Author under Sail: The Imagination of Jack London

Jay Williams

Chapter 14-- Theater of War, Theater at Home

Prelude to War

Before London left for Korea, before he had even finished the first half of *The Sea-Wolf,* he chose to work for William Randolph Hearst's *San Francisco Examiner,* a maneuver he had made a number of times in the past: in 1901, to cover the Jeffries-Ruhlin fight and to conduct two interviews; in the summer of 1902, to write a series on a shooting contest and a number of miscellaneous feature articles; and, in November 1902, to report on the new mining building at University of California, Berkeley. Again, we don't know how London got assignments at the paper—I imagine he approached them; by now they would have told him to come by any time—but in June 1903, on the day Bessie and the kids left Oakland to summer in Sonoma County, he contracted with the *Examiner* to write an essay on the case of Edgar Sonne. He planned to make this the first of a number of pieces for the newspaper, but circumstances—both personal and professional—led him away from that plan. *The Sea-Wolf,* after all, exerted quite a gravitational pull.[1]

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[1] London's sales notebook for this period indicates as much. On the page on which he wrote "Edgar Sonne" he wrote above that "Examiner work," a notation he had used in the summer of 1902 to stake out a full page of newspaper article titles and the dates he

Edgar Sonne, whose "case," said the newspaper, is important "to every thoughtful person concerned with good citizenship," "presents a problem peculiarly difficult to solve." Sonne, "an unclean bit of wreckage," in the tabloid discourse of the *Examiner,* was a boy criminal. Eleven years old, he broke into a house, was arrested, and then was caught twice stealing money from his mother. He was placed in the Boys and Girls Aid Society home, from which he had already escaped once. "To set him free," posited the newspaper, "is to give full rein to his misguided instincts. To confine him in any penal institution is to destroy any possibility of making a self-respecting man of him." London, the paper said, was peculiarly suited to discuss this issue because of his work in the London East End and because of his thorough knowledge of American low life. So the reader, set up by Hearst's *Examiner*'s usual emphasis on "individual frailities, sex and crime, economic failures . . . and strange and mysterious happenings," was prepared for and hoping for the worst.[2]

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completed them. The page below "Edgar Sonne" is blank, and the entire page is Xed out, indicating that he had closed down his idea to devote more time to the newspaper work.

[2] Ben Procter, *William Randolph Hearst: The Early Years, 1863-1910* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1998), 48. By 1903, Hearst's *San Francisco Examiner* had beaten out its competitors like the *San Francisco Call* and the *San Francisco Chronicle* and become the preeminent newspaper of the area. By the time London became a regular contributor, Hearst was in New York City. It seems highly unlikely that they ever met, and I discuss their one possible direct interaction below, when London became a "special correspondent" for the *Examiner* during the Russo-Japanese War.

London borrows from the paper's sensational rhetoric to present his solution: can "the stuff of his life . . . be cleansed" or was "the stuff of his life . . . too malformed and rotten"? Employing this binary of character and social policy, London used society's desire for sensational reporting against itself. Reprising his strategy from the past of seeming to be in league with the newspaper's all-or-nothing, black or white analysis of any given situation, he played that shallow understanding against itself. "His record," said London, "prepared me for the regular type of born criminal or degenerate, but my disappointment was agreeable when I found he was just an ordinary looking-boy."[3] One feels that the article could have stopped there, with the reader thinking, oh, well then, never mind. But London has larger fish to fry than reader expectations: "Rottenness and irregularity of the teeth, an abnormally shaped roof of the mouth, and certain other

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[3] London's vocabulary—"degenerate," "criminal"—is mostly informed by his recent reading in Enrico Ferri, *Criminal Sociology* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1898), a book in which he took notes and applied them to Edgar's case before he wrote this newspaper article. For example, he wrote in the back of the book, "Question raised—is he, or is he not, a free agent. Is he a born criminal, or is he a criminal by contracted habits? A criminal he must be, for responsibility to society enters in. He is guilty of crimes against society, and society must protect itself. p. 30—apply this especially to the *boy*. . . . Responsibility—either keep Edgar in prison, let him go & indemnify individuals for the depredations he commits, or cure him." See Hamilton, "Tools of My Trade," 117-18 for a complete list of London's annotations on the flyleaf. Hamilton does not make the connection between the Edgar in London's notes and Edgar Sonne. See chapter 15 for a fuller discussion of Ferri and chapter 23 for a discussion of *The Star Rover.*

peculiarities were all that might be classed as stigmata of degeneracy, but which, in themselves alone, signified no more than signify the notable teeth of our strenuous president." Because Hearst would not declare his presidential candidacy for another six months, readers could not tell that poking fun at the president was a political tactic that London endorsed. After all, "apart from Eugene Debs, . . . no candidate for office had a record of support for labor as straightforward and consistent as Hearst's."[4] As he had done in the past, London was burying his socialism just below the surface. Still, the paper wanted the boy in jail and London was having none of it. Having found the fault of his criminal behavior in his mother's violent treatment of her son as well as with a "society . . . that permitted this disease to go unattended," he turned at the end to H. W. Lewis, superintendent of the Boys and Girls Aid Society for the final answer: "Edgar Sonne's youthful errors and society's mature errors may be retrieved together, but how much better it would have been, had society caught Edgar Sonne when he was younger." As London said, in an article that has become a classic of his protective nature toward the young and vulnerable, the poor and oppressed, "if society arrogates to itself the punishment of youthful offenders, then it must take upon itself the responsibility for the making of youthful offenders." It was never a simple question of laying blame. Jails and doctors, punishment and rehabilitation must work together.[5] It's a philosophical position he held consistently from this point on—from reading Enrico Ferri and writing about the

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[4] Procter, 172.

[5] Jack London, "What Shall Be Done with This Boy? Jack London Replies to a Vital Question," *San Francisco Examiner,* 21 June 1903, Jack London Scrapbooks, vol. 2, reel 1. He received $46.00 for this contribution.

case of Edgar Sonne, to portraying Jim Hall the escaped convict in *White Fang,* to advocating the end of capital punishment in *The Star Rover.*

Instead of continuing with newspaper work and in the theatrical vein, which he would have done had he stayed the summer in the city, he joined his wife and kids on the Wake Robin Lodge property (at this endpoint of their marriage, it is impossible to say what motivated the change in plans) and began again to write *The Sea-Wolf.* When he had reached the half-way point (or what he estimated to be the half-way point), he took a break and wrote "The Banks of the Sacramento," a contribution tailored for *The Youth's Companion* and one I discussed in volume one as a companion to his sea stories for young people. Two weeks later, without having returned to the novel, and now back in the city, his dizzying movements determined perhaps by his new love for Charmian Kittredge, he wrote "Love of Life." He still owed George Brett "*The Faith of Men" and Other Stories,* which lacked a mere one story for completion, but that story would have to wait till the next month.

Now he was intent on writing a story, also set in the Klondike, that relied on several supposedly factual accounts, and thanks to a complaint lodged with *McClure's*, who published the story, we know something about London's composition process for this story. The complainant asked *McClure's* why there was such a similarity between London's story and "Lost in the Land of the Midnight Sun," an article *McClure's* had published in late 1901. After McClure asked him to respond publically, London wrote that, first, "it is a common practice of authors to draw material for their stories, from the newspapers." It is so common "that it is recommended by all the instructors in the art of the short story, to read the newspapers and magazines in order to get material," and we

saw in volume one how *The Editor* published any number of articles recommending it. "Here are facts of life," said London, "reported in journalistic style, waiting to be made into literature." So, yes, he had read Augustus Bridle and J. K. McDonald's essay about "the actual sufferings of a man with a sprained ankle in the country of the Coppermine River. " But he also relied on "another narrative of suffering . . . . a newspaper account of a lost and wandering prospector near Nome, Alaska." He also borrowed from Adolpus Greely's *Three Years of Arctic Service.* "On top of all this," as if explaining that writing a story was simply a matter of following a recipe, "I drew upon all my own personal experience of hardship and suffering and starvation, and upon the whole fund of knowledge I had of the hardship and suffering and starvation of hundreds and thousands of other men."[6] By now we are well versed in the relationship between literature and newspaper writing as London understood it. London incorporated several telling details from the *McClure* essay, which are interesting only because they are misleading. London was not accused of plagiarizing, did not plagiarize, and did not lack for story ideas; if he had been, he would have used Bridle and McDonald's explanation for why the two men separate—bad blood and revenge. To use printed material was a way to fill out the original conception, it is the document to ground the human, and it isolated him from charges of an overheated imagination. When another complainant raised the issue of how, in the story, a minnow could move from one pool of water to another London could answer, "for a moment I was quite flabbergasted" by what appeared to be a factual

[6] London, letter to S. S. McClure, 10 Apr. 1906, *Letters,* 2:569-70.

inaccuracy in the story; but "then I remembered that the episode actually happened."[7] He had read about it in one of his sources.

