

Lost Flying Squirrel Captured!

Greetings once again from Memphis. I hope that this issue of ALN finds everyone doing well, and I wish everyone a peaceful, healthy, and happy holiday season. You'll note that this issue is tagged Volume 4.1-2. The reason for this is that because of some other commitments, I won't be able to put out a spring 2010 issue (which would have been issue 4.2). But, have no fear, ALN will be back with a double-issue in October 2010.

I'm teaching a graduate course here at the University of Memphis this semester on American realism and naturalism. I am happy to report that *McTeague* has proven the overwhelming favorite among the students (a mixture of M.A., M.F.A., and Ph.D. students) thus far. Howells's *A Hazard of New Fortunes* also generated a great deal of interest in the class. As I write this note, the class is working its way through *The Sea-Wolf* and next week we'll be reading *The Damnation of Theron Ware*. We'll see if *McTeague* retains first-place status after we've worked through those heavyweights.

As always, each issue of ALN requires the help and assistance of many people. There are too many to list, but let me thank everyone who helped put this issue together, with a special thanks to the leadership teams in the Crane, Dreiser, Garland, and London societies who provided bibliographic updates, news items, mailing lists, and so forth. We have two excellent features this issue: one by Christophe Den Tandt, the other by Mary Papke and Anne Mayhew: my thanks for their fine essays. In addition, I would like to thank Keith Newlin for the great interview and June Howard for sharing her top five books, and Steve Frye for his ongoing help as Associate Editor of ALN. And, thanks to Susan Fitzgerald of the University of Memphis for her editorial assistance.

Naturally,
Eric Carl Link

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Teaching American Literary Naturalism to Western European Students

Christophe Den Tandt

When I chose to write my dissertation on American literary naturalism, thus anticipating a professional future in which this topic would be part of my teaching interests, I realized I was opting for what in a Western European context would be a road less traveled. As a student in Belgium in the late 1970s and the early 1980s, I had been trained in an academic world for which the celebration of modernism—and the critique of realist mimesis—had been academically dominant. In the early 1990s, when I went back to Brussels after completing my American Ph.D., I found a cultural context that was the logical offshoot of what I had previously known: readers, both within and outside academia, delighted in the recent developments of postmodern multiculturalism—Latin American magical realism and postcolonial fiction, particularly. It was therefore odd to return there with a pronounced interest in realist and naturalist fiction from the turn of the twentieth century. The latter corpus indeed only enjoys a status best described as reluctant institutional recognition. European academics cannot deny that the novels of William Dean Howells, Edith Wharton, or Theodore Dreiser have their place in the history of U.S. literature. Yet, except for specialists in the field, these texts make up a strangely uncool canon—works from a non-usable past.

Several factors account for the marginal status of American realism and naturalism in Western European academia. The discredit affecting the realist aesthetic itself under the pressure of formalism and (post)structuralism carries its predictable weight. I had the opportunity to feel its impact only a few years ago when presenting a paper devoted to the legacy of urban realism in music videos—an admitted-

ly off-center, though I thought legitimate topic for a realism/naturalism scholar. The very fact that this argument sought to broaden the scope of realism as a cultural practice instead of dismissing its claims proved so problematic to my academic audience that the discussion barely went beyond methodological debates, never reaching the body of examples. Conversely, a few other Belgian colleagues do teach American realist and naturalist fiction out of misgiving toward poststructuralist principles. In their courses, the texts appear as legitimate components of a cultural and literary history whose features are unruffled by changes in hermeneutic methodology.

My own approach to realism and naturalism, both as a researcher and a teacher, is precariously poised between these opposite methodological stances. Having been trained in the context of 1980s American neo-Marxism and neo-historicism, I initially tended to regard realist and naturalist works as fascinating objects for the deconstructive procedures derived from poststructuralism and postmodernism. Since then, as the anecdote above suggests, I have set out to rethink the contemporary relevance of realism and naturalism in positive terms, within a methodological framework that nevertheless takes heed of the impact of late-twentieth-century theories of power and discourse. Predictably, this repositioning—which involves successive reappraisals of the status of realism/naturalism under postmodernism (or, to be less tactful, a methodological flip-flop)—proves difficult to explain to friends or foes of deconstruction or postcolonial dialogism.

The second main factor affecting the status of American literary realism and naturalism in Europe is the fact that this corpus enjoys little visibility among non-academic readers. The latter audience is arguably more influential in Europe—and particularly in French-speaking countries—than in the U.S. Its taste is constructed through a mediatic apparatus comprising sometimes fairly popular cultural shows, both on radio and on TV. Several varieties of

U.S. literature are extremely popular among this readership: canonical (pre)modernism (Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Henry James, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner), or contemporary postmodernists who have achieved international fame (William Burroughs, Thomas Pynchon, Paul Auster, Toni Morrison). Above all, these readers like to act as overseas rescuers of the "noir" underside of the American identity—the image of U.S. cultural resistance that draws on the hard-boiled tradition (Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, James Ellroy) and on later countercultural heroes (Charles Bukowski, Hunter S. Thompson, Cormac McCarthy) embodying the rejection of what Europeans like to call American Puritanism.

I do not mean to quibble with this somewhat clichéd European-inflected construction of American culture. Suffice it to say that it bypasses large tracts of the American canon (James Fenimore Cooper, Walt Whitman, Harriet Beecher Stowe), and displays little awareness especially of the early stages of American realism/naturalism. To French-speaking non-academic audiences, Rebecca Harding Davis, William Dean Howells, Stephen Crane, Frank Norris, Kate Chopin, and Theodore Dreiser are virtually unknown; Jack London appears as a nature writer or as a post-Melvillean rebel, Henry James as a premodernist, and Edith Wharton as an occasional purveyor of screenplays for costume dramas. Only second or third-generation naturalists (John Steinbeck, Richard Wright, Nelson Algren, Norman Mailer, Tom Wolfe) or authors pursuing the realist aesthetic within minority literatures (Saul Bellow, Chester Himes) enjoy the recognition of this audience, who rarely views them as part of a tradition that developed from the second half of the nineteenth century. These non-academic views of American culture, as well as the university-derived distrust of realism, inevitably shape students' expectations with regard to the English and American literature curriculum in which they register.

In order to specify how these contextual factors come into play, let me first describe the educational framework in which my realism/naturalism classes are taught. French-speaking Belgian students registering in foreign-languages and literature programs study two languages as well as their cultural context. In addition to a few general courses taught to all students in the humanities (history, philosophy, art history), the foreign-languages and culture curriculum is composed of about two thirds of literature courses and one third of linguistics. Until recently, the divide between undergrads and graduate students was not clearly marked: most students went on to obtain a four-year degree, approximately equivalent to an American M.A. Doctoral studies, on the other hand, lacked visibility and funding. A B.A./M.A. system, closer to the American equivalent, has been initiated as of the early 2000s, unfortunately with only a marginal development of doctoral programs.

The linguistic proficiency required by these foreign-languages programs is, by European standards, fairly high. Courses in Dutch, English, and German are taught in the foreign language from the first year on. It is, however, impossible to expect first-year students to have any previous knowledge of the culture and literary history of the countries whose language they aim to study. Similarly, due to the small size of the foreign-languages departments, academics may not expect to teach only those topics on which they publish research: we are of necessity academic generalists. A majority of scholars in Belgian English literature departments happen to be specialists of North American culture (the U.S. and Canada)—a situation resulting from the availability of graduate fellowships to the latter countries. Still, for obvious reasons of canonical balance, we cannot restrict our teaching to American subjects. Thus, in the Brussels University curriculum, North American courses are taught mostly to third-year or M.A. students, while most B.A.

courses focus on British-oriented topics, including literature before the nineteenth century.

