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Catherine Carter

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POVERTY, PAYMENT, POWER: KATHLEEN THOMPSON NORRIS AND POPULAR ROMANCE

Catherine Carter
West Carolina University

2006 marked the fortieth anniversary of the death of Kathleen Thompson Norris. *Who?* I hear my under-fifty colleagues cry. The question is both understandable and remarkable, considering that between 1910 and 1950, Norris was the equivalent of Nora Roberts or Stephen King. The author of eighty-two novels, many of them best-sellers and many more serialized in the period's most popular publications, Norris claimed in *Time* (in 1955) to have written "about nine million words—at the rate of about $1 per word."[1] Not bad, even by the inflated standards of 2008. But she has been forgotten, condemned to the critical abysses of "romance" and sentimental fiction, despite her often bleak portrayals of married life for women. Her husband is recalled in specialized circles, but the reputation of both has been overshadowed by Charles Norris's more famous brother, Frank. Two critical studies—Anne G. Balay's "'Hands Full of Living': Birth Control, Nostalgia, and Kathleen Norris" and Bruce Degi's *Fiction and Family: The Early Novels of Charles and Kathleen Norris* have recognized the two Norrises' place in literary history, but are less sanguine about their contributions to literature.[2] In particular, the forced happy endings that marked many of Kathleen Norris's novels have not been forgiven by the postmodern academy; nor have the novels that took a different stance been remembered.

However, Kathleen Thompson Norris is interesting in her own right, as a "real" author who calls genre into question and plays radically with both anxiety and expectation. While many of Norris's novels count as "romance," focused as they are on monogamous heterosexual relationships, the forced conclusions that end the happier novels, let alone the despair that marks the darker ones, tell a story not conventionally "romantic." Despite her faith in the potential of marriage and family to redeem society, educate the young, and provide happiness for women,[3] Norris's essays and novels are also cautionary tales that position the choices to marry and to have sex as the most dangerous and fraught of a woman's life: not just morally or spiritually, but in terms of practical threats (notably poverty) to women's well-being. Even the happiest of Norris's novels show an equal and opposite pull of anxiety concerning women's ability to achieve any kind of security

for themselves in a world where the laws of both marriage and economy favor men.

The writing of Kathleen Thompson Norris is interesting not only as a recuperative project, but for its illumination of the tension that still characterizes popular romance today: love, sex, and financial and emotional security are profoundly desirable, but the power disparity between men and women means that the relationship that promises security may in fact undermine it. Long before scholars of romance in the 1980s pointed out the deep anxieties underlying that genre, Norris was addressing women's anxiety about the power disparities imbricated in sex and marriage, and attempting to allay it again in very nearly the way Janice Radway's *Reading the Romance* and Tania Modleski's *Loving with a Vengeance* would attribute to popular romance.[4] Norris's startling addition, however—one that did not cross into the subsequent generations' popular romances—was thrift. Love was not enough; there must also be money, and (contrary to the theme of the standard 1980s Harlequin) money was not to be had simply by marrying it.

Despite her belief in marriage, Norris advocated for women working both before and after it; moreover, she was a strong adherent of the new "science" of domestic economy or home economics.[5] Norris's works promise women security only as the result of extraordinarily good planning, both in choice of spouse and in terms of actual economy. In both love and domestic finance, solvency and safety are so difficult to achieve, and the perils of failing to achieve them so great, that endlessly careful choice, extreme thrift, and, in the last resort, good luck (good fortune, one might say) are the only hopes of salvation for Norris's women. She articulates the philosophy underlying most of her novels and all of her essays in her 1931 essay "What Hard Times Mean to Women": "Rich women are always worrying and scrimping, are almost always nervous about their incomes. The real freedom, financially, comes to the woman who has a steady husband and who has mastered domestic economics."[6] Women find safety within patriarchal constraints not only by finding "steady" men who respect and support them, but also by saving stale bread, finding their own work, and keeping their account books in order: this practical focus of Norris's solutions to masculine power is not what most women would consider "romantic" at all. This is the tension identified by Jeanne Dubino as the contrast between the romance and "the conduct book, a guide for shaping women's behavior into a thrifty, sexless, managerial norm."[7]

But this distinction is problematic when it comes to Norris, for whom the romance and the conduct book are one and the same, both

dedicated to teaching women to survive and profit from sex and marriage. Norris's novels are romantic in their faith in love and marriage, but strikingly anti-romantic in their insistence on the value of quotidian chores, efficient housekeeping, and the saving of money. Nor did she entirely subscribe to what Dubino identifies as the common goal of the two genres, "the domestication, emotionalization, and sexualization of women"; she knew already that the home was the site of (unpaid) labor, that sex was one of the few commodities over which women had any control, and that women's work and space were devalued by most men.[8] Thrift, control, and love conjoined are Norris's atypical answers to these problems, the very problems that give rise to the romantic fantasy in the first place: patriarchal domination and denigration of women.

Unromantic as her conflation of thrift and love may appear, though, it may actually make nearly any Norris novel an instance of the romance genre, if we use Jan Cohn's provocative definition of romance as "the story of how the heroine gains access to money."[9] Norris's love-thrift juncture has much to say about the roots of the anxieties and discomforts concerning power that still mark romance; unlike many of her literary descendants, Norris's works explicitly identify men's power as financial as well as sexual, a pressing concern around which later-century romances tend to tread very carefully.

This not-so-sentimental message manifests itself in three major ways: in the language in which Norris's nonfiction describes women's literal need to manage and control their money and their sexuality; in Norris's "happy ending" novels, much of whose happiness is always-already undone by what has come before; and in the darker Norris novels, most notably her long-forgotten *Shadow Marriage* (1952). All three are significant in the language Norris uses to describe women's literal and figurative poverty within a patriarchal economy; despite her apparently sincere belief in the equalizing power of romantic and marital love, much of her fictional and non-fictional advice concerned work, finance, and the necessity to both pay one's bills and to make one's efforts pay.