"Love of Life" begins with a poetic summation of the relationship between London as an author and the field that initially made him successful: "This out of all will remain—/ They have lived and have tossed: / So much of the game will be gain, / Though the gold of the dice has been lost." This quatrain from Hamlin Garland's "The Gold-Seekers," more importantly, tells indirectly of that devilish wellspring of the imagination, the devil's dice-box. Gold, the writing game, chance: the (un)holy triumpherite of London's writing career. He needed to return to his spectral Mount Olympus to write a new Klondike short story, something he hadn't done since February. But having communed poetically with the source of his inspiration he rattled off three Klondike short stories in rapid succession.

Still, after garnering a positive, life-affirming message from Garland, we start from our complacency and suspect an irony resides in the lines and in the title of the story. "Love," far from being a celebratory verb, signifies the irrational power of organisms to sustain themselves. "Love of Life" is about the fear that arises when life feels fatally threatened and the way it creates a prison in the open country: "He pulled himself together and went on, afraid now in a new way. . . . There were the wolves. Back and forth across the desolation drifted their howls, weaving the very air into a fabric of menace that was so tangible that he found himself, arms in the air, pressing it back from him as it might be the walls of a wind-blown tent." He is imprisoned as much by his biological imperative to carry on as he is by the heartless environment.

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[7] London, letter to S. S. McClure, [? January 1906], *Letters,* 2:545.

To our dismay, we realize we are in league with the imprisoning conditions of his existence. Like the scientists at the end (or like Wolf Larsen), we can only describe life—it is "persistent," it is "blind, unconscious"—we cannot empathize with it (938). As our nameless protagonist stumbles through the story (as helpless as Humphrey Van Weyden, who, like the protagonist gains strength only when he boards a ship), we are never given any reason to hope for him, to care for him, to care whether he lives or dies. Here is the significance of London ignoring the bad blood that apparently existed between Bridle and McDonald's hero and his companion; London ignored that plot device because he did not want the reader to sympathize with the miner. The reader becomes like the "complacent awfulness" that surrounds him. "He fought with his fear," and we observe his fight dispassionately. (924) He divests himself of more and more gold—the reason he is out there in the first place—and we think he might have a better chance to survive if he travels without that weight. But, then again, he might die of starvation no matter how heavy his pack. It's really all the same to us. Live, die, gold, no gold—London has given us so little about his character that we are rendered as dispassionate as the White Silence.

Further, given that so little actually happens, and that what happens is repeated over and over—the days are the same, the nameless wanderer goes in and out of hallucination, in and out of painful hunger—we are thrown upon the force of London's prose. Our attention is focused, not on the events being depicted, but on how they are depicted. "He contemplated the bones, clean-picked and polished, pink with the cell-life in them which had not yet died." (933) As if tired out by plotting a novel, London stripped this new short story down to the barest of essentials—a story that worked only if the prose itself was beautiful—just as his main character is stripped down to "the life in

him, unwilling to die." The man without even a name lives because of that mysterious metaphysical thing called life has not expired. So too does a writer write words because that mysterious metaphysical thing called the imagination does not quit. "He saw nothing save visions." (933). It drives our hobo-miner-author forward to the sea, as we gain pleasure only in the telling of the story. This is the best of absorptive fiction.

He sent it to *Cosmopolitan* (owned by Hearst) where John Phillips thought that the image of a man biting through the throat of a sick wolf was too strong for his audience: "I have held `The Love of Life' for a second reading. It's a magnificent piece of work but so ghastly that I fear to give it to men and women already piled with sorrows. Let me have something of the brighter side of life."[8] He rejected it, as he probably would have rejected *The Sea-Wolf* and its "brutality." But McClure loved *The Sea-Wolf.* Writing out of the blue—since late 1901, when he and London had fallen out over *The Children of the Frost,* McClure and London had exchanged mail only twice, both times to discuss rejected essays—McClure exclaimed in January 1904, "You are doing greater work every time. `The Sea Wolf' is masterly! Where are those stories you were to send us for the magazine? When are we to have your books again?"[9] The letter may have come unprompted by London, but McClure was following his usual pattern. As he had done with "An Odyssey of the North," he praised London's latest fictional work and asked for some for his own company. No matter that London harbored a grudge from how he had been treated. McClure knew London was bigger than that, and he was right. London responded immediately by sending him "The Love of Life." McClure took it, paid top

[8] John Brisbane Walker, letter to London, 21 Oct. 1903, JL 19831.

[9] S. S. McClure, letter to London, 16 Jan. 1904, Jl 14215.

dollar (six cents a word, double what London had earned earlier that year), and credited $400.00 against London's debt to the magazine. Now London was appearing both in *Century* and in *Century*'s chief rival, and though London was never going to leave Brett for McClure, they were back on friendly terms. McClure even offered to pay him the $400 directly: "The main thing, and much more important than all of this, is that I want another story from you. `The Love of Life' is a corker!"[10] London asked for the money and then corrected their accounting by pointing out (a) that he was owed $425 for "The Love of Life" and that (b) he had never been paid his $100 for "The Question of the Maximum," a sore point from the past (McClure had accepted but never published the essay). The publisher said he couldn't remember what had happened with that essay but that "if you say so it is all right."[11] He sent London a check for $400 and credited his account $125.00. McClure was back on the trail with London.

It was as if London was anticipating the objections to "Love of Life"'s plausibility when he wrote the first sentence of his next story, "Too Much Gold," but, as we saw in the last chapter, so much of what he was writing in the period was concerned with strange truths and horror that we shouldn't be surprised by it: "This being a story—and a truer one than it may appear—of a mining country, it is quite to be expected that it will be a hard-luck story."[12] As I pointed out in volume 1, "hard-luck" can be a mere

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[10] S. S. McClure, letter to London, 9 Feb. 1904, JL 14216.

[11] McClure, letter to London, 27 July 1904, JL 14218.

[12] London, "Too Much Gold," *"The Faith of Men" and Other Stories* (Macmillan: New York, 190-), 000. He received $100 for this story because he owed *Ainslee's* money. He read proofsheets for the story on 28-30 September and returned them on 1 October.

rationalization for ignorance, and this story trades in ironic humor, another way London spelled himself from the unrelenting terribleness of stories like *The Sea-Wolf* and "Love of Life." But underneath the humor of this story lies a serious socialist point about the nature of contract and how it may facilitate exploitation, even among members of the same class; in fact, W. J. Ghent in his *Mass and Class* uses this story as an example of bad ethical behavior.[13] The collection *Faith of Men,* which London had now completed, wasn't simply a collection of light-hearted tales. The humor, when it is present, always points to the seriousness of the white man's exploitation of the land and other peoples—including other white people—in the name of economics, greed, and domination.

The cover of *"The Faith of Men"* is similar to that of *The Sea-Wolf ,* both of which were departures from the other covers. That is, they are more illustrative than interpretative. Just as *The Sea-Wolf* simply shows Wolf Larsen shaking his fist while sailing his boat, not so much at anyone in particular as everyone and everything, including God, so *The Faith of Men* presents a pine bough, fecund with pine cones. It is a representation of the Klondike as a tame, domesticated place.

The final short story London wrote in 1903, and the last one he would write for nearly a year, was "Negore, the Coward." Prepared by the irony of London's previous titles, we automatically think that Negore's "cowardice" will be defined as such by white society. And we would be wrong. This story, strictly speaking a Klondike tale, takes place among a Native American tribe, warring with whites, in the middle of the

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[13] See W. J. Ghent, *Mass and Class: A Survey of Social Divisions* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1904), 142. This book plays an important role in London's composition of *The Iron Heel.* See chapter 19.

nineteenth century, during "the old days of the Russian occupancy of Alaska." Despite the change in time period, this story still marshals ghostliness, greed, and terror. It would not have been out of place in *Children of the Frost.* It is a straightforward tale: Negore, who has been wrongly labeled a coward by his people, proves his courage in the ultimate fight against the Russians and in death wins the heart of his beloved, a happy ending in London's fictional universe. It also forecasts London's trip to Korea in three months, and surely he would remember his fictional account of the brutality of Russian settlers in the Northland as he observed the war. In "Negore, the Coward," the Russians put out the eyes of Kinoos, the father of Negore's betrothed. They hunt and kill as many Native Americans as possible. As Negore says, "`I heard the talk of the shamans and chiefs that the Russians had brought strange sicknesses upon the people, and killed our men, and stolen our women, and that the land must be made clean." (958). Not alone were the Anglo-Saxons ravenous brutes: The Russians and accompanying mercenaries from Finland and eastern Asia were "foragers and destroyers from the far lands beyond the Sea of Bering, who blasted the new and unknown world with fire and sword and clutched greedily for its wealth of fur and hide."[14] Gold wasn't the only thing white men could have too much of. Any sympathy London may have shown the Russians in Korea in 1904 has to be tempered by the memory of what he wrote in this story.