Two of the classes I teach within this academic schedule accommodate discussions of realism and naturalism. The former is a core third-year English-literature class (48 hours of lecturing time), in which I have taken the habit to smuggle American-focused topics. The realism/naturalism subject is taught one year out of three, alternating with discussions of modernism (British and American), and postmodernism (mostly American). The second is a proper American literature course (24 hours of lecturing time), within whose framework I teach African American fiction every other year, including realists and naturalists such as Charles Chesnutt, Richard Wright, and Ann Petry.

Compiling the reading lists for these classes is pedagogically critical. Due to the student's linguistic background, the syllabus is predictably shorter than in British or U.S. universities: three to four novels are in order for a 24-hour class, six to eight for the 48-hour course. The scope of the African American literature class is fairly unproblematic: the course offers a survey of black fiction from the Civil War to the 1950s. The reading list can therefore accommodate only the most canonically acclaimed figures in the field—Chesnutt, Zora Neale Hurston, Wright, Ralph Ellison. As such, a fair segment of the course is devoted to realist and naturalist writers: the discussion of Wright's fiction, in particular, makes it possible to tackle the history of naturalism in the 1930s.

Putting together the syllabus for the 48-hour English literature class, where the more extended presentation of realism/naturalism is offered, is a tougher challenge, however. In previous years, I had made quixotic attempts to pay respects to the course's title and to provide a mixture of American and British names. But even an all-American list requires careful calibration. My main concern in this matter consists in offering students a diversified sample of the literary practices that make up the field of realism and naturalism. American scholars

have long been aware of the fact that realism and naturalism criticism cannot manifest itself through a homogeneous literary discourse. Scholarship of the 1980s and 1990s has been particularly explicit about the fact that mimesis does not construct a smooth, totalizing mirror of the world. Instead, in their early decades, realism and naturalism integrated elements of supposedly non-realist genres such as romance, sentimentalism, and the gothic. Later, realism interacted with modernist or even postmodernist aesthetics. A course on realism/naturalism must therefore do justice to the dialogical configuration of the corpus.

Accordingly, the first item on the reading list is a text that comes close to what might be regarded as the classical formula of realism—Howells's *A Hazard of New Fortunes* or Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth* (Henry James's early texts—*Washington Square*, for instance—would do as well). In these novels, I encourage students to focus on the legacy of domestic fiction, and the way in which this tradition is made to interact with realist demystification or even with early naturalist elements. This first novel is then contrasted with Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*, which serves as example of full-fledged naturalism. Norris's and Crane's fiction might admittedly fill this slot as well, yet I believe that, in such a short reading sample, Dreiser's canonical importance makes him an inescapable choice. Next on the list comes Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, which offers the opportunity to discuss the local-color tradition as well as the surprising expressions of cultural and political protest this corpus sometimes accommodates. (Chesnutt's stories of the color line, which we read in the African American literature class, lend themselves to a similar analysis.) Another good reason to read *The Awakening*, besides the novel's usual popularity among students, resides in the fact that it is so far little known among Western European readers: it deserves a canonical boost.

The second half of the course is devoted to what we might call the derived forms of real-

ism and naturalism—texts that carry out the work of social exploration and documentation through literary discourses not usually identified as elements of the realist tradition. In this segment of the reading list, we deal with works that might be described as naturalist romances: Jack London's *The Iron Heel*, or, when the course still tackled British authors, H. G. Wells's scientific romances—*The Time Machine* or *The War of the Worlds*. These works of political and scientific anticipation offer the opportunity to examine the link between realism/naturalism and the (anti)-utopian tradition. They also provide the material for the analysis of the politics of realism and naturalism and of the writers' ideological use of science.

The bottom of the reading list is usually devoted to twentieth-century crime fiction. This allows us to discuss the interaction of realism and mass culture, and, in the absence of a cultural studies curriculum at Brussels University, to provide students with a glimpse into the academic methodology that has developed around such topics. In practice, I like to point out that there is a structural similarity between the contrast opposing domestic realism (Howells) and naturalism (Dreiser) and, on the other hand, the familiar dichotomy between whodunnits (Agatha Christie) and the hard-boiled tradition (Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler). I also point out that hard-boiled novels may also be read as texts that developed at the interface of urban realism and modernism—an approach that leads to a reconceptualization of this literary historical boundary.

From a practical perspective, students do not regard the realist/naturalist corpus as particularly challenging from a linguistic or literary point of view—indeed less so than the medieval, Renaissance, or (post)modernist material they read elsewhere. Still, the social context depicted in realist or first-generation naturalist texts can be more alien than late-twentieth or early-twenty-first century readers initially realize. I have learned the necessity of being explicit about the moral dilemma facing Carrie

Meeber as she surrenders to Charles Drouet. Present-day students, abiding by a code of relationships different from that of Dreiser's time, do not spontaneously perceive that the peril with which the young woman is (however feebly) struggling is prostitution. Similarly, in Howells's *A Hazard of New Fortunes*, careful contextualization is required to make students perceive the social and personal sleight inflicted by decadent aesthete Angus Beaton as he fails to call on Alma Leighton after befriending her. That the structure of Edith Wharton's plots is determined by the strictures limiting the heroines' mobility within the public sphere needs the same kind of careful emphasis.

At a theoretical level, the students' response to this curriculum has seldom taken the form of a direct challenge to the legitimacy of realism itself—objections that might be inspired by material they encounter in other courses (including, ironically, my own literary theory seminar). The realism/naturalism course tries to anticipate this clichéd skepticism early on, by way of a theoretical introduction that runs through Plato's, Aristotle's, Erich Auerbach's, and Georg Lukács's views on the topic. In these initial lectures, realism and naturalism are presented as tentative, problematic practices, not as a self-confident, ideologically biased charting of the social world.

One complaint has recurrently been voiced over the years, however, targeting the seriousness, even dreariness of naturalist realist/naturalist novels—their relentless emphasis on misery and exploitation. The reading list indeed contains stories of upper-middle-class lost ladies who take their own lives, of proletarianized men dying of despair or, in *The Iron Heel*, of failed revolutions. One might be inclined to deplore that even students in the humanities expect fiction to provide them with escapist gratification. The objection deserves more careful scrutiny, however. I read it as meaning that students fail to find in the realist/naturalist corpus the utopian promise that they discern in modernist or magical realist works. More intri-

guinely, it takes some effort to make proverbially left-wing-liberal humanities students realize that realist and naturalist texts are inspired by writers' solidarity with the oppressed. In particular, they seem to regard naturalism's depiction of poverty in urbanizing America as a somewhat odd and distant topic, severed from their own political concerns. It is in this respect interesting to contrast their sympathetic response to African American fiction—including naturalist novelists—with their more guarded appreciation of late-nineteenth-century literary depictions of urban industrialism. Growing up in a political context dominated by multiculturalism and struggles for gender equality, they can more easily connect to the world of Chesnut's *The Marrow of Tradition* or Chopin's *The Awakening* than to that of Dreiser's *Hurstonwood*.