As scholarship on the romance demonstrates, a conflicted relationship between patriarchal power and romantic love is certainly not unique to Norris—though her identification of the problem as financial is one that the later romance genre has buried deep. Following Joanna Russ's 1974 "Somebody's Trying to Kill Me and I Think It's My Husband" and Ann Douglas's 1980 "Soft-Porn Culture,"[10] the first two full-length books of romance scholarship, Modleski's *Loving with a Vengeance* and Radway's *Reading the Romance*, reiterate that one of

the functions of popular romance novels is to first acknowledge and then (temporarily) defuse women's anxiety and resentment about their helplessness within patriarchal constraints. Modleski, building upon Jameson and Althusser, suggests that romances, like other works of popular culture, both "stimulate and allay social anxieties," ultimately reassuring the reader that dominant ideology is natural, right, and to the reader's benefit rather than a social construct which benefits those already in power.[11] Radway reaches a similar point through an ethnographic approach to a specific group of romance readers and the books they preferred to read, analyzing their preferences in terms of Nancy Chodorow's object-relations based theory, which describes a journey to a female selfhood predicated upon successful and nurturing relationships to others. But readers have financial as well as emotional incentives to believe what romances are likely to tell them, which is, in Radway's reading, "that, in fact, men do not threaten women or function as obstacles to their fulfillment. In the safe realm of the imaginary, then, the reader is allowed to indulge in the expression of very real fears that she is permitted to control simultaneously by overruling them with the voice of greater knowledge."[12]

Radway believes that successful or "ideal" romances achieve this in such a way that women's fears and desires are both validated: they are right to be frightened by men's power over them, but the threat is ultimately no real threat, and, by implication, sex, love, and marriage as the high road to financial security is ultimately a safe one. "Failed" romances, however, those rejected by Radway's sample readers, arouse the same fears of male power but fail to reassure them that those concerns are baseless.[13] Most of Norris's novels do exactly this: they present in painful detail the financial and emotional plight of the woman for whom marriage is not safe and then rescue her from it, usually (though not always) by providing her with a more suitable man or teaching her to appreciate the man she has.[14]

Contemporary romance critics interested in recuperating the romance tend to disagree with the premises that as a genre it reinscribes the status quo and that all romances do essentially the same thing. Some go further: Suzanne Jushasz suggests that romance offers an actual paradigm for gender equality, rather than a way to ignore the existing inequality; Kate McCafferty that romance can provide a critique of status quo even as it inscribes it; Jennifer Crusie Smith that romance readers want to see validated not only what they already want, but what they already have, enabling them to resist a patriarchal (or, sometimes, a feminist academic) vision of what they "should" want.[15] These appealing readings have much to recommend them; in

particular, their contentions that different romances function in different ways, that love and affection are not inherently unworthy desires, and that romance can be observed modifying its premises between 1970 and 2000, are worthy of more attention than I can give them here. However, explicitly recuperative readings generally do not address whether love (or marriage) is not also something that women in particular are acculturated to want, rather than an absolute or unmediated desire; whether romantic heterosexual love is always good for the principals; or whether, supposing they want it and get it, they don't also (to use Norris's word) pay for having done so.

Appealing as such recuperative investigations of the romance may be, then, it is important to remember that whatever the state of romance readers' psyches (about which it would be difficult to generalize), the state of their wallets is inevitably affected by the real economic disadvantages which women generally experience. An individual reader's life may be entirely to her satisfaction, but this does not change the overall trend dictating that women still make approximately seventy-five cents on men's dollar, that women are underrepresented in higher management and government, that even working women still shoulder a majority of housework and childcare responsibilities, and so on. Cohn's 1988 *Romance and the Erotics of Property* makes this point admirably, reading the romance as a story about power, and specifically about the power of wealth, to which the hero has access and the heroine traditionally has not. Her reading seconds Margaret Jensen's argument that women reading popular romance fantasize a great deal about "the luxury of creative, challenging work, the luxury of being able to choose to work or not, the luxury of part-time work with flexible hours, the luxury of shared work that will bring them closer to their husbands."[16] The heroine's path to economic security is sex with and marriage to the hero, and is one way in which it is possible to imagine having such luxuries. Despite many scholars' quite justified qualms about treating romances as interchangeable, and about romances' subversive potential before they inscribe marriage as ultimately desirable and safe, I follow Cohn in feeling that most romances tell, at least in part, that "story of how the heroine gains access to money" and that this is a necessary but ultimately problematic story because women's access to money of their own has traditionally been so restricted. Or, as Mary Nyquist puts it, "romance . . . enables its readers to experience safely a sense of helplessness that has layered, socio-economic depths."[17]

As Kathleen Therrien argues, popular romance in general is a site of "radically heteroglossic" discourse, because it gives voice to the con-

flicting ideologies that make it necessary in the first place.[18] Most romances are sufficiently conflicted about sex, gender and power that they may be read as conservative and as progressive, depending on which strands one chooses to emphasize, and Norris is no exception. Norris's works both are and are not romance as we understand the term today, or perhaps we should say that they include what Radway defines as both "ideal" and "failed" romance (Norris wrote as well as at least two novels, and several novellas, which surely cannot be called romance at all). Her work is imbricated in paradigms which demand that women find happiness and economic security through men and which assert women's helplessness without men. What, then, can we learn about romance, or about Norris, or about romance and Norris, by considering these forgotten works?

To answer this question, we must return to the question of payment, which Norris raised half a century before Cohn or Nyquist pointed to the connections between property, power and the erotic. Norris's fiction and essays perform their ideological gaps with a passion, offering advice and exempla which seem contradictory, but which in fact reflect contradictory cultural discourses. But the apparent contradictions resolve themselves, in Norris's language of economy of both love and management, into the ongoing metaphor of payment. Literal and figurative, payment spans all of Norris's concerns.

Men's financial power over women is an issue both central to much twentieth-century romance (both before and after it became a mass-market commodity in the early 1970s) and largely invisible in it. The heroines of many romances have money troubles, particularly if the romances are written in the 1970s or 1980s or set in pre-twentieth-century periods; in many others, particularly since the 1990s, they have none. The heroines of some (often early) romances are financially dependent upon the heroes, a dependence which serves both as a plot device to bring the couple together and as a sign of the hero's ability to care for the heroine.[19] The heroines of others (often later) are financially independent, to the point where discussion of money is striking by its absence. What very few romances overtly acknowledge is that in monetary terms, contrary to more hopeful critical visions, women do tend to pay for wanting, and for getting, romantic or sexual love, marriage, and family.