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[14] London sent this story to Arthur Street (whoever that may be, perhaps an agent, perhaps an editor at *The Critic;* he had never sent a story or essay to him before) who arranged payment of $250.00, which London received in November 1903. There was a promise that it would be published on 6 December, but apparently it never appeared, and bibliographies list its first appearance as in *"Love of Life" and Other Stories.*

In the mind of Charmian London, this story held a special place, though she was not quite sure how to define its centrality in London's work. In 1912, as she and Jack sailed around the Horn on the *Dirigo,* she wrote a long letter to Anna Strunsky filled with news about their activities on board ship. But she also wanted to talk to Anna about Jack's writing career and what she thought of his work in the last eight or nine years—that is, when she had come into his life—especially *Burning Daylight.* "Nothing could exceed a few of his first stories," she wrote, "but there's a something else now—a broader, easier, more mature bigness in the main. Some women rail at Jack for weakness in this work since he married a second time—you know the sort. This isn't to keep you from `railing' if you see fit—you are not the `sort' I mean. . . . Do you remember Negore the Coward? In that story is the first touch of what I hope, and feel, has helped Jack to fullness in his work—an expanding in his maturity."[15] Of course Charmian wanted to take credit for any development in London's artistic powers. But perhaps she was pointing to something that actually existed apart from her egotism, something apart from his mastery of genre, of the form of the novel and the short story. Call it a maturation in worldview, an expansiveness in outlook. It would be tested in Korea where his career would take him next.

Spectacle in Korea

It is important to stress the Russian presence in "Negore, the Coward" because we often think of London having never encountered Russian imperialism before he went to

[15] CKL, letter to Anna Strunsky, 22 June 1912, AW box 2, Anna Strunsky Walling Collection, HEH.

Korea in January 1904, especially when we read his scene of meeting Russian prisoners, one of those moments central to his body of twenty-two dispatches from the East and so a good entry point into this work. It is an intensely personal scene, and it is one of the most absorptive moments in his reporting. Instead of merely documenting for his readers the battle of the Yalu River, which included a successful frontal attack by the Japanese and the taking of Russian prisoners, he also recounts the moment when he comes face to face with the prisoners.[16] He paused on horseback in the village of Kuel-lan-ching among the Japanese soldiers he was accompanying:

> Into the windows of a large Chinese house I saw many Japanese soldiers curiously peering. Reining up my horse at a window, I, too, curiously peered. And the sight I saw was as a blow in the face to me. On my mind it had all the effect of the sharp impact of a man's fist. There was a man, a white man, with blue eyes, looking at me. He was dirty and unkempt. He had been through a fierce battle. But his eyes were bluer than mine and his skin was as white. And there were other

[16] One gathers from London's report that this is his first encounter with Russians. It may not have been. In Wiju, London took over a dozen photographs of Russian prisoners—on a balcony of a house; standing or sitting in the street; and dozens sitting and standing outside a house. It's even possible that if these weren't the first Russians he encountered, then there were others preceding his revelatory moment. See London, "Photograph Album Two," box 487, JLP 441, contact sheets 3-5, 3-6. It is entirely consistent with London's discursive methodology to have created a fictional encounter with Russian soldiers inside a house in order to better discuss his moment of racial and outsider identification.

> white men in there with him—many white men. I caught myself gasping. A choking sensation was in my throat. These men were my kind. I found myself suddenly and sharply aware that I was an alien amongst these brown men who peered through the window with me. And I felt myself strangely at one with those other men behind the window—felt that my place was there inside with them in their captivity, rather than outside in freedom amongst aliens.

This moment is fraught with identity politics, and later I will focus solely on the racism of this moment in the context of other racist passages in his 1904 writings, especially in relation to his essay "The Yellow Peril." But it is also a moment of self-discovery or, perhaps, self-rediscovery. Staring at white men through a window is so much like looking into a mirror that we have to first examine the totality—a kind of two mindedness—of what London thought he was seeing.

The context of this moment is complicated by London's employer's imperative to provide war news that often conflicted with his own imperative to fictionalize facts. An analysis of this scene, then, sets the stage not only for looking closely at London's thinking about race but also for how London saw his role as an author at a war front; it was far from being a mere war correspondent, just another Frederick Palmer or Edwin Emerson, professional foreign news correspondents.

To establish the appropriate context for this scene we have to remember, first, that he has just described the part of the battle of the Yalu River where the Japanese forces had conducted a frontal assault and lost a thousand men. London finds this act barbaric, an "Asiatic" mode of sacrifice. No "white" country, he says, would have ever committed troops this way; "I am confident," he says, "that a white commander . . . would not find

justification for [this sacrifice of troops] in the eyes of his people at home." In fact, the headline for this particular story emphasizes the supposed racial differences between East and West: "Japanese Sacrifice Human Life in Order to Make Evident That They Are Worthy to Face White Men in Conflict: Make Unnecessary Frontal Attack." London, as well as the Hearst newspaper headline writers, see this sacrifice as both unnecessary and determined, both foreign and familiar. Even though London says they did not act "white" in making the attack, he also says they acted equivalent to or even superior to the "whites"; after all, the Japanese soundly defeated the Russians in the battle. London's dispatch concludes with a brief meditation on race, rhetoric, and identity. He meets with a Japanese military liaison at headquarters who discussed the victory in English and in terms London would have used: "`Your people did not think we could beat the white. We have now beaten the white.' The word `white' was his own, as the thought was his own.'" The word triggers "a vision" in London's mind, but it is not of white faces, his own white face, staring back at him. No, it is of the foot and leg of a dead Russian soldier piled on top of other dead bodies on a moving cart. (107) In a masterful stroke of his own storytelling rhetoric, he repeats slightly altered versions of his description of the foot three times. "It moved up and down with the jogging, two-wheeled cart, beating ceaseless and monotonous time as it drew away in the distance" becomes "the white foot beating time on the jogging Pekin cart" becomes "the white foot beating time on the Pekin cart." Each time he repeats the phrase he pars it down to its essentials, and the final time is the final sentence of the piece. The repetition serves to keep in his reader's mind the fact that the "white" lost. The use of that word "white" by the Japanese authority makes it clear that the Japanese were "white" enough to win. The combination of fact and rhetoric

create an ambivalent space—a two mindedness—in London's head. He sees himself in the Russians, but he also sees a whiteness that is not him—the whiteness of the Russians killing the Native Americans in the Klondike, just like every other "white" peoples, and the whiteness of the Russians who were inferior in battle to the Japanese.

Second, before London sees the Russian prisoners he rides through the battleground. "I passed the Japanese dead and wounded on the road and found myself thrilling gently to the horrors of war." We cannot miss the lack of compassion London exhibits toward the dead and battered soldiers, but there is something else at work in London's thinking here. Seeing the horrific results of a battle is what he had traveled so far to see. This is his quintessential moment of war corresponding. Later, in his final dispatch, he will complain that he didn't get to experience "thrills," the life-and-death moments that war correspondents under fire seem always to get to experience. He only "gently" thrilled to the sight of the dead because he himself had not been threatened with death. He was close, but, it turns out, he never got close enough.

But there is even more to the racial context. Before he encounters the Russians, he has made his peace with living, working, and traveling with the Japanese army. "I had been traveling for months with Asiatic soldiers. The faces were Asiatic faces. The skins were yellow and brown. I had become used to a people which was not of my kind. My mind had settled down to accepting without question that the men who fought had eyes and cheek bones and skins different from the eyes and cheel bones and skins of my kind. It was all a matter of course, the natural order of things." (106) Then he sees the Russians and suddenly "the natural order of things" is disrupted. It's not natural to see oneself in another people. It's not simply that he is caught between two peoples, unable to identify

with one or the other. The case is more complicated than that. He is jolted out of his acceptance of an "alien" people, the Japanese. The social order that defines his identification by race is actually an unnatural order, but it is an order that he cannot ignore. Neither can he ignore how he learned to be comfortable among those not of his "kind." He finds refuge in racial thinking because his own construction of identity—a white man at home among the Japanese—is at odds with the social construction of reality. That is why his body rebels at the sight in the mirror. He doesn't see himself. He sees himself as society has constructed him—a white man among yellow men. His bohemian nature puts him at odds with everyone, and when he cannot stand the difficulty of being a bohemian—a social outcast—he turns to his whiteness. His two mindedness is therefore a conflict between his self construction of identity and a social construction of identity. The sight of the white foot jiggling up and down is finally a symbol of his unease in the world, an unresolved conflict between who he thinks he is and who he is seen as.

There is one final turn of this screw of identity construction. He is back on the road. Though it is not an American highway or railroad, nonetheless he is back being the traveling author, the hobo author. To see prisoners, no matter what their color, is to bring back the threat of being imprisoned again. That is why he emphasizes the "captivity" of the Russians and the "freedom" of the Japanese. He would rather be free with those not of his kind than imprisoned with those of his kind. Again, this threat of imprisonment—this reminder of what had happened to the hobo author in 1894—causes his body to sicken. To be both white and free never seems a safe place, and, being of two minds, he

would rather be with those not of his own kind and free than imprisoned with white people.