Overall, the main educational benefit of teaching realism and naturalism to early-twentieth-century Western European students consists precisely in providing them with a view of what John L. Thomas felicitously calls "Alternative America"—the tradition of political protest that challenges what may be perceived as a polity of conservative consensus. Admittedly, 1980s and 1990s criticism has developed a chart of the politics of realism and naturalism far more complex than that provided by earlier liberal or classical Marxist accounts. It has thrown a sharp light on the ambiguities and limits of the promise of political empowerment afforded by this corpus, highlighting the racist and sexist discourse entangled in the attacks against monopoly capitalism and the defense of individual freedom. Still, I think that a properly contextualized course on realism and naturalism must avoid building the perception that the latter corpus acted exclusively as a disingenuous tool of disenfranchisement. Building a balanced view of realism and naturalism for the sake of Western European students is the more important as these readers' view of U.S. culture, for understandable reasons, lacks political nuances. Until the election of Barack

Obama last year, the image of United States politics available to present-day European young adults was based to an overwhelming extent on memories of George W. Bush's administration—an impregnable bulwark of conservatism based on a paradoxical blend of unfettered individualism and religious fundamentalism. It is therefore interesting to nuance this legitimately negative, though also simplistic view by having them read material indicating that the American social configuration they take for granted came into being only in the recent past, as the offshoot of a highly contested political and cultural process. Whatever the complexities of its politics, American naturalism registers the action of forces of political protest whose action has sometimes been marginalized and obscured in the development of twentieth-century politics. This is why I take a particular satisfaction in placing on the reading list such politically explicit texts as Chesnut's *The Marrow of Tradition*, London's *The Iron Heel*, and Chopin's *The Awakening*.

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Why Students Should Read Frank Norris First

Mary E. Papke and Anne Mayhew

The University of Tennessee at Knoxville just enrolled what it is touting as its brightest class ever—40% straight-A students, a record number of National Merit Scholars. Yet, despite their commendable records (and we will refrain from bringing up the issue of grade inflation), these students are probably no better prepared to study American naturalist literature than preceding classes, and the fault, we suggest, lies in what is typically read in high school classes.

Ideally, undergraduate students of naturalism would bring to their studies a knowledge of economic history, for naturalism is synonymous not only with biological/social determinism, but with the rise of commodity culture as well. Not surprisingly, given the typical high school curriculum and current college general education courses, they don't. At best they bring to a course a notion about extreme economic cataclysm at the turn of the 19th century derived from reading a novel like Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, a work that, as Sinclair himself lamented, failed to achieve his goal of garnering support for socialism and workers' rights. Instead, it spoke to the gut rather than the heart. Similar to Crane's early experiments in sketches of the rich and the poor, Sinclair's work offers an essentially static economy of immense disparities that demands from modern-day readers an association of nihilistic pessimism with what is already by virtue of its determinist bent a necessarily constricted, taut scenario of fate, chance, and will that is the essence of naturalism. And, to complicate matters further, for those who get past the gore, Sinclair offers as remedy for economic disparity a type of politics that is historically dated and for our (mostly conservative) students of little relevance to economic reality today. If Sinclair's novel is their sole background prepa-

ration, and it is commonly employed in a variety of high school classes, then for them naturalist literature is decidedly one-note—an anguished scream, perhaps, or a dying moan, or, even worse, a deluded shout-out for socialism.

If one had the luxury of requiring background reading in preparation for an upper-level course in American naturalism, a corrective to the above might be achieved by asking students to have read Emile Zola's *The Experimental Novel*, *Germinal* or *Nana*, and, most importantly, *The Ladies' Paradise* by the first day of class. The first work outlines what American authors, if they read Zola at all, took up as the fundamentals of deterministic naturalism, and the second work illustrates hard determinism at work. The last novel cited, also from Zola's Rougon-Macquart cycle, balances this hard naturalism with a detailed—at times verging on the excessive and/or the erotic—cataloguing through the operation of one grand department store the major shifts in economic transactions affecting all classes as France moved out of an artisan-based trade to the mass-produced consumer culture of the late 19th century. Of course there is no way to require such preparatory reading, nor is there any space in the typical syllabus to add three French works before diving into the large collection of American naturalist works.

Restricting the list to American works, one might begin with Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*, a text that, like Zola's *The Ladies' Paradise*, demonstrates the centrality of *things* and the insatiable desire to possess them, this time on American ground, just as it documents that success, if perhaps not as likely, is nevertheless possible in a naturalist work; yet, unlike Zola's work, Dreiser's novel hardly offers a more nuanced understanding of economic realities in the U.S. than does Sinclair's novel. That is, like Sinclair's novel, *Sister Carrie* is certainly a reflection of turn-of-the-century economic developments and American commodity culture that in and of themselves played a central role in the emergence of American naturalist litera-

ture. However, any reflection *on* commodity culture is overshadowed by Dreiser's capital investment in the staging of character trajectories of rise and fall, his dubious 'scientific' theories about human motivation, and his predilection for a type of melodrama strikingly similar to that evident in *Carrie's* stage successes.

Why even worry about students having or acquiring a critical perspective on American capitalism at all? One reason is that it would assist in a thicker understanding, to use Clifford Geertz's term, of naturalism itself, particularly its intimate relationship with commodity culture, class status, and the accessibility of the American Dream at the turn of the 19th century. A second compelling reason is that careful presentation of economic developments at the turn of the 19th century might enable better understanding of the current unraveling of the American economic system at the turn of the 20th and in the early years of the 21st centuries. How, then, to make the study of American naturalism most relevant and engaging for students today? We suggest teaching Frank Norris first.

In his novels, Norris provides detailed descriptions of two economic phenomena that are particularly relevant for us today, offering insight into both how we should read naturalist works and how we can better understand the economic reality we have inherited. The first phenomenon, best illustrated in *McTeague*, is that consumption rather than deprivation is the economic trap that is most likely to bring both individuals and the economic system to ruin. In *The Jungle*, as in much of the muckraking literature of the late 19th and early 20th century, it is the deprivation of Jurgis Rudkus and his kin that is the appalling outcome of the American economy as these immigrants came to know it. While Upton Sinclair correctly saw the maldistribution of income and the hard conditions of the newly urbanizing areas, he did not so clearly see, as did Norris, that for many Americans (immigrants and otherwise), it was an abundance of goods and how to distrib-

ute them within the constraints of an existing social order that also posed a serious threat to society.

Indeed, *McTeague* begins with a paragraph that makes the reader feel heavy with abundance if not with cultured tastes:

It was Sunday, and, according to his custom on that day, McTeague took his dinner at two in the afternoon at the car conductors' coffee-joint on Polk Street. He had a thick gray soup; heavy, underdone meat, very hot, on a cold plate; two kinds of vegetables; and a sort of suet pudding, full of strong butter and sugar. On his way back to his office, one block above, he stopped at Joe Frenna's saloon and bought a pitcher of steam beer.

To be sure, Norris continues with descriptions of how overworked McTeague's parents had been and of how McTeague himself had spent years "trundling the heavy cars of ore in and out" of a mine. But once McTeague reaches San Francisco, and at exactly the time when American output of consumer goods was growing with great rapidity, the difficulties that comprise his story change dramatically.

Chief among McTeague's problems is his yearning for the gilded tooth that would replace the modest signboard that he has, without benefit of state or medical certification, hung to advertise his provision of dental services. Read in one way *McTeague* is the story of the kind of freelance, non-certified professional self-appropriation, similar to the wildcat banking and other entrepreneurial activity that characterized the rush to settle the American West. When McTeague is, after apparently successful years as an untrained dentist, forced to give up his practice, it is a vindication not only of science but chiefly of state-authorized legitimacy, the kind of state disciplinary practice that was then spreading throughout the U.S. His loss of the right to practice that for which he has had only practical training can also be read as a consequence of the lunacy of desiring gold,

and, thus, too-flashy self-promotion, that eventually leads McTeague to his horrid end in Death Valley accompanied only by one of his earliest possessions, a “half-dead canary chittering feebly in its little gilt prison.”

But, there is another way to read *McTeague* as well. Certainly, the world of which Norris wrote was as gold obsessed as William Jennings Bryan notably claimed in his “Cross of Gold” speech. It was also a world of more and more goods and of rising expectations that these goods could be possessed even by those who did not have hereditary rights or other legitimated access to an abundance of goods. Not only did Trina’s lottery money provide the ability for them to have a richer life but, even once his practice is gone, McTeague could no longer “[figure] on living in one room.” He has had more and wants even more. Had the state with its licensure requirements and Trina’s own compulsive hoarding not stood in the way, abundance could have been his.