Whatever the inherent desirability of romantic or sexual love, it is seldom, if ever, free of financial ramifications: the financial union of marriage entails decisions about how or whether to share assets, debt property (particularly real estate), names (and therefore legal identity and credit history) and financial responsibility for children. More-

over, women also pay for *losing* love, marriage, or family, as they do in the cases of divorce or death.[20] It is not so in every case, certainly; it is not necessarily so; yet it happens often enough, even now—let alone in 1920. A woman who marries may raise her financial status because of the doubled income; but if she works at a job which pays less than her husband's, if she works at a lesser-paying job in order to live with her husband, if she works at a lesser-paying job to put her husband through college, or if she takes time from her career to be the primary caregiver to children, her financial dependence increases too, even while her bank account may (or of course may not) flourish. If she stays single, her independence may be unquestioned, but her safety net is likewise much reduced; an illness or injury can bankrupt her as it is unlikely to do to a married woman, let alone a married man, particularly given the disparities between health care coverage for men and women, and between the kinds of jobs that men and women tend to have. If, finally, she marries and then divorces, her income is statistically likely to drop no matter what she has been doing in the meantime. Little of this is true, statistically, for men.

This is the financial reality that most contemporary romances skirt, either by posing the money problems as secondary to the emotional ones and then solving both by marriage to a wealthy man, or by postulating hero and heroine as improbably equal in terms of money. It is the absent center at the heart, so to speak, of the romance and of much romance criticism as well: the hero may be more powerful socially or financially, but the heroine's emotional and sexual power over him negates this imbalance and puts him in what romance author Susan Elizabeth Phillips, in her essay "The Romance and the Empowerment of Women," calls an "emotional stranglehold."[21] Many apologists for the romance make this point without, however, saying much about the power dynamics which generate the need for a "stranglehold" over one's spouse or lover. But nothing really negates the basic financial disparity; it can be ignored, or it can be dubbed irrelevant by the equalizing (or strangling) power of love, but it remains problematic, the visible sign of a gendered privilege which no amount of love can erode.

Norris does not gloss over this central issue, and the way in which she conflates it with the "other" issue of love and sex makes for lively reading. It also makes for more "failed" romances, in Radway's terms, because it makes it so difficult to reassure the reader that all is really well when the marriage plot has run its accustomed course. But Norris's work also illuminates the central conflicts and contradictions of romance more clearly than most of its successors, just because it does acknowledge that the barriers to "true love" are as much financial as

emotional. In Norris's work, the absent center is not absent at all, and the "failed romance" makes for a much more complicated novel.

Her essays provide the clearest explication of how payment functions to mesh Norris's domestic and financial economies. From the essays, readers learn that poverty, while often character-building, is basically uncomfortable, dirty, and painful. It can be avoided, however, by careful choice; even children born into apparently hopeless poverty can find their way out of it through good work and good marriage. The pangs of poverty do not mean that wealth is an inherent good—on the contrary, too much wealth and comfort render Norris's characters unable to enjoy simple or "real" pleasures (her most constant model of unaffected joy is the family picnic on the beach or in the hills, which appears in nearly every book). Worse, while rich men (there are almost no independently wealthy women) can provide freedom from want, they generally undervalue women, instead wasting their time in spoiled search for more sophisticated pleasure, living "too hard and fast." Norris's laws of money (thrift in preserving what one already has, hard work, careful and clever planning, and the appreciation of inexpensive but genuine joys) and those of love (thrift in preserving what one already has, hard work, careful and clever judgment of character, and the appreciation of a middle-class but genuine man and all he has to offer) are the same.

Hands Full of Living (1931) is a representative collection of Norris's essays on marriage, money, love, housework and society. The second essay in this Depression-era collection, "What Hard Times Mean to Women," presents the hypothetical Mary Black as a type of the reckless spender who sneers at domestic economy only to suffer endless worry and discomfort as a result.[22] The volume's other short essays encourage women to follow "Office Rules for Kitchen Workers" (that is, to systematize housework and home economy in order to minimize the labor and maximize the freedom to do more pleasing things); to consider whether they "really want that divorce"; to preserve their "purity" or virginity at all cost ("The Woman Who Has Something to Hide" and "Making Purity Attractive"); and to find the work that will fulfill them ("Do Workers Make Good Wives?").

This advice may seem contradictory: women are told both that the care of their families and homes is their most sacred duty and their real profession, and that they should work outside the home and find their own interests in life. But payment encompasses it all. Women should enjoy and care for their own children as much as possible because nothing else "pays" so well (both in terms of pleasure now and in terms of producing children who will help them later, especially if husbands prove

unreliable). Women should work, save, and be relatively independent people whom men cannot subjugate financially, because it "pays" to look after oneself; they should resist sex until marriage because doing so "pays" so well, and because if they don't, they will surely "pay." The object is a life in which financial, familial, and emotional security are assured by planning and careful choice, by not "throwing away" or "giving away" one's assets, by avoiding, at all costs, waste.

The obvious strand of the payment metaphor is, of course, sexual: purity "pays," promiscuity makes one "pay." In "Making Purity Attractive," Norris first compares promiscuity to physical addictions—alcoholism, gluttony—and then adduces her customary hypothetical exempla, in this case Louisette and Margaret, as evidence of the types of "payment" that her two choices entail. (If the names don't say enough, Louisette is promiscuous and extravagant.) Norris acknowledges that "in those years from eighteen to twenty-six, years of daughtering and sistering and settlement work and books, [the virtuous Margaret] had sometimes wondered if decency and purity paid" (77). Norris of course answers emphatically that it does, and to prove it offers us her contrasting picture of Margaret at thirty-five: wholesomely gardening and mothering in her upper-middle-class home, surrounded by "her children and books, her friends and family, her clubs and charities . . . all only a background for the marriage that has crowned and fulfilled the highest possibilities of her being, and the love and companionship for which she had the courage to wait" (77).

Margaret is not only safe from sexual censure and the poverty attendant upon such censure, a central concern for Norris, but financially secure in that home and garden, wealthy enough to *have* clubs and charities rather than being the recipient of their good offices, not only legitimate but positively royal ("crowned") in her privilege and safety, and, most importantly, happy in her marriage, not only financially but emotionally and sexually fulfilled. Careful choices, thrifty living, and sexual providence have elevated her not only to aristocracy, but to royalty in the Norris economy. Louisette, on the other hand, is left beggared of her one sure asset, a figurative if not a literal pauper, with no such acceptable future. As Norris dramatically and predictably concludes, "Purity pays."

The equation of sex and finance, promiscuity and payment, springs up again in "The Woman Who Has Something to Hide." The essay begins with a long excerpt from what I take to be a fictitious letter (the style has all the marks of Norris herself) from a woman who "didn't play the game straight" (102). This metaphor sets the tone: sex and marriage are gambles, and promiscuity is cheating at that game or on

that bargain (an analogy still in use for adultery). Moreover, the theme here is again payment, in the triple sense of debt, punishment, and restitution: as if the sexual woman were a thief whose debt must be paid back. "Life is like that: we have to pay as grown men and women, for the stupid, blind, passionate things we did when we were hardly more than excited and ignorant children. If you put out your eight-year-old eyes, for a dare or a stunt, Nature doesn't give you another pair of eyes to practice on" (105). The secondary metaphor is one of vision, and it too surfaces in other essays on a regular basis; as children or adolescents, we act blindly, unable to see things "as they really are." The girl who "yields" sexually is putting out her own eyes, blinding herself to better possibilities, acting short-sightedly.