Analyzing these ways that two mindedness governs London's reaction to the multifaceted experience in Korea and Japan gives us a chance to avoid the supposed dichotomy that has governed previous understandings of this moment in his authorial career. We have tended to think that he had to choose between the Japanese and the Russians when he covered the Russo-Japanese War. If we thought his reporting was about imperialism and economics, then we tended to dismiss the racial content. There are other simplifications we need to avoid. We might think of this six-month period as significant for London as an author, but usually that analysis takes place as if he had never been a reporter before, or had never been abroad, or had never critically examined the relationship between fact and fiction, between literature and newspaper reporting.[17]

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[17] Kevin Swafford is an important exception to this statement. After surveying biographical accounts of London's war correspondency, he says, "Scholars of London's work such as King Hendricks, Earle Labor, Jeanne Campbell Reesman, Russ Kingman, Clarice Stasz, James L. Haley, and Andrew Sinclair (among others) have all suggested [that] . . . . interpersonal conflicts, financial difficulties, and a desire for adventure" led him to go to Korea." He concludes, "Certainly, by late 1903 London's first marriage was in shambles and many aspects of his private life were characterized by vicissitudes. However, whether or not London in fact needed a `change of scene' for personal reasons, his willingness to leave California and travel half the world to write about war was most certainly rooted in a serious artistic concern" (Kevin R. Swafford, "`In the Thick of It':

When London left on 7 January for Japan and the war, he knew he was going to create a series of human documents, material that some future novelist might employ in his or her own fiction. He even bought a new camera for $67.50, and, though it may be surprising for someone whose work seems to value direct experience over book knowledge, he bought $45.00 worth of new books to read on the *S. S. Siberia*.[18] He brought along

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(Meta)Discourse of Jack London's Russo-Japanese War Correspondence," *Pacific Coast Philology* 50 (2015): 83).

[18] Among the books he bought and read were Francis Henry Bennett Skrine, *The Expansion of Russia: 1815-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903); Walter Del Mar, *Around the World through Japan* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1902); Basil Hall Chamberlain, *A Handbook for Travellers in Japan Including the Whole Empire from Yezo to Formosa* (London: John Murray, 1901); John W. Hodge, *Corean Words and Phrases: Being a Handbook and Pocket Dictionary for Visitors to Corea and New Arrivals in the Country* (Seoul: The Seoul Press, 1902); William Oliver Greener, *Greater Russia: The Continental Empire of the Old World* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1903); William Elliot Griffis, *Corea: The Hermit Nation* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902); Arthur Smith, *China in Convulsion*, 2 vols. (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1901); Emilii Bretschneider, *Map of China and the Surrounding Regions* (Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh, 1900); Alexis Krausse, *The Far East: Its History and Its Question* (London: Grant Richards, 1903); Isabella Lucy (Bird) Bishop, *Korea and Her Neighbors: A Narrative of Travel, with an Account of the Recent Vicissitudes and Present Position of the Country* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1898); Daniel L. Gifford, *Every-Day Life in Korea* (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1898) (a book that doesn't appear in

several bound notebooks to serve as diaries, several pads of paper to use for notetaking in the field, and several pads of onionskin paper for writing out his "stories" in longhand.[19] All these material supports are exactly the same ones he used when he wrote fiction; and of course we recall his plea to a Klondike buddy to send him some photos of the North so he could refresh his memory for writing fiction. So we will look at the rest of his reporting to see how this journey further developed not only his ideas about race, imperialism, and economics, but also newspaper writing and, more generally, about theatricality and authorship.

Russia and Japan's modern-day antagonisms dated back to their first armed conflict in 1804 and then intensified during the first Sino-Japanese War in 1894, when China was supported by Russia, Germany, and France; Japan had taken Port Arthur and the Liaodang Peninsula but were forced by the Western powers to relinquish it. Thus Russia was able to fortify Port Arthur and use it as a year-round port. Japan, being as

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Hamilton); and John Foster, *American Diplomacy in the Orient* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1903). All these books are to varying degrees annotated, used as notepads for the collection of background material on the war. See David Mike Hamilton, *"Tools of My Trade,"* for a near-complete transcription of London's notes.

[19] See for example London, "Expenses-Addresses-Etc.," JL 21153, a little red address book in which he kept track of expenses in Korea and Japan, addresses, details like metric conversions of distance, and how big was a regiment, and how many tools and what kind do certain companies and regiments carry. A number of original manuscripts of his dispatches survive at Utah State University, the Huntington Library, and the University of Los Angeles, California.

imperialistic as Russia and shamed by its own concessions, was intent on reestablishing at least part of Manchuria and the Korean peninsula within their sphere of influence. Korea had been leaning more and more toward Russia, especially after the Japanese assassinated their queen in 1895 and invaded the country a year later to instigate a general revolt. Russia, for their part, needed Korea to ensure a safe trade and military route between their two ports at Vladivastok and Post Arthur. Russia and the United States both wanted Russia and Japan to share equally in economic and military rights in Korea (no one wanted Korea to be an independent state), but Japan, having signed a nonaggression pact with Britain (and with the perceived covert support of the US),[20] was

[20] See "American and British Sympathy for Japan Causes Irritation in St. Petersburg," *San Francisco Call,* 30 Dec. 1903, 3. The US was officially neutral and helped negotiate the end of the war; but the US provided military advisers (including Douglas MacArthur and his father, Arthur) who marched with the Japanese army into Manchuria, and London even took a photograph of two of them, Colonel Crowder and Captain Marsh (see box 470, JLP 422, photo 85); see Palmer, *With Kuroki in Manchuria,* 118-19, and Oliver Ellsworth Wood, *From the Yalu to Port Arthur: An Epitome of the First Period of the Russo-Japanese War* (F. Hudson Pub. Co.: Kansas City, Mo., 1905), who was just such an adviser. Kowner states, "Americans were also critical of Russian expansion in the Far East, of the cruelties of Russian despotism, and of the persecution of Jews, especially after the Kishinev Pogrom of 1903 when 50 Jews were massacred by a mob without government interference" (Kowner, "Becoming an Honorary Civilized Nation: Remaking Japan's Military Image During the Russ-Japnaese War, 1904-1905," *Historian* 64 (2007): 36). In fact, the *San Francisco Call* reported that the Russians had expelled all Jews from

Port Arthur shortly before the war began (see "Decree Excludes Hebrews," *San Francisco Call,* 27 Dec. 1903, 1) and then, on the front page, that a representative of American Jewish organizations would meet with State Department officials and with President Theodore Roosevelt about steps to take to prevent the rumored upcoming massacre of Jews on the Russian new year (7 January) and "the whole subject of the status of the Jews in Russia" ("Will Discuss Jewish Issue with President," *San Francisco Call,* 29 Dec. 1903, 1). London himself spoke out against the pogroms in an interview in late 1905: "These race prejudice riots in Russia have always been directly traceable to the government" and he supported a socialist overthrow of that government ("Fifteen Minutes of Socialism with Jack London," *Inter Ocean,* 26 Nov. 1905, 29) In a public lecture, he also asserted that he and all the correspondents he traveled with were pro-Japanese before they arrived but turned against them because of their "abiding hatred of the white man" ("Smart Set Is Improving Mind," *Oakland Tribune,* Jack London Scrapbooks, vol. 5).

Although President Roosevelt's attitude toward Japan changed during the war, initially he supported Japan and even cast the conflict in his typical racial terms, seeing the Japanese as more Western and the Slav as the real "yellow peril"; see Kowner, "Becoming an Honorary Civilized Nation," 37, 36. Lloyd Griscom, the equivalent of the US's ambassador to Japan, reports that Roosevelt "usually expressed [in diplomatic correspondence] in the most outspoken terms his detestation of the Rusiians" (Lloyd Griscom, *Diplomatically Speaking* (Literary Guild of America: New York, 1940), 245). Japan's victory, however, threatened the US's own imperialistic advances in the Pacific and led to "the start of a `cold war' between them, which culminated eventually in the

confident in battling Russia for hegemony over the peninsula. In late July 1903, Japan presented its first demands to Russia, and the negotiations continued until 8 February when Japan attacked the Russian fleet in Port Arthur and war was declared.[21]

In December 1903, London would have known some or all of this as current news. He clipped an editorial from the antisocialist, racist, anti-Asian *The Argonaut* from October 1903 on the developing conflict. The *San Francisco Call* reported in early December on the front page that the "Far Eastern Crisis Nears Settlement,"[22] and nearly every day that month the front page carried news—almost always illustrated by photographs of the chief participants—of the on-again off-again negotiations as well as the continuing war preparations—both political and military—of Japan and Russia. "Russia's Reply to Japan Rejected by the Council of the Elder Statesmen" read the headline on 18 December, and it was forecasted that Japan would soon send troops into Korea.[23] Finally, in what must have been the moment London and newspaper editors

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Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the war in the Pacific" (Kowner, *Historical Dictionary,* 406).