Thorstein Veblen, writing at roughly the same time as Norris, talked about “conspicuous consumption” and did so not simply to poke fun at pompous excess but also, and more importantly, in order to stress how emulation was the force that could cause the population as a whole to consume the more and more that factories were capable of producing. Such emulation might be, in Veblen’s view, essential for continuation of the system that was emerging as he and Norris wrote, but it did not guarantee individual happiness. Although the story of America’s industrialization that is foundational in naturalist works is most often told as one of workers threatened with starvation and other physical deprivation, it is also, then, a story of growing abundance and of the tensions created within a society in which new ways of legitimizing the distribution of that abundance had to be devised if the system was not going to collapse through overproduction or, to use an equivalent term, underconsumption. And so it was for McTeague who—once he had tasted the possibility of feasting on steak, drunk liba-

tions finer than steam beer, and grown used to the luxury of spacious living quarters—wanted the more that was being produced in a way that drove him to his death. We will, of course, see the same response to the call of things in Crane, Dreiser, Wharton, and Cather, though not always the same conclusion of events.

Norris also understood, however, that the dangers in the new industrial capitalism that was taking shape in America were not simply one man’s ill luck; that is—and this is the second economic phenomenon he understood so well—the greatest danger to individuals, individual firms, and, indeed, governments is that they are likely to be entrapped by a system of commercial capitalism in which fluctuations in one part of the system have a whiplash effect upon all others. The greatest threat is, ironically, the too easy availability of abundance and the octopus of “supply chains.”

In his novels *The Octopus* and *The Pit*, Norris was remarkably prescient in describing the ambivalent nature of the supply chains that were being built by businessmen who took full advantage of the railroads and steamships that were altering the world. Beginning in the 1980s, students of business strategy began to talk about “supply” or “value” chains as key to successful management, and by the first decade of the 21st century, their talk had given rise to a flood of literature on the subject. But the idea of such chains was, obviously, not new, for it is possible to see in the work of Marx and of Veblen and of Norris an understanding that it was management of the rapid and low cost movement of goods from fields to factories to consumers that made for business success or failure.

The Octopus, the first of a planned trilogy of novels about the supply chain that was being built to move wheat from the fields of the U.S. all around the world, focuses on the railroads that were the *bête noir* of U.S. farmers and reformers during the late 19th century. Even as the railroads were built across the continental U.S. so that farmers could ship grain around the

world and could use Sears Roebuck and Montgomery Ward catalogs to buy a wide range of commodities that were previously available only in cities, those same railroads also infuriated the farmers and their elected representatives by their pricing practices. These practices which made sense from the perspective of the railroad managers who were themselves under great financial stress were seen as deliberately destructive by those who too often saw their dreams of agrarian success dashed. The story ends with disastrous results for almost all save those who profited from the railroad itself: the octopus wins; the farmers and ranchers lose.

Norris did not live to write an account of what would happen to the wheat once it got to “the Himalayas,” and it is possible to read his thunderous final paragraphs in *The Octopus* as simply a paean to bounty and the indestructible drive of nature to produce and evolve. However, *The Pit*, the second of the three-part “Epic of the Wheat” that Norris proposed, shows Norris’s brilliant revelation about this emerging economic system. The interconnectedness of markets was something new to the world in the 19th century, for it was only in that century that transportation by rail and steamship allowed goods to be transported in sufficient quantity and over sufficiently long distances to make the wheat grown in Kansas a rival in French flour mills to domestically grown wheat or as a source of famine relief in India. It was only in the last half of the 19th century that it was possible to contemplate a harvest moving from the Sierras to the Himalayas. This was a possibility, as Norris saw, that was to be celebrated, but he also understood that it meant that the ranchers and farmers as well as the heads of railroads were now caught in a system that was more powerful than any one individual and a system that for all the good it promised also turned humans and nature itself into commodities.

While the interconnectedness of markets was coming to be understood by some contemporary economists, few described the profound consequences so clearly and in such dramatic

light as Norris. What he saw in Chicago, home to the Board of Trade and “the pit,” was trade in abstracted wheat and people involved in its production and movement as another part of the emerging supply chain of American agriculture. He also saw the ruin that could come to people who took advantage of the financial opportunities that movement of goods through the supply chain offered, precisely the same kind of opportunities that have rocked our own 21st century financial institutions. Then, as now, when people bet on their own ability to predict price differentials at some time in the always uncertain future, they courted both success and ruin, but Norris also saw that the same commercial logic that motivated Shelgrim, in *The Octopus*, made such betting inevitable, at least in the absence of fiercely determined regulators. One cannot help, Norris insists, playing the hand one is dealt, though, as Jadwin’s case in *The Pit* teaches us, one should know when to fold.

In truly remarkable passages toward the end of his sad story in *The Octopus*, Norris characterizes the railroads and the wheat that they haul in a way that might be used today by those frightened by the globalization that is to be seen at Wal-Mart, globalization that is as frightening in its successful provision of products produced on the other side of the world under conditions of great poverty as it is in its possible failure to continue to provide low-wage jobs and cheap products. When Presley, the Norris-like narrator, visits Shelgrim, the president of the Pacific & Southwestern Railroad (the pseudonym for the Southern Pacific), he is surprised by Shelgrim’s claim that he himself, although head of the railroad, does not really control it:

“You are a very young man. Control the road! Can I stop it? I can go into bankruptcy if you like. But otherwise if I run my road, as a business proposition, I can do nothing. I can *not* control it. It is a force born out of certain conditions, and I—no man—can stop it or control it. Can your Mr. Derrick stop the Wheat growing? He can burn his crop, or he can give it

away, or sell it for a cent a bushel—just as I could go into bankruptcy—but otherwise his Wheat must grow. Can any one stop the Wheat? Well, then no more can I stop the Road.”

While Presley leaves his interview with Shelgrim “stupefied, his brain in a whirl” as he thinks about the “laws of supply and demand” that he now sees as “indifferent enemies,” his perception of these laws reveals Norris’s profound grasp of the new system aborning and the defensive fatalism that those who have would employ to deny their responsibility to those who have not.

What Norris understood was that this system was one in which finance and production were interrelated not by a simple supply and demand mechanism in which a little more wheat harvested would result in slightly cheaper bread but, rather, through a complex set of circumstances that could ruin farmers in California as well as respectable financiers in Chicago. The financial innovation, as it would be called today, that accompanied the flow of a commodity, wheat in this case, had resulted in a system in which a bumper crop in Kansas affected not only farmers in California but men in Chicago and New York and beyond who had quite possibly never actually seen a bushel of wheat. It is this understanding that is relevant to a world in which cheaply available goods of great variety in a nearby Wal-Mart cause distress for the common man and is relevant as well to an understanding of why Bernie Madoff and even his more law-abiding colleagues in financial markets are an integral part of a system that no one person can control. It is this story that is relevant to our students, and it is Norris who can best introduce them to it.

Mary E. Papke is Professor of English at the University of Tennessee. She has authored books on Edith Wharton, Kate Chopin, Susan Glaspell, and edited a collection titled *Twisted from the Ordinary: Essays on American Literary Naturalism*. **Anne Mayhew** is Professor

Emerita of Economics and History at the University of Tennessee and has written extensively on Thorstein Veblen; her most recent publication is *Narrating the Rise of Big Business in the USA: How Economists Explain Standard Oil and Wal-Mart*. Papke and Mayhew co-directed a graduate seminar in Consumer Culture in Late 19th and Early-20th Century American Fiction in the spring of 2007.