But Norris shortly drops the question of vision to return to the obsessive metaphor of payment: "The fact remains that she knew . . . that she was stealing, from her own future, from her unborn children, from the honorable parents and brothers and sisters who love her, and worst of all, from her own integrity. She was stealing from the community that has built its civilization upon certain protective and clean and good laws—laws for her benefit as well as that of the commonwealth as a whole" (105–6). Here, lest we miss it, Norris makes her point explicit: the girl's virginity, and the use of her sexuality, are property, hers with which to bargain but held in joint trust by future husband (the man who will buy it), future children, current family, and community. This may seem extreme—what stake has a brother in a sister's virginity? or a child in her mother's early sexual experiences?—but it makes sense in a social climate in which a man can divorce his wife for prior sexual experience. It makes still more sense when virginity is the only property of which every woman can be sure, her only chance to buy herself a "safe" future, and the only asset over which she herself has complete control (there is only one rape in all the eighty-two novels, and even that is attributed firmly to a spoiled young girl's "foolishness" in being alone with her rapist). Even if the probability is that the deceptive wife will "get away with" her deception of her husband, she is, of course, "paying in the ugly memory" (108).

However, women pay for faults other than sexual improvidence; they pay more literally for carelessness in dealing with actual money, when it finally comes into their hands. In "What Hard Times Mean to Women," designed to prepare housewives for the incipient economic depression, Norris recommends "a housecleaning on paper," the collection's first conflation of domestic responsibility (traditionally women's sphere) with financial or business responsibility (less traditionally so). Norris waxes quite specific about what she wants wives

to avoid: "families whose whole income is $150 a month will carry bills in the neighborhood of $600—or one third of the yearly income" (15). This fearless plunge into exact figures marks Norris's focus on domestic economy throughout; she is not speaking in abstractions, and much of her advice about love, money, sex, and housekeeping might be summed up as an adjuration to "sweat the small stuff." Norris winds up this essay with a metaphor nearly as pervasive as that of payment: she compares the housewife to a businessman, and asks why the thrift and organization required in the latter would be less desirable in the former. This comparison at a stroke configures housework as a legitimate and scientific occupation, justifies Norris's also very deep interest in systematizing housework, and authorizes women to handle money without succumbing to clichés about women's dependent role.

This housewife-as-businessman analogy appears again in "Office Rules for Kitchen Workers," which urges women to the same thrift, economy, and scheduling necessary in the world of paid work and which holds up as a model the wife who keeps her house on a strict schedule, generates her own spending money through part-time work, and sings the praises of stale bread crumbs as the base for at least a dozen staple dishes. We see it again in "Do Workers Make Good Wives?"—a rhetorical question to which Norris answers with an unequivocal affirmative, because "the business girl, disciplined and sensible, knowing the value of money, knowing something about men and their downtown lives, is the real 'home girl' today. Nine times out of ten she has gone into business in the first place just to hold some home together, to help Mother, or Dad, or the boys. She knows the value of home" (39).[23] The woman who has learned good business planning can be trusted with the planning necessary for a home: that most valuable of commodities, that place of safety, security, and education of the young. Even though children are "the real and glorious fulfillment of her highest destiny," Norris advocates the mother working again once the children are in school, because "the day of soap-making, spinning, fowl yards, lard frying, raisin seeding, soup kettles has gone forever" and the wife can't "sit at home embroidering doilies, dusting the piano, and working on French verbs" (40). Norris both feels that marriage, family, and housekeeping are work—subject to the organization and planning that govern all other work—and that women can and should find other work too, accruing all the "payment" that results from both. The bread crumbs become a kind of trail that the intelligent wife can follow to safety and security.

The business metaphor appears once more, reversed, in "The Love Job," an essay adjuring women not to make romantic love the sole

focus of their lives. "To give up your mother, your friends, your outside interests when you marry is the quickest way of becoming the stupid, pathetic, parasite type of woman who presently finds that she hasn't got anything left at all" (122). This is interesting not only for its continued focus on *women's* happiness and safety as the primary good (a quality that marks all romance and designates romance as a "women's" genre) but because in a prior essay, "Here Comes the Bride—Heaven Help Her," Norris praised the Victorian ideal of women who gave up these things to the all-important marriage job. As Anne Balay notes, Norris is prone to position nostalgia for the Victorian era as preferable to the loss of order or "code" she perceives in the modern period.[24] Even there, though, Norris acknowledges that those days are gone, that marriage is "neither bond nor free," and asserts that, in large part thanks to women having their own pre-marriage working income, "Nothing begets married disputes quite so often as does the money question, and nobody knows so little about money and its proper administration as does the bride" (19, 21).

The conflicts and gaps here are striking, both in Norris's own ideology and in the "neither bond nor free" cultural attitudes surrounding marriage throughout the twentieth century. "Neither bond nor free," an overt reference to Galatians (3:28), also suggests a more recent slavery, implicitly comparing marriage to the condition of the freed slaves and their descendants whose lack of clear place in the social structure left them vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. The key to Norris's paradoxical comparisons and metaphors, though, ultimately lies in her advocacy, over and over again, of whatever offers the most practical safety, support, and happiness to (white) women. She believes that marriage and family are the surest route to these things, but, as a woman who herself combined marriage, family, and a successful career, she sees no reason why work cannot be part of the equation.[25] The same agenda informs her conflicting images of poverty as threat and poverty as character education: money is good to the extent that it makes women's lives better, dangerous to the extent that it becomes an end in itself and cuts women off from better things than clothes, society, and card games—like marriage to a "good" ("steady") husband. Her perhaps not-very-serious suggestions of matrimonial colleges and the like speak with genuine respect of men's rights and women's responsibilities within the marriage system, but they also offer deeply contemptuous portraits of men who are unjust to their wives—adulterers, spendthrifts, bullies, the wrong choices for women. Women are most valuable in their ability to construct and maintain families; families are most valuable in their capacity to

protect, support, and educate women, and to educate men to treat women well. When families fail to do these things, they are failures indeed, as the protagonist of *Martie the Unconquered* tells her father.[26]

The same contradictions and conflations inform Norris's novels, whether they end well or badly for the heroines. Sex promises women pleasure (eventually, within rigorously circumscribed bounds) and marriage and family promise them safety; but these promises are continually undercut by equal and opposite portrayals of misery, penury, and loss for the sexually and maritally improvident. Norris, whose family was plunged into working poverty when she was a teenager, has much to say about life without ready money, and one of her many interviews was entitled "The Joys of the Poor," which she believed to be many.[27] However, she also chronicles the difficulties and distress of poverty, the lack of room for any misstep or misfortune when there is never quite enough of anything, and the constant need for active planning and thrift if the woman, and the family, are to survive.