[21] For a more detailed analysis of the international situation, including the importance of the 1905 Russian revolution, see Joan London, *Jack London and His Times,* 264-80, though she does not discuss the importance of Russian pogroms to the US's decision to side with Japan.

[22] "Far Eastern Crisis Nears Settlement: Japan and Russia on Verge of Agreement," *San Francisco Call,* 2 Dec. 1903, 1.

[23] See "Russia's Reply to Japan Rejected by the Council of the Elder Statesmen," *San Francisco Call,* 18 Dec. 1903, 1.

were waiting for before committing themselves to the expense of sending reporters overseas, the *Call* announced on 29 December that "Russia's Answer to Japan's Final Note Is a Refusal: Both Nations Contract for War Supplies in America."[24] Two days later London signed his contract with the *Examiner.*

Again, we don't know exactly how London ended up as a reporter for the Hearst papers (his material appeared in the *San Francisco Examiner,* the *New York American,* the *Chicago American,* and others), but it is likely that he approached them and others as he finally saw the end of *The Sea-Wolf* coming just as he saw the war developing. On 31 December 1903, the day he signed his contract with Hearst, Robert Collier, editor of *Collier's Weekly,* wrote to Roosevelt asking him to write a letter of support for Frederick Palmer to the Secretary of State, and he mentions that Palmer is one of three reporters that he is sending, the other two being Richard Harding Davis and Jack London.[25]

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[24] See "Russia's Answer to Japan's Final Note Is a Refusal: Both Nations Contract for War Supplies in America," *San Francisco Call,* 29 Dec. 1903, 1. London apparently clipped other material between December 1903 and January 1904, including two articles from San Francisco newspapers before war was declared; Hamilton says that London put this material inside his copy of Basil Hall Camberlain, *A Handbook for Travellers in Japan,* but they are no longer there and apparently not in the Huntington's collection. See Hamilton, *"Tools of My Trade,"* 85.

[25] See Robert Collier, letter to Theodore Roosevelt, 31 Dec. 1903, Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record.aspx?libID=o43389, Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library, Dickinson State University.

London claimed to Johns that he had chosen Hearst from among others.[26] In fact, it seems he didn't let *Collier's, Harper's,* and the *New York Herald* know he was in communication with Hearst. He simply sent a wire to Hearst, asking for the job, and Hearst gave it to him on more favorable terms than he had received from the others. Hearst signed him without caring if London succeeded as a war correspondent. As he told Edwin Emerson (who doesn't mention a competing deal with Collier), "I have just received a telegram from Jack London in San Francisco [this is, as Emerson says, before the war started, so his chronology matches the facts] that he is ready to go to the front, and I have wired him to go ahead. I don't know what kind of war correspondent he will make, but whatever he writes is bound to catch on, so I don't care."[27] They may have

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[26] See London, letter to Johns, 7 Jan. 1904, *Letters,* 1:405 n. 1. Edwin Emerson took London's place. How Collier eventually learned that London had chosen Hearst or what the process of negotiation was among Collier, Hearst, and London is unknown, and the same goes for the other two publications London mentions, *Harper's* and the *New York Herald.*

[27] Edwin Emerson, "When West Met East," *Sunset* 15 (Oct. 1905): 518; quoted in David Mike Hamilton, "Some Chin-Chin and Tea: Jack London in Japan," *Pacific Historian* 23 (Summer 1979): 20. Hamilton does not comment on the possibility that Hearst's words can be taken as an indication that London put himself forward as the right man for the job. There is no indication here or anywhere else in this heavily documented episode of his life that Hearst was aware of competing offers and needed to outbid others. Emerson's article may also be the spurious source for the story that London hit a Korean servant in the face after he supposedly came at London with a knife; Emerson is

been more sympatico than either imagined. In a series of directives to his editors, Hearst wrote, "Try to be conspicuously accurate in everything, pictures as well as text. Truth is not only stranger than fiction, it is much more interesting."[28] Hearst was one of the first newspaper publishers to emphasize the newsworthiness of photography, even to the extent of creating a new post, picture editor. The combination of truth, text, photography, fiction, and interest/absorption would have resonated deeply with London.

The Hearst contract specified that he leave 7 January 1903 on the *S. S. Siberia*. War had not yet been declared, so the contract stipulated that if there were no war London would receive $500 a month plus expenses. If war were declared, he would get an extra $250. According to London's own calculations, he earned a total of $4312.50 (for five and three-quarters months) or $111,276 in today's dollars.[29] (Richard Harding Davis, on the other hand, was earning $4000 a month from *Collier's Weekly.*)[30] He would

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repeating the story that George Sterling told him, a very untrustworthy source. See below for a discussion of this incident.

[28] William Randolph Hearst, "Seven Rules," in *Newsmen Speak: Journalists on Their Craft,* ed. Edmond D. Coblentz (Books for Libraries Press: Freeport, N.Y., 1954), 107.

[29] London, "Expenses-Addresses-Etc.." JL 21153. London could have easily stayed on for any number of months and continued to bank such easy money.

[30] See The Wanderer, "`Marking Time in Tokio,'" *Town Talk,* 1904, JL Scrapbooks, vol. 4, reel 2, and Davis, letter to Theodore Roosevelt, 14 Feb. 1904, Theodore Roosevelt Papers, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record.aspx?libID=o44222, Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library, Dickinson State University. Davis tells Roosevelt

be reporting in case of war for a minimum of three months and then for however long Hearst thought prudent and necessary. He was allowed to take and publish photographs "*as he shall consider useful,"* and he had the right to publish his material in a book. The contract did not specify how many articles he should write in case of war (six, if war did not materialize, of 2-3000 words), but it did specify that he "is *to diligently seek and forward, by the usual methods of conveyance, such information concerning the war and allied topics as may be appropriate for publication."*[31] London stayed roughly three and a half months, 18 March to May 25 in the theater of operations. (He was still physically present at the end of May, but he had applied for a pass to Tokyo, signaling that he was done.) He was gone from the US from 7 January to 30 June, almost six months, and he completed twenty-two articles plus the essay "The Yellow Peril."[32]

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that he hopes the Japanese will start taking it easy on the Russians so that the war isn't over before "I can grow rich" on his *Collier's* salary. He also tells the president that he couldn't leave New York until 20 February because he is producing a play. Obviously his commitment to reporting the war is at best half-hearted, and he stayed behind the lines with his wife, John Fox, and others.

[31] London and James Tuft, "Agreement with William Randolph Hearst to Act as Correspondent, " 31 Dec. 1903, JL 21110.

[32] He listed twenty in his little red account book. The discrepencies are important from a bibliographic point of view and do not impact the close reading I (and others) have engaged in. Using *Jack London Reports* as the primary source, we can see that he didn't include the third, "Advancing Russians Nearing Japan's Army" (which is not written in London's style; it is the one dispatch filled only with news, and it features a strong lead.

"This *People of the Abyss,*" London told Brett a year previous, "is simply the book of a correspondent writing from the field of industrial war. . . . It is a narrative of things as they are," and this was his intention, too, for writing about a military war with economic causes.[33] We remember his essay "The Impossibility of War" (written February

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It is my opinion that London did not write it), the fourth, "Vivid Description of Army in Korea," the eighteenth, "Japanese in Invisible War," or the twenty-first, "Japanese Consider Everything a Military Secret." Finally, he included his article on Dr. Moffett, which wasn't published and which he entitled "Mah-Mok-Sah," and he includes "The Yellow Peril," which was published in the *Examiner* but not properly considered a dispatch; it is an essay. London's own complete list: "1- Preparing to Start from Seoul" 2- Jap soldier, kit. etc. 3- Peking Road 4- Peking Road 5- First Land Fight 6- Interpreters 7- Troubles of Travel including money, army, permits, storming villages 8- Sunan – on taking fotos, deserted village, etc. 9- Sunsan-sore feet mailed Mar. 20/04 10- ought to be (1-) Moji camera trouble 11- Mah-Mok-Sah 12- on Correspondents 13- Overtaking Army and first sight of Russians from Wiju Castle 14- Action of April 26 and shelling of Wiju 15- Long range fighting apropos of action of April 29th 16- The Passing of the War Correspondent 17- Actions of April 30th and May 1rst 18- Further views on above actions 19- Final, Last, and True Account of the Crossing of the Yalu 20- Race Adventure and Yellow Peril" (London, "Expenses-Addresses-Etc.," JL 21153).

[33] Perhaps he simply could not gather the necessary factual material about the war that he could for *The People of the Abyss.* An example about the latter that I left out of volume 1 is an article he clipped from *Truth,* 28 Aug. 1902, which lists a number of court cases that he quotes verbatim as a list in chapter 16. See London, "Truth," JLE 749.

1900) in which he argued that prolonged war would induce famines on the home front, leading to popular rebellion if sustained too long. Economics, he argued, not military prowess, would determine the outcomes of war.[34] On 20 December 1903 London must have seen the report in the *San Francisco Call* that Russia was having trouble securing international loans for war preparations,[35] a significant fact that would have greatly interested London because he would later predict in 1904 that Japan could not win the war; they had borrowed money at 6 per cent.