Five on Eleven

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—chalk it up to the peculiar obsessions of editors who wasted far too much time in their misspent youths trying to decide which books one would take to a deserted island. For this issue of ALN, we asked **June Howard**, Arthur F. Thurnau Professor of English at the University of Michigan and author of *Form and History in American Literary Naturalism (1985)* and *Publishing the Family (2001)*, among other works.*

The Howard Top Five

1. Jane Austen, *The Complete Novels*
2. J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*
3. Jewett, *The Country of the Pointed Firs*
4. Kim Stanley Robinson, *Red Mars*
5. Howells, et al, *The Whole Family*

ALN would like to thank Professor Howard for sharing this list of her favorite books. It is a list filled with sense and sensibility, written on acid-free paper manufactured from the finest of Maine timber. One suspects that at least twelve different authors had a hand in the creation of the list, and it is rumored that several of them are going to be sent to colonize Mars, with one trilogy to rule them all, one trilogy to find them, one trilogy to bring them all, and on the red planet bind them (in the land of Ann Arbor, where the shadows lie).

Ten Questions with Keith Newlin



Photo: Kathy Rugoff

Keith Newlin is Professor of English and Chair at the University of North Carolina Wilmington. He is coeditor of *Selected Letters of Hamlin Garland* and *The Collected Plays of Theodore Dreiser*, and editor of *A Theodore Dreiser Encyclopedia*, *American Plays of the New Woman*, and a number of editions of Garland's novels. His

most recent work is *Hamlin Garland, A Life*; his edition of *A Summer to Be, A Memoir by the Daughter of Hamlin Garland* will be reprinted by the University of Nebraska Press in 2010.

ALN: Congratulations on the publication of *Hamlin Garland: A Life*. What originally attracted you to Garland?

I first read *Main-Travelled Roads* long ago while backpacking in Wyoming. I devoured the stories while waiting out a prolonged rainstorm, and I was struck by his ability to elicit sympathy for the lives of hard-working farmers. Later, in graduate school, I reencountered him through his association with the playwright and actor James A. Herne while I was studying melodrama, which later evolved into my dissertation. (The two were involved in an abortive attempt to bring Herne's Ibsenesque *Margaret Fleming* to the stage.) When I finished that work, and after spending a month among Garland's papers at the Huntington and the University of Southern California, I was struck by the extent of his involvement with the leaders of American literature, and particularly his work with an astonishing number of cultural organizations. Garland never met a club, society, or movement he failed to join, and I was impressed both by his energy and by his ambition. He had an extensive correspondence with writers, politicians, and other cultural figures, and that led to my first book, the *Selected Letters of Hamlin Garland* (1998), which I co-edited with Joe McCullough. When I finished that project, I realized that it would be a shame to let what I had learned through annotating the letters disappear, and so I decided to write a biography.

ALN: Taking a somewhat broad view of American literary history, what, as you think back over Garland's career, is Garland's place in American literary history?

Though his talent as a writer was modest, Garland remains important for his effort to tell the truth, as he saw it, about life on Midwestern farms. Each time I teach his stories, I'm gratified by student response: I always have several students who grew up on farms, and they tell me Garland has it right: the drudgery, the narrow margin between profit and loss, his ability to call forth the beauty of the landscape while also depicting the squalor. Garland's work still resonates. But he's also important for his efforts to shape the direction of American literary culture, a story I tried to tell in my biography.

ALN: One final question on Garland. Students typically know Garland through "Under the Lion's Paw" and scholars of the period tend to know *Crumbling Idols* and *The Rose of Dutcher's Coolly*, in addition to *Main-Travelled Roads*. If the intellectual slate was wiped clean, and our understanding of Garland could be rebuilt from scratch, what texts would be central to this revised portrait? What would we know of Garland and his career?

I think that *Main-Travelled Roads* is still his most important work, closely followed by *A Son of the Middle Border* (1917). In many ways, the first volume of his autobiography is the better work—in terms of his skill at evoking a bygone era, in his handling the problem of the egotism involved at presuming his life story is worth telling, and in his command of detail in evoking setting and mood. While in many ways it's a period piece, readers have consistently been drawn to it. I think that Garland's skill as an autobiographer (and as a biographer—his *Ulysses S. Grant: His Life and Character* [1898] still has the ability to resonate) in many ways surpasses his skill as a writer of fiction.

ALN: You are the co-editor, with Stephen Brennan, of the journal *Studies in American Naturalism*, which is now in its fourth volume. What can you tell us about the genesis of this project? Where do you think SAN is headed in the future?

As you know, SAN had its genesis in *Dreiser Studies*, which began publication as the *Dreiser Newsletter* in 1970. With the changing nature of scholarship, particularly the increasing demands on the untenured to publish in major journals, quality contributions began to taper off, as indeed they had for many literary journals. In part this decline was due to the tendency of younger scholars to focus on cultural criticism rather than traditional literary criticism, but I also suspect that after 36 years, much that needed to be said about Dreiser had been said. It became clear around 2004 that in its present form *Dreiser Studies* wasn't sustainable as a two-issue per year publication. So after consulting with our membership and the editors of potentially competing journals, Steve and I concocted a plan to extend the journal's purview to naturalism in a broader sense, retaining the "Studies" as a link to the journal's past. In many ways SAN remains a niche journal, but we like to think that niche is broader. Past issues have included, in addition to essays on the usual suspects like Dreiser, Norris, London, articles on Upton Sinclair, Cormac McCarthy, John Updike, and others, and we're pleased that the journal is fulfilling its intent to broaden the conception of "naturalism." Finally, with the forthcoming issue, SAN will begin appearing in Project Muse, in addition to EBSCO's Academic Search Premiere database, and we hope this more extensive digital reach will make readers more aware of the journal and prompt additional submissions.

ALN: As a field for scholarship, American literary naturalism continues to prove attractive to many literary and cultural scholars. What work needs to be done in the field?

For this sort of question it's customary to respond with "extending scholarship to lesser-known works or works by other than white male authors," right? But I think more fundamental is a need to reexamine what "naturalism" is, apart from its customary conception as an offshoot of realism. Too little attention has been paid to the genre's connection to popular writing, to its reliance on melodrama, sensation, sentiment, and other popular narrative strategies. Too often we forget that the writers were chiefly interested in making a buck and crafted works that they hoped would sell and drew upon

what they hoped would attract readers. They were less interested in being part of what academics later termed a movement, and that's why earlier attempts to impose some monolithic philosophical or artistic benchmark upon them have failed to account for the range of what the naturalists produced. Think of Stephen Crane and Hamlin Garland: while both have works that critics term "naturalistic," much of their writing resists that classification. I like to think of "naturalism" as a genre that encompasses a number of tendencies, and fresh insights might be gained by examining the writers' connection to the marketplace.

ALN: What is your favorite naturalist text to teach?

McTeague, closely followed by *Sister Carrie*. Every time I teach *McTeague* and read passages to students, I can't help laugh at his bizarre scenes and jokes: who can resist the scene where McTeague bends over the unconscious Trina and kisses her "grossly, fully upon the mouth"—her reaction when she awakens: she throws up! What especially delights are the students' responses to the novel, which never fails to remind why I enjoy teaching. I like *Sister Carrie* for Dreiser's ability to evoke sympathy for his little country traveler and his depiction of the inexorable inevitability of its events.

ALN: You have also done a great deal of work on Theodore Dreiser and have long been associated with the Dreiser Society in various capacities. What advice can you give the readers of ALN who may wish to introduce *An American Tragedy* or *The Financier* to the contemporary undergraduate English major?

You're asking the wrong person: I've never had the courage to inflict a 950-page novel on my students, most of whom find reading even 300 pages a considerable challenge, these twitter days.

ALN: A fair amount of your scholarship looks at the plays written by the literary naturalists. Naturalism is typically thought of as a genre that lends itself to novel writing—especially long novels filled with pages and pages of descriptive details. What is a naturalist play? What are the special problems, if any, that the naturalist

playwright has to overcome when moving from the novel to the stage?