This is true too of Norris's fictional portrayals of marriage, her topic for more than forty years: generally speaking, women are configured as the poor, both literally and figuratively, and while they have joys denied to the wealthy and the male, they must be economically and emotionally provident indeed to achieve anything like the safety (and financial comfort) they seek in marriage. And, as is so often the case with literal poverty, even extreme thrift is sometimes powerless to help women escape the confines of their circumstances or their marriages. But by and large, Norris says, thrift can be enough. As another character says of the exemplary heroine of *The Rich Mrs. Burgoyne* (1912), "She's simply found out what pays in this life, and what doesn't pay, and I think a good many of us were living too hard and fast ever to stop and think whether it was really worth while or not. She's the happiest woman I ever knew; it makes one happy just to be with her, and no money can buy that."[28] Norris's recurring thesis is that some things pay (as in a sound return on an investment) and some things make us pay (as in punishment and debt) and the only hope of safety lies in learning to distinguish between them.

> Life boils down to this, doesn't it? . . . that women have something to sell, or give away, and the question is just how much each one can get for it! That's what makes the most insignificant married woman feel superior to the happiest and richest old maid.

> She says to herself, "I've made my market! Somebody wanted me!" That's what motherhood and homemaking rest on: the whole world is just one great big question of sex, spinning away in space![29]

This cry from Norris's 1945 novel of feminine education, *The Story of Julia Page*, is startling in the context of Norris's body of work, which for forty years glorified "motherhood and homemaking" so effectively that she was publicly commended for her anti-birth control stance by Theodore Roosevelt.[30] It is also striking that being "wanted" by "someone" (a man) is secondary to having "made [one's] market" or sold one's product; this may be the equation of the romance novel, and the reason why it is exciting to be "wanted," but how often is it cast in these terms by any romance author? To reduce these "sacred" vocations of motherhood and homemaking to sex and salesmanship was not in Norris's usual vein; it is, however, implicit throughout her work.

This uncharacteristic paragraph documents the heroine's recognition that she is never to be free of her early indiscretions. Having been ill-educated by unfortunate parents, Julia starts life handicapped, has an equally unfortunate sexual affair, and is driven to educate and recreate herself through the subsequent remorse, her development of a work ethic, and her love for the educated man she eventually marries. However, this is not Horatio Alger; the marriage is made in the middle, not at the end, and the second half of the book explores Julia's realizations that she might have been happier alone, that her husband cannot (or chooses not to) live with her past despite having a past of his own, and that women are punished for sexual freedom in a way that men are not. And while these realizations are unlikely to be news either to Norris's audience or to readers of contemporary romances, they add a certain painful realism that most of today's mass-market romances cannot claim. For Julia Page, even a mature and intelligent love and marriage are not without flaw. While the marriage is eventually salvaged, if in somewhat damaged form, by Julia's determination to endure her husband's censure (catalyzed by her religious belief that "love fulfills the law"), the reader is left with explicit statements that the law is not just. Even the husband, Jim, who never entirely forgives Julia, ponders, "Lord, what a world for women!"

> Hunted down mercilessly, pushed at the first sign of weakening, they know not where, and then lost! Hundreds of thousands of them forever outcast, to pay through all the years that are left to them for that hour of yielding![31]

Women are presented as prey ("hunted down" by men who are, by

extension, predators), as exiles ("lost" and "outcast") and as debtors or criminals who must "pay."

The recurring metaphor of payment highlights all the novels' underpinnings in Norris's fraught economy of money and love. Women who "yield" sexually in Norris's work are, as the battlefield verb suggests, defeated or occupied (and who could the victorious enemy be except men?). Worse, though, they are condemned to figurative and literal poverty by their improvident choice. In the essays we see such women described sympathetically as "generous"—they "give away" sexuality or virginity rather than selling—but such generosity, Norris emphasizes, does women no good (105). Generosity is no virtue when it beggars the giver without enriching the recipient, as, in Norris's construction, sexual generosity invariably does.

Similar points appear in Norris's novel of divorce, *The Heart of Rachael* (1916), in which Rachael leaves an unsatisfactory husband only to be told that he "won't *be* blamed," no matter what he has done; "men never are."[32] Her more pleasing second husband is tempted away by a younger woman, and though a *deus ex machina* (literally, a car accident that injures their younger son) rejoins the severed couple, Rachael too is left to consider women's helplessness at men's hands and the disadvantage at which legal divorce may place women. Since divorce is still a very strong indicator of poverty for women, it is clearly of women's well-being that Norris is thinking, despite her oft-expressed doctrine of service and sacrifice. While Rachael is not materially impoverished by her divorce or her separation from her second husband (though we do see her humiliation at having to ask the first husband for money), she finds herself abandoned after having finally known love and family life, and feels herself ruined by her choice. As her second husband pursues an affair with an actress, she decides that

> while civilization is as it is, divorce is *wrong* . . . if I had had a little more courage [in trying to mend matters with her first husband], or a little more prudence [in marrying him] in the first place . . . [eight other people, including herself and her estranged second husband] might all have been happier, to say nothing of the general example to society.[33]

Divorce, in this formulation, is "wrong," that is, morally wrong, a predictable and publicly necessary stance for the solidly Catholic Norris. However, a greater wrong seems to lie in the fact that Norris sees it as leading to less happiness rather than more, particularly less happiness for women. Moreover, it is wrong temporally, not eternally, "while civilization is as it is": a proviso that Rachael never fully explains, but

that seems likely, in context of the book's constant harping upon the many perils of marriage and sex, to mean "while men have such power over women." While Norris was opposed to divorce on religious grounds, her phrasing is telling. Divorce, it seems, is most wrong because Norris believes it enhances rather than limits men's power to manipulate women and family; divorce initially frees Rachael from the disappointing Clarence, but it then allows Warren, the second husband, freedom to pursue another woman and to abandon his wife and sons. It allows men to go free and continue to enrich their lives, literally and metaphorically, while leaving women bereft of their one asset in the marriage economy, the virginity which they traded for security, the gift of the men who can now leave them.[34] And even when women do the leaving, *The Heart of Rachael* implies, they set themselves up to be left in turn. Dramatic disaster brings Rachael and Warren back together, but by implication it takes dramatic disaster to revise the tragedy that poor choices in marriage create for women.