Every once in a while in his reporting, he turns an economic eye and his political-economy mind to the war zone. He sees immediately the class differences in Korea and how "the master class, which is the official class" (meaning, the class of officials, not workers) robs the poor of wages and reimbursement for food procured by the Japanese through the managerial class. "The Korean official can give the Occident cards and spades when it comes to misappropriation of funds. The Oriental term for this is `squeeze.' Centuries of practice have reduced it to a science, and in Korea there are but

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[34] See London, "The Impossibility of War," *Overland Monthly* 35 (Oct. 1900): 282, and volume one of this work, pages 261-62. Interestingly, he pasted the sheets from the published version of the essay onto typewriter paper and then added paragraphs and sentences here and there, expanding the original greatly as if for republication in a book of his. See the mislabeled folder, London, "War: [sketches of the Russo-Japanese War]," JL 1376. There is nothing about the Russo-Japanese war in the expanded version, and the typewriter he used indicates a composition date pre-1904.

[35] See "No War Loan for Russia: St. Petersburg Cannot Obtain the Sinews for a Conflict," *San Francisco Call,* 20 Dec. 1903, 1.

two classes—the squeezers and the squeezees. The common people, of course, as all the world over, are the `squeezees.'" (51) London even lobbies vociferously a corrupt Korean magistrate on behalf of the people of Sunan to return money he had unjustly taken. London does so, however, as much out of solidarity with the Korean working class as he does to not lose face as a so-called powerful white man and because he was "decidedly bored by my own society" while cooped up in Sunan, awaiting permission to continue north to cover the war. We will see later how this is an example of how London forsook politics and an analysis of the world class-struggle in favor of an analysis of war based on biology and race.

So when he returned home, he told Brett that "I doubt that my stuff will make a book."[36] He was so disappointed that he reiterated his failure three days later, scapegoating the entire Japanese army for the failure: "Am now turning back to the States, quite disgusted with the whole situation so far as it concerns a correspondent getting material. Our treatment has been ridiculously childish, and we have not been allowed to see anything. There won't be any war-book so far as I am concerned."[37] In December 1904, he tried to market a shortened version of one of his dispatches, which was focused on economics and entitled "Korean Money"; but it was an odd mix of travelog, economic analysis, and self-deprecating humor, and it did not sell.[38] Later, he

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[36] London, letter to Brett, 1 June 1904, folder 2, box 63, Macmillan Company records, NYPL.

[37] London, letter to Brett, 4 June 1904, *Letters,* 1:430.

[38] See JL 1020, which is a folder containing the handwritten manuscript of "On the Pekin Road" and half of "Travel in Korea," the final seventeen manuscript pages which deal

with his attempt to understand the Korean monetary system. See London, "Travel in Korea," *Jack London Reports,* 68-73. This dispatch also shows how London would take the serious disquisitions of Isabel Bishop and make them humorous. For example, Bishop writes about Korean money, "This coin [the cash] is strung in hundreds on straw string, and the counting of it, and the carrying of it, and the bing without it are all a nuisance. It takes six men or one pony to carry 100 *yen* in *cash,* L10!" (Isabel Bird Bishop, *Korea and Her Neighbors: A Narrative of Travel, with an Account of the recent Vicissitudes and Present Position of the Country* [New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1898), 66; see also a similar passage on page 305, which London marked. For all of her in-depth exploration of the country, she still remains aloof; the Koreans are, in her "last words on Korea," defined best by "their limpness, laziness, dependence, and poverty." (445) London converts her annoyance into humor: "The unit of Korean coinage is the Chinese cash. It is a round piece of copper with a square hole punched through it. The square hole enables it to be strung on strings. A stout pack horse can carry about fifty American dollars worth of cash. An afternoon's shopping would require a couple of coolies to carry the money. To pay a debt of two or three thousand dollars would require several pack-trains, while all that a robber could carry away on his back would not constitute a serious loss to the one robbed." (68). In "Dr. Moffett," a dispatch that for some reason never made it into the papers, he quotes from Bishop's story of visiting with a magistrate because he has been persuaded to confront a similar magistrate about his corruption and theft from the people of Sunan. He turned to Bishop's book to learn how she acted in front of such a personage when she merely needed information, which was curtly not supplied. So, London decides to confront the Sunan magistrate so that "I might at least avenge her."

would make lists of Japanese names, for inclusion in possible stories, he wrote out a brief set of notes for a short story tentively entitled "The Jap," and he used the death of a Russian he had observed at the battle of the Yalu River as material for a possible article called "How We Die." And, of course, he used some of his experiences and notes on reading for the Adam Strang episode in *The Star Rover.*[39] But he never completed a story, or a book, or a treatise on economics and warfare: just dispatches from a distant front and photographs of the poor, tormented people of Korea who seemed voiceless in this matter of nationhood.[40]

Her presence is with him throughout the encounter, and he constantly tells us how he wished she were there to take pleasure in how he has learned from her how to deal effectively with "impudent" magistrates. But the idea of wanting her to see the "defeat" of the Koreans is used for laughs: "`Oh, Isabella Bird Bishop,' I thought, `if you had only sent such a summons how different your treatment might have been.'" (87) "And oh, if only Mrs. Isabella Bird Bishop had been there to see him go!" (88). She is after all a type, the travelling, adventurous, but morally uptight lady. London uses the thematic of The Revenge of Isabella Bird Bishop as a means to create a humorous anecdote out of a serious situation.

[39] See London, "How We Die," JL 775; London, "The Jap," JL 818 (the main character smuggles "10,000 rifles, 50 machine guns, and 8,000,000 rounds of ammunition" somewhere on the US west coast); and London, "Japanese Names," JL 820, 978.

[40] He didn't give up right away on the book, for he bought a number of first-hand accounts of the war, like "O," *The Yellow War* (McClure, Phillips and Co.: New York, 1905), HL 336999, which alternates between stories of individual Russian and Japanese

soldiers and sailors; Frederick Palmer, *With Kuroki in Manchuria* (Charles Scribner's Sons: New York, 1904), which appeared in November with excellent photographs by James Hare; Richard Hayes Barry, *Port Arthur: A Monster Heroism* (New York: Moffat, Yard and Co., 1905), which according to David Mike Hamilton he took with him on the *Snark* "to remember old times" (though it is clear to me that given the number of books he bought after the war he was interested in writing more about the experience); Frederick A. McKenzie, *From Tokyo to Tiflis: Uncensored Letters from the War* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1905), which is inscribed "to Jack London-Greeting F. A. McKenzie London, Eng. June 2, 1905"; and Homer Hulbert, *The Passing of Korea* (New York: Doubleday, Page, and Co., 1909). Palmer marched with the Japanese army for five months and dedicated his book "to the Japanese infantry, smiling, brave, tireless." Palmer was stringently pro-Japan and just as stringently anti-Korean. He labels Koreans as "filthy," "noncommittal about the coming of the Japanese," sexless, and "stupidly impassive" (Palmer, 32).

Hulbert, an expert on Asian affairs, was a resident of Korea, a reporter, and editor of *Korea Review.* London saved two copies of this periodical, one of which contained the following account of London's initial adventure from Japan to Korea: "A goodly number of correspondents have arrived on the scene and more are expected. . . . Mr. Jack London who represents the Hearst syndicate had a hard time in getting here. He succeeded in making Mokpo in small coastal steamers but from there he had to come in a sampan. He made Kunsan in twenty-seven hours but from there to Chemulpo occupied five days, owing to strong head winds and rough seas." It is very possible that London himself was the source for this account (Homer Hulbert, "News Calendar," *Korea Review* 4, no. 2

(Feb. 1904), box 569, JLE 2097). A second account of London's travels comes from Robert Dunn:

> I got to Korea one month before London. Immediately after my arrival at Chemulpo the port was closed. London knew that. So did the other correspondents who were at that time in Japan. They evidently decided that it would be useless to try to get into Chemulpo. London had another idea. He came over to Korea in a junk. From Fusan, where he landed, he came ito Chemulpo in a sampan. A sampan is an open boat, big enough to carry three men. It is very similar to our rowboats. It took him seven days to make the trip from Fusan to Chemulpo.
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> The weather during this trip was at the zero mark. When London arrived in Chemulpo I did not recognize him. He was a physical wreck. His ears were frozen; jis fingers were frozen; his feet were frozen. He said that he didn't mind his condition so long as he got to the front. He said his physical collapse counted for nothing. He had been sent to the front to do newspaper work and he wanted to do it.
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> London was absolutely down and out to use the slang expression. He had to undergo medical treatment for several days. As soon as he was able to move about he and I started for the front" (R. L. Dunn, "Jack London Knows Not Fear. R. L. Dunn, Commissioner to the Japanese War for "Collier's Weekly" Eulogizes the Daring of the Great Novelist. He Arrived in Korea with Frozen Hands, Ears and Feet, but Physical Ailments Could Not Keep Him from the Front." *San Francisco Examiner* 26 June 1904, Jack London Scrapbooks, vol. 4, reel 2, HEH)

And in the interest of re-creating the atmosphere of daring-do and fame that newly surrounded London, here is a third report, which was printed at the top of page one of the *San Francisco Examiner:*

"Robert Alden McLellan , employed by Collbran & Bostwick in the railroad business at Seoul, Korea, arrived from the Orient yesterday by way of Victoria. He brought letters from Jack London, one of "The Examiner" correspondents at the scene of the war and he tells some additional things about the hardships which London has experienced in his effort to get the news of the conflict for "Examiner" readers.