Interesting question. Readers may be surprised to learn that the plays written by the naturalists—that is, the plays by Jack London, Theodore Dreiser, Hamlin Garland, Stephen Crane—are either outright melodramas or have an underlying melodramatic structure. In part that’s because when they wrote their plays, melodrama ruled the stage and to get a hearing, they needed to adopt the conventions their audience, actors, and managers expected. Here’s an example from Jack London’s first play, *Scorn of Women* (1906). Hero Floyd Vanderlip leers at heroine Freda Moloof: “Ah, you beauty! You’ve made me mad for you. I’ll crush you into submission as you crushed me into submission at the dance to-night. You beat me down to my knees, but I’ll bring you down on your knees to me till you’re glad to kiss the toe of my moccasin.” Freda’s reply: “You may pollute me with your lips, but you shall not master me with your strength.”

But melodrama is also an underlying component of naturalist novels: think of the Maud Brewster-Humphrey Van Weyden-Wolf Larsen triangle in *The Sea-Wolf*, and you only need read a bit of the dialogue to recognize its melodrama. Even Dreiser’s “supernatural” plays—those where he dramatizes the chemical forces of the universe, as in *Laughing Gas* or *The Blue Sphere*, adopt a melodramatic structure. At their core, melodramas are thesis plays, and they employ exaggeration, sensation, and emotion to prove a point—whether it’s that good will prevail or that humans are helpless pawns of an indifferent universe. To return to your question, a naturalist play is a melodrama because melodrama is an essential component of naturalism and because the novelists perceived successful dramas to be melodramas.

ALN: With your biography of Garland in print, what’s next for Keith Newlin?

I’m finishing *The Oxford Handbook to American Literary Naturalism*, a rather large volume of 28 solicited essays reexamining the genre from a number of angles, ranging from its contexts and philosophical and scientific background, to gender, race, psychology and other “tensions,” to its connection to the other arts.

ALN: Finally, what the readers of ALN really want to know is this: do you still have that replica of McTeague’s gold tooth...and is it still hanging in your office?



I do: a gift from an art student who recognized my obsession. Surprisingly, few visitors to my office comment on the tooth, though they can’t help see it since their chair faces it. Wonder what that means?

--ALN: Thanks, Keith!

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 eclink@memphis.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 forth-coming 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?

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Paul Sorrentino’s edition of *The Red Badge of Courage* has been published as part of the John Harvard Library Series (Cambridge: Belknap P of Harvard UP, 2009). Congrats, Paul!

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In April, 2010, The University of Nebraska press will be reissuing Keith Newlin’s edition of *A Summer to Be*, the memoir written by Isabel Garland Lord about growing up as the daughter of Hamlin Garland.

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The Penn State Center for American Literary Studies will host a state-of-the-field conference for a new academic society, **C19: The Society of Nineteenth-Century Americanists**, the first academic organization dedicated to nineteenth-century American literary studies. The conference will be held from May 20 to 23, 2010, at The Nittany Lion Inn on Penn State's University Park campus in State College, Pennsylvania. The theme of the conference is "Imagining: A New Century." The inaugural C19 conference will explore the place of the imagination in the literature and culture of nineteenth-century America. The conference will address both how the imagination functions as a site of rich archival, theoretical, philosophical, and historical analysis, and how the imagination can shape innovative critical and pedagogical methodologies that will take American literary studies in new directions.

•ALN•

In the last issue of ALN, the editors called for haiku that take the free-will/determinism debate as a theme. The following fine submission came to us from Bruce White:

final leaves on bough
falling free or clinging fast—
crumble to litter

Thanks, Bruce!--ALN

The Call of the Papers

Jack London Society 10th Biennial Symposium

November 4-6, 2010
Hyatt Vineyard Creek & Spa-Sonoma Country
170 Railroad Street
Santa Rosa, CA 95401
(707) 284-1234

The Symposium returns to Jack London's beloved Sonoma Valley to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Society. The Hyatt Vineyard Creek is offering a discounted room rate of \$160

double or single. Reservations should be made by calling 1-800-233-1234 before the cut-off date of October 1, 2010. Conference registration will be \$125, \$85 retiree, and \$50 graduate student. Events will include a picnic and tour of the Jack London Ranch on Thursday afternoon and a visit to Kenwood or Benzinger Winery. On Friday and Saturday we will hold regular sessions including panels of papers, roundtables, films, and other formats. Friday evening we will have a cocktail reception, and on Saturday a luncheon.

The Mediterranean-style Hyatt Vineyard Creek is a five-star luxury hotel on 9 acres along the banks of Santa Rosa Creek; historic Railroad Square is 1 block away, downtown is a 3-block stroll, and Sonoma County wineries are within 6 miles. The restaurant at Hyatt Vineyard Creek Hotel & Spa spotlights fresh seafood with a country French influence. The spa offers Sonoma-inspired treatments, and the garden complex features a lap pool and a water-wall fountain. In the spacious guestrooms, beds are topped with fluffy duvets and partial canopies and bathrooms are marble.

Proposals for papers or other presentations should be sent by email to Jeanne Reesman (Jeanne.reesman@utsa.edu) by the deadline of July 15, 2010. Papers are 15 minutes in length. Proposals should include a 200-word synopsis of the presentation, names and affiliations of all participants, full address and email information.

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The Theodore Dreiser Society 2010 American Literature Association San Francisco, CA May 27-30, 2010

The International Theodore Dreiser Society will sponsor two sessions at the American Literature Association Conference in San Francisco, May 27-30, 2010.

1. Theodore Dreiser's Other Careers
Dreiser is best known as a novelist, but this panel seeks papers that consider Dreiser's other careers, loosely defined: his work as an editor, as a journalist, as a poet, as a dramatist, as a travel writer, as a

public intellectual, and so forth. Also encouraged are papers that compare and contrast Dreiser's early and late writings.

2. Open topic. Papers may be submitted on any topic concerning Dreiser or his work.

Presentations will be limited to 20 minutes. Please send brief proposals (1-2 pages) by email to the program chair by 10 January 2009:
 Donna Campbell
 Department of English
 Washington State University
 Pullman, WA 99164-5020
 campbelld@wsu.edu

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The Hamlin Garland Society
2010 American Literature Association
San Francisco, CA
May 27-30, 2010

The Hamlin Garland Society will sponsor one session at the American Literature Association's 21st Annual Conference. Papers on all aspects of Garland's writing and related topics are welcome. Please submit proposals or papers via e-mail before 10 January 2010, to the program chair:
 Roark Mulligan
 Hamlin Garland Society
 105 N Sulgrave Ct.
 Williamsburg, VA 23185
 757-810-2581
 mulligan@cnu.edu

•ALN•

The Stephen Crane Society
2010 American Literature Association
San Francisco, CA
May 27-30, 2010

The Stephen Crane Society invites papers and proposals for two panels at the American Literature Association Conference in San Francisco, CA, May 27-30, 2010.

All topics are welcome, but proposals on the following topics are particularly encouraged:

- Crane and war

- Crane and the arts (painting, photography, music, etc.)
- Crane's depiction of the city
- Race and ethnicity in Crane's work
- Issues of gender in Crane's work

Presentations will be limited to 20 minutes.

Please email proposals (approximately 300 words) by January 8, 2010, to...
 John Dudley
 Department of English
 University of South Dakota
 Vermillion, SD 57069
 John.Dudley@usd.edu

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The Frank Norris Society
2010 American Literature Association
San Francisco, CA
May 27-30, 2010

The Frank Norris Society will sponsor two sessions at the American Literature Association Conference at the Hyatt Regency San Francisco in Embarcadero Center, May 27-30, 2010.