This is the stance articulated in *Burned Fingers* (1945) as well: one young woman tells another,

> "If a girl gives in to a man she's the one to blame and everyone blames her, and if he lets her down hard nobody blames him; perhaps his mother is perfectly delighted. But if they're married and he breaks away or is unfaithful, then *he's* wrong and he gets all the blame."
>
> "It's not fair," Jennifer said hoarsely.
>
> "No, of course it's not!"[35]

It's not fair; Norris tells her readers so on literally dozens of occasions in the essays and novels. But it is "the way it is," in the world Norris saw. And she tells readers this as well, and offers the logical corollary: until, or unless, the world changes so much that women don't need to bargain with sex for security and happiness, they had better drive the best bargain they can. If they don't want to be "blamed"—a catch-all term which included sexually suspect women being barred from work, cut off from their families, socially ostracized, and sent to the reformatory-like "homes" seen in *Julia Page*[36]—women must get marriage, and *good* marriage, before providing sex.

What makes this stance interesting is its startling pragmatism, its focus on the fear of literal and figurative poverty. Patriarchal cultures have controlled women's sexuality with moral and financial censure for millenia, and women have cooperated in controlling other women's sexuality for just as long; but Norris's take on this old dance is different. First, as a kind of early Phyllis Schlafly, she preaches abstinence

to women as a means of achieving economic and emotional parity with men who hold all the visible economic and emotional power. Second, while she does not always make it explicit that this parity, or the source of men's power, is economic in nature, she continually places it in economic terms. The emotional and the financial flow together seamlessly in Norris's work, making a single economy in which love and money, need for sex and need for security, are interchangeable.

Despite their humble beginnings, Julia and Rachael are not menaced for long by literal poverty; even before marriage, they have found provisional escapes through education, recreating themselves in a "finer" mold. But for both women and any number of Norris's other protagonists, the threat of poverty is haunting. Both, like most of Norris's women, have experienced the terrors and privations of poverty in kitchens that smell of onions and apples and rotting wood (Norris's hallmarks of poverty), and the threat of emotional destitution is perpetual. Their sexual mistakes (having sex with men who will not provide long-term affection, support and respect) leave them vulnerable not only to actual poverty, but also to abandonment, societal censure, and loneliness, the poverty of Norris's emotional economy.

Emotional security or wealth—which is only incidentally equated with actual financial wealth, and is more often found in the struggling but upwardly-mobile middle-class marriage—is to be had only in context of thrift: of spending money, and love, only where they are most needed and where the best bargain (for love and respect in return) is to be had for what is spent. The thrifty wife who hoards her stale bread, keeps her account-books and her hair in order, and lets no half-cup of rice go to waste in "Office Rules for Kitchen Workers" is the moral and metaphorical equivalent of the woman who, on the marriage market, considers her options, waits for the (potentially successful) man who will love her, respect her, and provide her with sexual satisfaction, and resists alike the insidious blandishments of the trifling man who has only charm and sex to offer, and the wealthy man who will never value her at her true worth (191–92).

Norris's late *Shadow Marriage* (1952) is the novel most indicative of the points at which the emotional and financial perils come together; it is also the novel that most calls into question Norris's reputation as the author of happy endings. Georgia, a widow spurred by poverty, makes one of Norris's textbook unhappy marriages to a rich man, Philip, who spends the rest of the novel treating her as badly as Norris can make him do. This is a pattern in other Norris novels, and a model for what to avoid in a husband: a wealthy man immune to the claims of reason or justice, and deeply devoted to power, derides, criti-

cizes, dominates, and harasses his wife, who finds herself eerily powerless to change anything. And, Norris implies, while the wife's sufferings are profound, she might have so easily avoided them by a more thoughtful choice. Long before the book's midpoint, we are told that Georgia has chosen, literally, to yield her self to Philip.

> She had completely lost her old identity; the growth of a new one was painful. Georgia could have better endured all these wrenching pains, shocks and bewilderments if remnants of the old life had not continually stirred under the surface, reminding her that she had voluntarily chosen this metamorphosis. . . . That this condition of deadness, this sense of not actually being herself any more, much less belonging to herself, would follow, she could not of course have dreamed, but she wondered sometimes what she had dreamed. There had certainly been a dream. But what had it been and who had dreamed it?[37]

This focus on identity is not new—indeed, a bride wondering why on earth she had wanted to marry is intriguingly common in the Norris novels—but it is strange phrasing for the anti-psychological Norris, and it is of course mitigated by the focus on Georgia's *choice*.[38] Georgia does not marry Philip for seventy-five pages, and those seventy-five are packed with foreshadowings of the misery to come. Despite her numerous strictures concerning the brevity of romantic infatuation, Norris also believes that marrying without love is quite as foolish and dangerous as throwing away potential security in the name of short-term romance. Georgia's aunt warns her that "you'll find him a selfish man, Georgie, and a spoiled man. His life is nothing but pleasure, and I don't know any girl who'd get less out of that sort of life."[39]

But Georgia does marry Philip, and despite her best intentions, it is largely because she is dazzled by his wealth. Her relative poverty makes her susceptible to the appeals of luxury and financial security. "Her affairs . . . had fluctuated for years from growing uneasiness and strain to just such unexpected solutions. . . . Small sums lurked in her mind like little foxes, nipping and snarling." By contrast, Philip can offer her financial and, she believes, emotional security. In passages duplicated in seemingly every Norris novel, we are shown the contrast between the "bitter wind [that] moaned over the city, trailing patches of fog in its wake" and the wealthy houses with their "warmth and brightness, the scent of flowers and women's perfumes, of wood fires and strong drinks." If, at Georgia's home, everything is "monotonous and familiar and dull," the washing of dishes juxtaposed with the soaking of red beans and oatmeal for the next day's drab meals, Geor-

gia is "frantic for movement, engagements, frantic to be moving about the dark city streets in some big car, to be entering great lighted doorways to be met by a rush of warmth and color and perfume and the sound of music, with big arms, like Philip's arms, held ready to envelop her." Georgia, like many another heroine, perceives wealth in positively sexual terms: contemplating luxury and financial security, "excites" her and "stirs her pulses."[40] Philip's embrace and that of his car are conflated by the adjective "big," even though we have already been told that Philip is no way a big man.