> "When Jack London left Japan on one of the Japanese steamers," said McLellan, he came to Mokpo in Southern Korea, expecting to proceed onward to Seoil by the same boat. His steamer, however, was chartered by the Japanese Government as a transport, and so it turned back to the Japanese ports. That left London without any means of proceeding to Seoul by the regular means of transportation, and for a time it looked as though he would not be able to get any farther. However, he managed, after some delay, to engage a sampan or Korean boat, and with that he continued his journey. The hardships that he encountered must have been severe almost beyond description.
>
> The weather was exceedingly cold, the thermometer registering 10 degrees below zero, and in the open boat there was little protection for the correspondent. With only rices and such other foods as the Koreans use, and with practically no shelter from the extreme cold of the Korean midwinter, the journey, occupying several days, must have been an exceedingly difficult one. Mr. London made it, though, for he was already back at Chemulpo when I left.

To us, his photographs of Koreans give voice to the stateless, but that was not necessarily his intention. To begin with, we have to look at the context in which he took his photos, that is the sociocultural, as opposed to the militaristic, context. London ignores or fails to notice that his photographs of everyday Koreans and their lives is an ironic imitation of what he calls the Koreans second most "salient characteristic" ("after inefficiency"): "curiosity" or *koo-kyung."* (72), a Korean word that means "plays, lectures, sermons, horse-shows, menageries, excursions, picnics."[41] As he waited in Sunan to advance further with the army, he lived in a house on the main drag, Pekin

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> London was the last man to reach Seoul, among all the newspaper correspondents in the field, but he was the first at the front. He returned to Chemulpo merely because they would not allow him to accompany the Japanese army on the firing line, and because he wanted to be sure of getting his dispatches away to "The Examiner." (Scrapbooks, vol. 4, reel 2)

[41] Unconsciously (or, if consciously, then accompanied by no explanatory discourse), London further demonstrates his immersion in Korean life by writing in "Japanese Officers Consider Everything a Military Secret" that "the correspondent who ventures out for a `look see' all by himself finds that just about everything in the landscape is unspecificiedly forbidden." (120). See the following discussion of how mirroring adds to the sense of the ghostliness of the Korean world.

Isabella Bishop translates the word differently, as "sightseeing," and lists it as one of a number of reasons Koreans travel. But she also remarks on the "ill-bred and unmanageable curiosity of the people." (126) London may find the curiosity irritating at times, but he deals with it without moralizing about it.

Road. Here, every afternoon, he "set up my photograph gallery," both mirroring and adding to the *koo-kyung;* just as the Koreans stare at him, turning him into a character in their plays, so London stares at the Koreans through his camera and creates an American *koo-kyung.* In this way he is both disrupting the Korean gaze and documenting the people's outward appearance. After all, his staged portraits are of Koreans staring into the camera, and so London manages both to capture and disarm the power gained from their objective observation of foreigners.

Many of his portraits were set up by Manyoungi, his new Korean servant: "Manyoungi has quite entered into the spirit of my photography and fares forth enthusiastically to capture any specimen I desire." (77). Some subjects did not know what the camera was and feared it as a "terrible instrument of death." (77) London's activities as both a writer and photographer mirror the Korean population's supposed central characteristic of curiosity and observation, though he never explicitly identifies with the Korean populace. He only observes them observing him observing them. If in some sense he is seeing himself in the Koreans, all dressed in white like ghosts, in their deserted villages, impassive, all the Korean world is like a mirror, a medium for entry into the subsconcious, where he is struggling with questions like racial identity and authorial construction. It's as if he is engaged in spirit photography.

His first preference was action photographs of warfare, though it is surprising that he never took a photograph of a dead soldier, a la Matthew Brady; after all he took photos of the naked asses of Korean laborers, the exposed breasts of Korean women, and even several photos of children show exposed penises.[42] He took many photographs of street

[42] See London, photographic album 7, JLP 445, contact sheet 8.

scenes, but even these two categories of photographs achieve the general effect of disrupting the centrality of the Korean gaze by interposing his own view of the matter. In the final analysis, though, London is after documentation, the facts of the matter. His photographic work wants to be anthropologic, not spiritual or even polemical. He is not illustrating the down-and-outers of Korea, as he did in London with the people of the abyss. He has no political objective or program in mind. His character studies simply document life on Pekin Road outside his house or people he saw on the streets of Korean and Japanese towns and villages. Most of his photos were not meant for publication, and only one (entitled "Sunset on the Yalu") was taken for the beautiful effects of the scene. London may have carefully framed and composed his scenes, but they weren't taken for artistic reasons. His portraits weren't Arnold Genthian in nature, and neither were his landscapes like Ansel Adams's. He was not interested in advancing the art of photography. When he wasn't consciously taking shots for the newspaper, he took them for private reasons, as an aide de memoire to form a stockpile of documentation in case he ever wanted to write about these experiences in the future. For example, his extemporaneous portraits of captured Russian soldiers might have provided him with visual documentation for a story he outlined after his return. Imagined as part of a series called *How We Die,* "four or five subjective studies of men dying—emphasizing the withdrawing into themselves, their own thoughts, etc." London typed out a full page of notes on "a Russian soldier, killed on the Yalu, Japs are crossing to East and flanking Russian Left—Russians are drawing in, along river to Kulien Ching." When London wrote this is unknown; the typewriter he used indicates a time before the *Snark* voyage.

The story is deeply sympathetic to the Russian as it portrays him trying to escape Japanese artillery fire:

> "Our Russian, caught on both sides, must scale awful Manchurian mountains. Jap battery of six guns directly across, hurling shrapnel. Kulien Ching, 16 guns, turns loose on Jap battery. At times silence it, and our Russian climbs without danger. Every lull, Jap battery breaks out. Great uproar down river. He cannot see 16 guns wiped out in four minutes, but he knows they help no more, and Jap shrapnel and common shell pour upon him. Rock-steeps burst into flaming craters. His comrades dropping. The rocky channel of the steep and shallow gorge. They find water. A shee bursts, they go on; water stained red. At last, only two are left. he gets his---common shell. He is stunned. Had not known being torn to pieces was so painless---as he see hand on ground, cut off at writst by piece of shell. Those were his fingers. The finger with the strained tendon that always hurt in cold weather. well, it would never hurt again, he pondered dreamily. It was a pit, he things, to have climbed so far, only to be killed. Visions of the long way he had come---Russia, Siberia, the great lake of ice, the Amur, all Manchuria. (Has no family. An orphan asylum graduate, who had worked in a bake-shop).[43]

His camera was a prosthetic not just for seeing in a different way but for writing in a different way. And if the subjects are unwilling and scared of "the glittering mechanism [the camera] that they mistake for some terrible instrument of death," then he welcomed that added drama, and subconsciously he knew it to be yet another manifestation of the

[43] London, "How We Die: [story notes]," JL 775.

irrational ghost world of Korea. So men cry and scream and beg not to be hurt all the while London and Manyoungi hold them in place to keep the subjects in focus. (76-77).[44]

There is a verbal dimension to his photography. A number of headlines for his dispatches proclaimed not just that his photos were firsts from the front but that his words were "word-pictures." They might be a "vivid glimpse" or "graphic story" or "typical Incidents by Way of Illustration" or even "vivid pen pictures," all equally compelling as the photographs, if not slightly less so. Of course London would not have failed to notice the poverty and hardships of his subjects. But, like the photos in *The People of the Abyss* (and, for that matter, his photos for his voyage on the *Snark*) they illustrate a tension in his authorial conception: that between his identification with his subject and his distancing of himself from that subject. We must never forget that London, in the process of becoming an author in 1893-94, saw authorship as a way to save himself from the fate of those he took pictures of in London and even in Korea. If we locate an authorial presence in Adam Strang, the American sailor who lives in Korea in his 1915 novel *The Star Rover,* we see how complicated this relationship between traveler-writer and resident really is.

