untimely death of Theodore Winthrop, the author of "John Brent" and "Cecil Dreeme" at the outbreak of the civil war. While rallying his men at the battle of Great Bethel, which he had planned, he was shot in the heart and instantly killed. Holding the rank of major, he was the military secretary of General Benjamin F. Butler, then in command at Fortress Monroe. Like [N]orris, his writings were running through the press when he died. These four talented writers died young, and Norris was the youngest of them all.

**Arthur Goodrich was a fellow employee of Doubleday, Page, and Company, and the managing editor of the World's Work, which published a number of articles by Norris in 1901 and 1902.--ALN*

A Fistful of Websites

Garland Society:

<http://www.uncw.edu/garland/>

Dreiser Society:

<http://www.uncw.edu/dreiser/>

Studies in American Naturalism:

<http://www.uncw.edu/san/>

Dreiser Web Source at Penn

<http://www.library.upenn.edu/collections/rbm/dreiser/>

The William Dean Howells Society

<http://www.wsu.edu/~campbelld/howells/index.html>

The Edith Wharton Society

<http://www.wsu.edu/~campbelld/wharton/index.html>

The Stephen Crane Society

<http://www.wsu.edu/~campbelld/crane/index.html>

The Jack London Online Collection

<http://london.sonoma.edu/>

The Jack London Society

http://london.sonoma.edu/Organizations/jl_society.html

Jack London International

http://www.jack-london.org/main_e.htm

The World of Jack London

<http://www.jacklondon.net/>

The Frank Norris Society

<http://www.csub.edu/franknorriscenter/>

Frank Norris

<http://www.wsu.edu/~campbelld/howells/norris.htm>

Did you enjoy the inaugural issue of ALN?
The editors desire your feedback. Send your
questions, comments, suggestions, critique, and
assorted commentary to....

Eric Carl Link
elink@ngcsu.edu

and

Steven Frye
sfrye@csu.edu

Coming up in our Spring Issue:

Naturalism news. Another bibliographic
update. More stuff from the archives. An
interview with a scholar working in the field.
And a whole bunch of other stuff that you'll
want to tell your friends about.

If you would like to contribute to ALN, please
contact the editors. We need your help.

We are particularly interested in articles of
2000-3000 words that look at literary
naturalism in the classroom, both in the United
States and abroad. If you would like to
contribute such a piece, we'd like to hear from
you. In addition, if you have items that would
be suitable for presentation in *From the
Archives*, please let us know.

Submissions: please use MLA specifications
for all matters of style and documentation.
Submit material for consideration as an e-mail
attachment, as the text of an e-mail, or send by
post to...

Eric Carl Link, Editor
ALN
Department of English
North Georgia College & State Univ.
82 College Circle
Dahlonega, GA 30597