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 might 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 Topic. Any aspect of Frank Norris'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 January 15, 2009, to the program chair:

Eric Carl Link
 eclink@memphis.edu

•ALN•

The Cormac McCarthy Society
2010 American Literature Association
San Francisco, CA
May 27-30, 2010

The Cormac McCarthy Society will sponsor two sessions at the American Literature Association Conference at the Hyatt Regency San Francisco in Embarcadero Center, May 27-30, 2010.

Session One: Cormac McCarthy on Film. This session will focus on the adaptation of McCarthy's two recent novels *No Country for Old Men* and *The Road*. Essays will treat the novels and films themselves, focusing specifically on issues of adaptation and interpretation.

Session Two: Cormac McCarthy and Science. This session will explore the scientific concepts and themes in McCarthy's work, present from the beginning, but more dominant after the author began his association with the Santa Fe Institute.

Presentations will be limited to 20 minutes. Please email abstracts or papers of no more than ten double-spaced pages by January 15, 2010, to the program chair:
 Steven Frye
 sfrye@csu.edu

•ALN•

The Jack London Society
2010 American Literature Association
San Francisco, CA
May 27-30, 2010

The Jack London Society will sponsor a panel at the 2010 ALA conference.

Papers are welcome on any aspect of London's life and work. Send one-page abstracts or completed papers to Jeanne Campbell Reesman at jeanne.reesman@utsa.edu by the proposal deadline of December 31, 2009. Include complete mailing and email information, affiliation, and paper title. Papers are to be no longer than 15 minutes, about 8-9 double-spaced 12 pt. font pages.

Bibliographic Update

Listed below are studies on American literary naturalism published since the last bibliographic update (in the spring 2009 issue of ALN). The lists below are comprehensive, but not exhaustive, and we undoubtedly missed a work here and there. If you published an article or book related to American literary naturalism in the past six months and it is not listed below, please let us know, and we will make sure to note it in the next issue of ALN.

Stephen Crane

- Clayton, Tom. "The President's Column: In a Jocular Vein." *Stephen Crane Studies* 17.1 (Spring 2008):16-20.
- Fagg, John. *On the Cusp: Stephen Crane, George Bellows, and Modernism*. Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama P, 2009.
- Houston, George and Jean V. Houston. "An Unpublished Note and Inscription of Stephen Crane." *Stephen Crane Studies* 17.2 (Fall 2008): 13-15.
- Johanningsmeier, Charles. "The 1894 Syndicated Newspaper Appearances of *The Red Badge of Courage*." *American Literary Realism* 40.3 (2008): 226-247.
- Kunga, Shunji. "The Sound and the Fury in Stephen Crane's *Maggie* and *George's Mother*." *Stephen Crane Studies* 17.2 (Fall 2008): 1-12.
- Leary, John Patrick. "America's Other Half: Slum Journalism and the War of 1898." *Journal of Transnational American Studies* 1 (2009) 1-33.
- Lutes, Jean Marie. "Lynching Coverage and the American Reporter-Novelist." *American Literary History* 19.2 (Summer 2007): 465-81.
- Monteiro, George. "Crane's 'Red Wafer' Again." *Stephen Crane Studies* 17.1 (2008): 13-15.
- . "'Our Own Steve Crane' in Chicago." *Stephen Crane Studies* 17.2 (Fall 2008): 16-19.
- Rowan, Jamin. "Stephen Crane and Methodism's Realism: Translating Spiritual Sympathy into Urban Experience." *Studies in American Fiction* 36 (2008): 133-154.
- Weinstein, Cindy. "Crane and the Body Count." *What Democracy Looks Like*. Amy Lang and Cecelia Tichi, eds. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 2006. 53-67.
- Wertheim, Stanley. "The New York City Topography of *Maggie* and *George's Mother*." *Stephen Crane Studies* 17.1 (2008): 2-12.

- Wright, Jonathan. "The Business of Teaching 'The Open Boat'." *A Class of Its Own: Re-Envisioning American Labor Fiction*. Laura Hapke and Lisa Kirby eds. Newcastle upon Tyne, England: Cambridge Scholars, 2008. 233-247.
- . "The Unpleasant 'Business' of Stephen Crane's 'The Open Boat.'" *A Class of Its Own: Re-Envisioning American Labor Fiction*. Laura Hapke and Lisa Kirby eds. Newcastle upon Tyne, England: Cambridge Scholars, 2008. 33-74.
- Theodore Dreiser**
- Adams, Richmond B. "Trains and Billboards: Carrie's Existential 'Fall.'" *Dulia et Latria Journal* 1 (Spring 2008): 17-32.
- Engelman, Jeanna. "The Russian Dreiser: A Narrative History." *A Class of Its Own: Re-Envisioning American Labor Fiction*. Laura Hapke and Lisa Kirby, eds. Newcastle upon Tyne, England: Cambridge Scholars, 2008.
- Hapke, Laura. "Laboring Dreiser and Working-Class Studies." *A Class of Its Own: Re-Envisioning American Labor Fiction*. Laura Hapke and Lisa Kirby, eds. Newcastle upon Tyne, England: Cambridge Scholars, 2008.
- Kim, Uirak. "The Conflicts of Love and Self-Pity in Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* and Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*." *Nineteenth Century Literature in English* 12.2 (2008): 171-187.
- Orlov, Paul. "Theodore Dreiser." *Prospects for the Study of American Literature II*. Richard Kopley and Barbara Cantalupo, eds. New York: AMS, 2009. 216-34.
- Jack London**
- Berliner, Jonathan. "Jack London's Socialistic Social Darwinism." *American Literary Realism* 41.1 (2008): 52-78.
- Bruni, Paul P., Bernadette H. Hyner, and Precious McKenzie Stearns. "Performing the Perfect Dog: The Reconstruction of Gender in Jack London's *The Call of the Wild* and *Wild Fang*." *Forces of Nature: Natural(-izing) Gender and Gender(-izing) Nature in the Discourses of Western Culture*. Newcastle upon Tyne, England: Cambridge Scholars, 2009. 174-209.
- Juola, Patrick. "Becoming Jack London." *Journal of Quantitative Linguistics* 14.2-3 (2007) 145-47.
- Orgeron, Marsha. *Hollywood Ambitions: Celebrity in the Movie Age*. Wesleyan Film (Wesleyan Film). Middletown, CT: Wesleyan UP, 2008.
- Prokupek, Tomáš, and Martha Kuhlman. "Pérák and Spring Heeled Jack: From Prague Avenger to London Ghost and Back Again." *International Journal of Comic Art* 11.1 (2009) 34-50.
- Reesman, Jeanne Campbell. "Jack London." *Prospects for the Study of American Literature II*. Richard Kopley and Barbara Cantalupo, eds. New York: AMS, 2009. 151-89.
- Shaheen, Aaron. "The Competing Narratives of Modernity in Jack London's *The Iron Heel*." *American Literary Realism* 41.1 (2008): 35-51.
- Frank Norris**
- Link, Eric Carl. "Frank Norris." *Prospects for the Study of American Literature II*. Richard Kopley and Barbara Cantalupo, eds. New York: AMS, 2009. 137-150.
- Nader, Jennifer M. "A Recovered Interview with Frank Norris." *American Literary Realism* 42.1 (Fall 2009): 79-82.

From the Archives

Two Reviews of the 1894 English translation of *Le roman expérimental*

The publication of Zola's collection Le roman expérimental in 1880 sparked the interest of some English-speaking reviewers, but this interest was, of necessity, limited to those who could read French. Thus, it comes as no surprise that the publication of the Belle Sherman's English translation of The Experimental Novel in 1893 generated a new wave of interest in Zola's lauded collection of essays. Two reviews, both published in 1894, of Sherman's English translation are reprinted below. What is of particular note is that both reviews—the one signed by H. H. Boyesen and the unsigned review from The Literary World—both highlight the inherent difficulties with Zola's "experimental" program. The error is in a confusion of categories: artistic productions such as the novel simply do not serve as adequate vehicles for conducting experiments in human psychological and physiological characteristics. The imagination of the artist, a key factor in the creation of literary art, is the very factor that prevents the portrayal of human psy-

chological and physiological responses from having scientific validity of any particular measure or merit.