Also like other Norris heroines, Georgia discovers that the excitement of wealth, like the romantic glamour of sexual attraction which it mimics, is insufficient. Philip must have his own way with no respect to anyone, certainly not his wife, whom he dominates through routine rudeness, disrespect, and disinterest. More than this, though, Georgia's discontent is based in Norris's belief that happiness for women is inextricably linked with intimate care of their children. In her essay "Do You Really Want that Divorce?" Norris writes,

> Nine times out of ten—not ten times out of ten, but almost always—the real happiness for the mother of small children lies in making a home for them, wresting from disillusion and disappointment what makes for safety and happiness for them. To have the unchallenged right to be with them, to have their growing companionship and sympathy as her recompense, to know that the respect of neighbors and family is deepening year by year is not so poor a prize in a life where the prizes are so few. (252)

Women's poverty is such that they cannot afford to abandon children, one of marriage's nearly-sure benefits, without great cause. (Norris never dwells on the possibility of children providing little satisfaction, much less upon the lack of respect or pay that the world accords mothers.) Moreover, a woman who has both freedom and children should be slow, Norris tells us, to relinquish this rare combination for either wealth or love. Georgia considers the marriage not only in terms of personal luxury, but of what it may mean for her sons: "to have Keith and Ned wear smart little overcoats and ride ponies."[41] But as in *Walls of Gold* (1933), Georgia quickly discovers that the first and worst aspect of her husband's power is that he can force her to neglect her children.[8] Marrying to provide the boys with a father in a Norris novel generally means that the children, far from actually getting a father, lose their mother. The boys are packed off to a "camp school" which has everything but their mother; "Keith's look, anxious, fearful, trying to be brave, stayed with Georgia for a long

time."[42] Later, in a deliberately casual aside, we find that Philip also prevents Georgia from seeing her younger son when he is dying.

In no novel are these motifs of the perils of marriage, the power of men, the conflation of money and desire, and the necessity for conscious choice more clear than in *Shadow Marriage*, because (alone among Norris's novels) here there is never any escape or reconciliation: no fortunate circumstance executes the unpleasant husband or reveals that they were never really married in the first place.[43] Nor does the wife eventually realize that she is better off with the husband, as happens with more bearable husbands in other books. This unromantic novel is very nearly Norris's last word on the perils of choosing shadow over substance. But one can hardly blame a character for being confused as to which is which when Norris herself conflates finance and affection so openly and so often. In *Burned Fingers*, the protagonist not only discovers the perils of trusting dangerous men, but speculates on what it would take for her to have the financial power that they exert over her.

> "But poor people do get rich, Carol?" Jennifer ventured.
>
> "Men do," Carol conceded. "They're always talking about how they got seven dollars when they first began to work. I don't know how they begin to get more. Girls never do."[44]

Girls never do. As we see in the essays' focus on the need for thrift, control of one's money, and women working, this is the center of the problem: women find financial security primarily by marrying men. And while this is so, their only hope of safety depends upon their ability to select a trustworthy man in terms of both love and money—and even a trustworthy one may change his nature and break his implicit trade of support for sex. This problem resurfaces in novel after novel. In *Wife for Sale* (1933), the title says it all. Norah is creative, thrifty, inventive, and hard-working, but she doesn't get rich despite steady effort with the resources nearest to hand; she doesn't even break even—what saves her is love. Her husband-of-convenience returns from presumed death, it turns out he loves her, her marriage is a financial and emotional success, and so it all works out.[45] Even when it does, though, the reader is hard put to it to feel comfortable: what if it hadn't worked out? And has it really? And how are we to know in advance whether it will? Most of the happy endings offer no real promises, especially when it takes a dramatic accident to achieve them.

Kathleen Norris is not a closet feminist as we use the term now, despite her steadfast support of paid and respected work for women and her conflicted stances on divorce and birth control. She is, how-

ever, a floating signifier of conflict: a sentimentalist working within a realist tradition and grounding her sentimental beliefs in strikingly brutal pragmatism; a modern author appalled by many of the freedoms of modernism; a family-values advocate who believed wholeheartedly in women working; a romance author who recognized love and money as two strands of the same issue, bringing the language of money to the questions of love and desire even as she eroticized the language of business. The thread that ties her work together, and that both connects her to and separates her from genre romance as we know it, is this conscious perception of the problem in the economic and the domestic spheres: the literal financial power of men over women. If Jan Cohn is right in seeing this as the most pressing issue of romance, Norris is almost unique among romance authors in acknowledging it with open eyes and adjuring women, if not to change the existing social structure, at least to see it for what it is and work actively within it for their own well-being. Like her category-romance descendants, Norris offers romantic solutions (an idealization of love and family which generally manages to counter-suggest that there may be no real solution); like those descendants too, she declines to suggest radical social change as an option for improving women's lot; unlike them, though, she issues a decidedly unromantic call to women to protect themselves with equally careful choices in sex, marriage, money, and the saving of bread crumbs.

Notes

[1] Bruce Jonathan Degi, *Fiction and Family: The Early Novels of Charles and Kathleen Norris* (Ann Arbor: UMI Dissertation Services, 1985), 2.

[2] Anne G. Balay, "'Hands Full of Living': Birth Control, Nostalgia, and Kathleen Norris," *American Literary History* 8 (1996), 471–95, and Degi.

[3] This is, as Balay and Degi rightly note, the keystone of Norris's world view. As Norris writes in her essay, "Don't Outlaw Your Mother-in-Law," "It would be a good thing for us all if the day of good manners would return; the day when a young wife preserved a respectful attitude toward her husband's mother, endured her interference, sat politely through occasional dull family dinners just because family life is so beautiful, and so easily destroyed, and so difficult to recreate." Kathleen Thompson Norris, *Hands Full of Living: Talks with American Women* (Garden City: Doubleday, Doran and Company, 1931). This is Norris's vision of the family, comprised almost equally of dullness (her descriptions of interior furnishings describe finishes and sheens as "dull" so often that it's quite striking), interference, fragility, and beauty. She does not deny that family is infinitely trying; one novel even takes the relationship with the mother-in-law as its whole

plot (*The Sacrifice Years*), and the wife triumphs primarily through an improbable act of blackmail; but it does, in the long run, "[bring] in a rich and sweet reward" (*Hands Full of Living*, 222).

[4] Tania Modleski, *Loving with a Vengeance: Mass-Produced Fantasies for Women* (New York: Methuen, 1982); Janice Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy and Popular Literature* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1984, 1991).

