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By Amy Kaplan

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Kaplan redefines American realism as a genre more engaged with a society in flux than with one merely reflective of the status quo. She reads realistic narrative as a symbolic act of imagining and controlling the social upheavals of early modern capitalism, particularly class conflict and the development of mass culture. Brilliant analyses of works by Howells, Wharton, and Dreiser illuminate the narrative process by which realism constructs a social world of conflict and change.

"[Kaplan] offers some enthralling readings of major novels by Howells, Wharton, and Dreiser. It is a book which should be read by anyone interested in the American novel."—Tony Tanner, *Modern Language Review*

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