I

The Cosmopolitan

Volume 17.4 (August 1894): 506-507.

ZOLA'S "THE EXPERIMENTAL NOVEL" H. H. BOYESEN

As an authoritative manifesto of modern naturalism, Emile Zola's volume, "The Experimental Novel, and Other Essays" (translated by Belle M. Sherman) is highly significant. Whether one is inclined to agree or disagree with the author's conclusions, it is useless to deny that he writes with a force of conviction which gives point to his style and weight to his arguments. Though I am in sympathy with the general trend of his reasoning, I am yet unable to endorse his postulate that (like medicine) novel-writing must emancipate itself from the position of an art and become a science. However desirable it may be that novelists should be "experimental moralists," as physicians aim to be experimental physiologists, I confess I am unable to see where the novelist is to find the material for his experiments. Mentally to propose to himself a problem, select the characters which are to illustrate it, and with whatever knowledge that may be at his command, work out a solution in accordance with the assumed logic of reality—is not a scientific proceeding. He must yet rely largely upon his imagination, which is the very element Zola wishes to eliminate. The scientific method would be to bring together certain people—as the vivisectionist does certain animals—in a certain definite environment, and then study, in actual (not fictitious) relations, how these people affect each other, how they affect their environment and are affected by it, how their instincts, passions, and desires manifest themselves, etc. But the writer would have to be czar of all the Russians in order to obtain the power and the right to institute such experiments. When M. Zola fancies that he can obtain scientific data by merely taking into account the results of observation and experience, and bringing all ascertainable facts to bear on the problem, he seems to be laboring under a singular misconception as to the meaning of the word "scientific." I doubt if his master, Claude Bernard, whom he quotes approvingly on every page, would have accepted this definition of a scientific method. To take M. Zola's own example—Baron Hulot in Balzac's "Cousine Bette." Balzac's problem was to illustrate the working of a certain passion in a certain given environment. Can anyone pretend that he has solved this problem? How is it that Baron Hulot, in spite of all his excesses, is not physically exhausted, and does

not end (like Heinrich Heine) with a collapse? A scientific observer would, I think, have made him die slowly of locomotor ataxia. Instead of that, the baron continues in full enjoyment of his passionate energy, which seems to go on increasing the older he grows. That is exactly the a priori treatment of a vivid imagination, to which M. Zola justly objects.

In spite of these strictures no one can read these interesting essays without being greatly impressed with the weight of the author's personality. The essay entitled "To the Young People of France," is a vigorous, truthful, and courageous piece of writing, showing how utterly sapless, unsound, and superannuated the ideals of romanticism are, and how dangerous to a nation's welfare it is to indulge in lyrical enthusiasm and discard dispassionate investigation and exact thought. "To applaud a burst of rhetoric," says Zola, apropos of the recent production of Victor Hugo's "Ruys Blas," "to become enthusiastic for the ideal, are but nervous emotions of women who weep, when they listen to beautiful music. To-day we have need of the manliness of truth to enable us to be as great in the future as we have been in the past."

This passage is, in a sense, the key-note of the whole book. Lyricism, the tendency to mistake sentiment for fact, a shrinking from the actual, and a hazy absorption in what is called the ideal (which is supposed to be exalted above the actual), are the rocks which (in Zola's opinion) will wreck the ship of state, as well as the individual man, unless he be furnished with an accurate chart, warning him of the hidden as well as the obvious dangers. And to furnish such a chart to the rising generation is the author's object in the present volume.

The translation is in the main good; but I notice that Miss Sherman uses the word "physician," when she means "physicist," and she has the originality to make the plural of goose "gooses" (page 53).

II

The Literary World

Volume 25 (April 21, 1894): 118-19.

THE EXPERIMENTAL NOVEL

Beside the title essay this volume contains four papers of considerable length—"A Letter to the Young People of France," "Naturalism on the Stage," "The Influence of Money in Literature," and "The Influence of the Republic in Literature"—and some twenty minor discussions grouped under the two headings of "The Novel" and "Criticism." The main theme of all the essays, longer or shorter, is that scientific art of novel writing which M. Zola conceives himself to have been practicing for a number of years. He means to prove that "if the experimental method leads to the knowledge of physical life, it

should also lead to the knowledge of the passionate and intellectual life.” He makes great use of Claude Bernard’s *Introduction to the Study of Experimental Medicine*, which states and illustrates the method of scientific procedure in ascertaining the laws of physiology and the art of hygiene based upon them.

To the logical value and the practical fertility of this method in all matters where the investigator is able to supplement observation of nature by experiments in the laboratory no reasonable objection can be made. It is M. Zola’s contention, however, that “if the experimental method can be carried from chemistry and physics into physiology and medicine, it can also be carried from physiology into the naturalistic novel.” But what is the experimental, naturalistic novel, granting that the method is applicable?

This is what constitutes the experimental novel—to possess a knowledge of the mechanism of the phenomena inherent in man; to show the machinery of his intellectual and sensory manifestations under the influence of heredity and environment such as physiology shall give them to us; and then finally to exhibit man living in social conditions produced by himself, which he modifies daily, and in the heart of which he himself experiences a continual transformation.

The larger portion of this definition would apply well enough to the novelists of any time or country who have tried to show life as it is and have held fast to observation as a basis. But the *experiment* which M. Zola supposes he can introduce into fiction writing as a scientific process is wholly illusory. The physiologist in his laboratory after putting two organic substances in contact, under certain conditions, watches for the result. His observation of this leads the man of scientific genius to the formation of hypotheses, which he verifies by further experiments. It is an extremely illogical confusion to suppose that the novelist, putting his characters, men or women, into certain circumstances in his story and then letting them develop, so to speak, their several natures, is following the same process. He has nothing material before him; his personages are imaginary, and they go through, on paper, experiences which his imagination decrees for them, however bent upon copying reality the writer may be. The scientific procedure is to test the development and the results of the novel by comparison with real life, keenly observed. Observation, not experiment, is the weapon of the realistic novelist. But M. Zola is so far from using terms rightly that he has to reject the plain words of his great authority, Claude Bernard, who very justly declares, with a clear perception of the differences in things:

In art and letters personality dominates everything. There one is dealing with a spontaneous creation of

the mind that has nothing in common with the verification of natural phenomena, in which our minds can create nothing.

M. Zola is very frank to quote these words, but he has no success in attempting to overthrow them. M. Bernard recognized the limits of experiment; M. Zola apparently does not know what a real experiment is. His view of science is purely literary, and verbal fallacies completely confuse him. The novelist may “lean upon physiology,” like Dr. Holmes, to a great extent, but he is not in so doing experimenting and reaching results which are of value apart from observation of real life.

With other less central positions taken by M. Zola, such as his criticism of Renan, his belief that the author occupies a more independent and salutary position than formerly, and that the right attitude of the republic toward literature is to let it alone, we find ourselves in cordial agreement. There is straightforwardness and a desire for substance rather than style in M. Zola’s essays which cannot fail to commend them to the Anglo-Saxon mind.

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

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Coming up in our Fall 2010 Double Issue: Naturalism news. Another bibliographic update. More stuff from the archives. An interview with a scholar working in the field. More calls-for-papers. Step-by-step instructions for how to teach the free-will versus determinism debate in the classroom using interpretive dance.

If you would like to contribute to ALN, please contact the editors. 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 suitable for presentation in *From the Archives*, please let us know.

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