[5] Home economics was first taught as a college discipline at Kansas State University in 1882; it caught on quickly, spreading to other public colleges and land-grant institutions, largely because women themselves requested such programs. Norris, as she makes apparent in her essays but also in her short stories and novellas, is abundantly familiar with the discipline.

[6] Norris, *Hands Full of Living*, 12.

[7] Jeanne Dubino, "The Cinderella Complex: Romance Fiction, Patriarchy, and Capitalism," *Journal of Popular Culture* 27, no. 3 (1993), 105. According to Dubino, both romances and conduct books "helped to facilitate the split between the rational, public world of work and the emotional, private domain of the home" (105)—the very split which Norris bridges without visible effort.

[8] Dubino, 105.

[9] Jan Cohn, *Romance and the Erotics of Property: Mass-Market Fiction for Women* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1988), 3.

[10] Joanna Russ, "Somebody's Trying to Kill Me and I Think It's My Husband: The Modern Gothic," in *To Write Like a Woman: Essays in Feminism and Science Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1995); Ann Douglas, "Soft-Porn Culture," *The New Republic* 30 (August 1980), 25–29.

[11] Modleski, 28.

[12] Radway, 141.

[13] Radway, 177.

[14] *Shadow Marriage* and *Martie the Unconquered* are the most notable exceptions to this formula; neither plot makes any real effort to allay audience anxiety about women's helplessness, and neither heroine finds a happy marriage. Martie, however, finds a rare happiness as a single working mother.

[15] Suzanne Juhasz, "Texts to Grow On: Reading Women's Romance Fiction," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 7 (1988), 239; Kate McCafferty, "Palimpsest of Desire: The Re-Emergence of American Captivity Narrative as Pulp Romance," *Journal of Popular Culture* 27, no. 4 (1994), 45; Jennifer Crusie Smith, "Romancing Reality: The Power of Romance Fiction to Reinforce and Re-Vision the Real," <http://www.jennycrusie.com/essays/romancingreality.php>.

[16] Cohn, *Romance and the Erotics of Property*; Margaret Ann Jensen, *Love's Sweet Return: The Harlequin Story* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1984), 153.

[17] Mary Nyquist, "Romance in the Forbidden Zone," *Reimagining Women: Representations of Women in Culture*, ed. Shirley Neumand and Glennis Stephenson (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1993), 169.

[18] Kathleen M. Therrien, *Trembling at Her Own Response: Resistance and Reconciliation in Mass-Market Romance Novels* (Ann Arbor: UMI Dissertation Services, 1997), 25.

[19] Pamela Marks makes this point briefly in "The Good Provider in Romance Novels," in *Romantic Conventions*, ed. Anne. K. Kaler and Rosemary E. Johnson-Kurek (Bowling Green: Bowling Green Univ. Popular Press, 1999), 12.

[20] While varying the means of measurement makes these numbers fluctuate, a single female householder has double or triple the likelihood of living in poverty of a single male householder, suggesting that divorce may be one of the greatest single indicators of poverty for women. Post-divorce, men's income typically stays level or rises; women's typically falls, with or without child support. Moreover, as recently as the late nineties, 57% of the American poor were still female.

[21] Susan Elizabeth Phillips, "The Romance and the Empowerment of Women," in *Dangerous Men and Adventurous Women: Romance Writers on the Appeal of the Romance*, ed. Jayne Ann Krentz (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), 57.

[22] Norris, *Hands Full of Living*, 9–18; hereafted cited parenthetically.

[23] While Norris does not give "business girl" the common-use, compound-noun status of "businessman," the phrase suggests Norris's desire to bring "business" and "girls" together in popular consciousness.

[24] Balay, 473. Balay demonstrates that while Norris clearly recognizesd the Victorian era as flawed in many ways, including its treatment of women, she was drawn to its familiarity, its clear "codes" for behavior, and its ordered system of class.

[25] Degi (102) points out that while Norris's husband Charles entirely supported Norris's writing career, he never agreed with her that the business world was a good place for women in general.

[26] Kathleen Thompson Norris, *Martie the Unconquered* (1917; New York: Paperback Library, 1971), 284.

[27] Kathleen Thompson Norris, "The Joys of the Poor," *Literature in the Making*, ed. Joyce Kilmer (New York: Harper, 1917), 28.

[28] Kathleen Thompson Norris, *The Rich Mrs. Burgoyne*. Available online at ClassicReader, <http://www.classicreader.com/booktoc.php/sid.1/bookid.1580/>.

[29] Kathleen Thompson Norris, *The Story of Julia Page* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1915), 204.

[30] Kathleen Thompson Norris, *Mother* (1911, rev. ed. 1913; New York: Paperback Library, 1970), 16.

[31] Norris, *Julia Page*, 212.

[32] Kathleen Thompson Norris, *The Heart of Rachael* (1916; New York: Paperback Library, 1969), 60.

[33] Norris, *Heart of Rachael*, 251.

[34] Norris does sometimes distinguish between divorce for most common reasons and divorce to free a woman from abuse—under which, if *Shadow Marriage* is any indication, Norris includes mental cruelty. In the essay "Some Husbands Are Worth Saving," Norris compares divorce to a therapeutic poison (*Hands*, 258).

[35] Kathleen Thompson Norris, *Burned Fingers* (New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, 1945), 35.

[36] Norris, *Julia Page*, 155–56.

[37] Kathleen Thompson Norris, *Shadow Marriage* (1952; New York: Paperback Library, 1967), 91.

[38] On Norris and psychology, see Balay, 477.

[39] Norris, *Shadow*, 67.

[40] Norris, *Shadow*, 19, 8, 24, 31.

[41] Norris, *Shadow*, 20.

[42] Kathleen Thompson Norris, *Walls of Gold* (1933; New York: Paperback Library, 1969), 88. In this unsubtly titled novel, Gordon's most unjust power over Jimmie is expressed not by his rudeness and domination, nor yet by his keeping a mistress in Jimmie's own house, but by his forcing her to abort a pregnancy because he wants no children. He pays her for this service with pearls, traditionally emblematic of tears.

[43] These unlikely events occur regularly in Norris's other works, particularly the husband's death by suicide, as in *Bread into Roses* (1937), *Barberry Bush* (1926), *Lost Sunrise* (1939), and *Three Men and Diana* (1934).

[44] Norris, *Burned Fingers*, 66.

[45] Kathleen Thompson Norris, *Wife for Sale* (Garden City: Doubleday, Doran and Company, 1933).