In a number of other rhetorical ways, London reprised his role of hobo-author even before he began his formal work as a war correspondent. In fact, there is no indication that he wanted to be considered first and foremost a newspaper war correspondent; certainly he would not have been considered as such by his companions

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[44] All these reactions were most likely created by London for rhetorical effect; no portrait that survives shows any subject showing tears or fear of the camera. Many show people delighted to have their photograph taken, completely at ease in front of the camera.

on board the *S. S. Siberia*: Frederick Palmer, James Hare, Robert L. Dunn, and other veteran reporters (Palmer, for example, had already covered the Greco-Turkish War, the war in the Philippines, and the Boxer Rebellion, though he and London shared similar experiences in the Klondike in 1897-98).[45] I'm sure they never "bucked a game run by the Chinese firemen of the *Siberia,*"[46] an activity reminiscent of London's time in steerage crossing the Atlantic a little over a year previous and a game a hobo would have felt comfortable playing. London went where the working men went, and only by breaking his ankle on board between Hawai`i and Japan was he prevented from associating more with the Chinese firemen and other common laborers and allowing them to win their money back.

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[45] Palmer had a negative opinion of London, though he did lend him his code book for cabling messages back to the States (see "The Telegraphic Condenser and Universal Cipher Code [code book used in Russo-Japanese War]," JL 1297). He thought of him as a pseudo-socialist and egomaniac who kept to himself and formed an army of one. Dunn and F. A. MacKenzie, who also traveled with him, thought well of him and valued his companionship greatly. See Palmer, *With Mine Own Eyes;* F. A. MacKenzie, "The Little Brown Man: Marching North with the Japanese Army," *London Daily Mail,* 30 May 1904, Jack London Scrapbooks, vol. 4, reel 2, HEH; and R. L. Dunn, "Jack London Knows Not Fear. R. L. Dunn, Commissioner to the Japanese War for "Collier's Weekly" Eulogizes the Daring of the Great Novelist. He Arrived in Korea with Frozen Hands, Ears and Feet, but Physical Ailments Could Not Keep Him from the Front." *San Francisco Examiner* 26 June 1904, Jack London Scrapbooks, vol. 4, reel 2, HEH).

[46] London, letter to Charmian Kittredge, 15 Jan. 1904, *Letters,* 1:406.

Even in his dispatches from Korea he downplays his identity as a war correspondent. In "Few Killed Nowadays in `Fierce Battles: Fighting at Long Range Described," he tells us that in the artillery duel over the Yalu River, "a tactical advantage may have been gained by the Japanese which strengthened their strategic movement. Now, what is a strategic movement?" he asks, and we have a moment, typical in London's theatrical writing, of addressing and instructing his readership. But this is not, as London knows, what a war correspondent does; he would already know what "a strategic movement" is and presume that the reader does, too. In the next paragraph, London makes clear the distance between who he is and who, say, F. A. McKenzie is: "This is modern warfare to the mind of this layman." (97). He is a mere "layman," not interested in becoming professional conversant about the technical aspects of warfare. In his final dispatch, he confesses that he had come to the war hoping to enter life-and-death situations: "I knew that the mortality of war correspondents was said to be greater, in proportion to numbers, than the mortality of soldiers. . . . [I wanted to be] where life was keen and immortal moments were being lived. In brief, I came to war expecting to get thrills."[47] (122) No clearer statement of the tyro could be made. He did not want to be a war correspondent. He wanted to be placed in situations that were allowed only to war correspondents and soldiers. He wanted to fight a war without having to shoot a rifle or stab with a bayonet.

Within a week of his arrival in Japan, London was arrested for photographing people in the fortified city of Moji. It speaks to his inexperience, and newspapers either

[47] Part of London's style here is to exaggerate his expectations in order to highlight how little he was able to report from the front due to Japanese army restrictions.

cited that fact or imagined he had gotten arrested for publicity purposes. For London, however, it brought back memories of being arrested for vagrancy on the road in America. He took three photos before he was stopped by a "middle-aged Japanese man," who then led the unsuspecting London into a police station: "the middle-aged Japanese was what the American hobo calls a `fly cop.'"[48] Further, under questioning by the police, he is completely cooperative, that is, until they made it apparent that they thought it suspicious he had been wandering around, like a spy. London, instead of assuring them that he is not a spy, tells us that "their conclusion from my week's wandering was that I had no fixed place of abode." (28) He deliberately converts spying into hoboing in order to make this point about his mental state: "I began to shy. The last time the state of my existence had been so designated it had been followed by a thirty-day imprisonment in a vagrant's cell!" (28). Surely the punishment for being a Russian spy would have been greater than that. London fictionalizes this account (of course he didn't have a permanent home in Japan) just in order to tell us that he was a certain kind of author.

This is not the only moment of converting fact into fiction, and because the correspondents could not get close to the action, to warfare's killing, this war had the air of the unreality of theater. Frederick Palmer says about the day of the attack across the Yalu River: "There was to be a charge and the time for it was almost as exactly set as that for the rising of a theatre curtain." (68) London, who had for years now combined news reporting with fictional techniques, easily exploited this atmosphere. For no apparent

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[48] London, "A Camera and a Journey," in *In Many Wars, by Many Correspondents,* ed. George Lynch and Frederick Palmer (Lousiana State University Press: Baton Rouge, 2010), 124.

reason, he does not use the real names of the two correspondents who accompanied him north on the Peking Road, F. A. McKenzie and Robert L. Dunn, for his first nine dispatches, calling them instead "McLeod" and "Jones," as if they were characters in a play.[49] Then, without explanation, he begins to use their real names. There are even ghosts at work in the background. When he begins to discuss Korean dogs, he can't help but compare them to Klondike dogs. Then, in the very next paragraph, Korean civilians, because they are all dressed in white, become like "ghosts" walking in the mostly deserted countryside, as if the White Silence were present. In a dispatch entitled "The Invisible War. . . . It Might Have Been Battle of Ghosts," he writes of the battle at the Yalu River, "This was the battle—a river bed, a continuous and irregular sound of rifle firing over a front of miles, a few black moving specks. That was all. No Russians were to be seen. With all the hubbub of shooting no smoke arose. No shot was seen to be fired. The black specks disappeared in the willows. . . . It might be a war of ghosts for all that eye or field-glass could discern." And, of course, because the Japanese military kept a tight rein on correspondents, they weren't allowed to see what they wanted to see, thus creating a kind of ghostliness around the entire theater of operations. The very subject of his work, the war, is a ghost, there one minute, and gone the next.

But this is not absorptive fiction, so ghosts lurk in the background. His model is not the Klondike story but rather his 1902 feature work for the *Examiner.* His writing is strictly narrative, using the first-person voice, a folksy kind of voice, alternating among humor, naivete, and irritation. For example, when he tells us about the Korean pony he

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[49] Richard O'Connor mistakes the fictional names for facts (209), and all other commentators are weirdly silent on the matter.

bought (as if we really care what sort of animals he has), he explains that though short and small as a large dog the horse could carry an enormous weight. He considers it as a replacement for his own stallion "if something happens [to it]. Jones's [that is, Dunn's] principal objection to this is that both my feet will drag on the ground, and I half believe him. To-morrow I shall mount it and find out for myself. Perhaps I may be able to tuck my feet up a little." (38) This is how a fiction writer closes a story, with a little self-deprecating humor about a minor incident. He never assumes the voice or style or organizing principles of the veteran war correspondent. There is rarely a lead, and little reporting.[50] He often uses dialogue to further the action of the "story." He sets scenes as

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[50] As I said above, I do not believe that London wrote "Advancing Russians Nearing Japan's Army," *Jack London Reports,* 38-39, but, if he did, then it is the one exception, though even this article contains a literary allusion, comparing the flight of Korean refugees to a scene from "De Quincey's `Flight of a Tartar Tribe.'" (39). Having collated the first appearances of London's dispatches in the *San Francisco Examiner* against their reprinting in Hendricks and Shepard's collection, I have used their texts—with silently corrected typos—for expediency's sake (one cannot look at all of the original *Examiner* texts at the Huntington Library at once; they have to be called up separately), but I have used the headlines used by the newspaper, not Hendricks and Shepard's reconstruction of them. It is extremely important to note that Hendrick and Shepard mistakenly added six paragraphs to London's third report (if it is indeed London's); they actually belong to Edwin Clough's report from China that appears on the same page as London's. How ironic! because Clough is none other than Yorick, the columnist who routinely skewered London in his column in the *Examiner.* It seems, though, that all was forgiven between

if he were writing a short story: "The morning of April 30th was hazy. The sun shone dimly, and the distant valleys and canyons seemed filled with the smoke of some vast conflagaration. But this cleared away with the growing day and the valley of the Yalu lay before us." (*JLR,* p. 100). He is intimately involved in all that he sees and wants to bring the reader along with him as he experiences every little thing. He is our guide in the theater of war, pointing out people, places, and things of interest—even down to the details of what Japanese soldiers carry—so that we too can feel we are present at the scene. Although it isn't stressed, there is an air of you-won't-believe-this to his writing. Once again fact is stranger than fiction, though he fictionalizes fact to make it more believable.

The moment under arrest is when London's true authorial identity leaks out. On the road in 1894, he had been a hobo-author pretending not to be an author. In the Klondike, he had been a hobo-author trying to be a miner, not an author. In England, he had been a hobo-author again pretending not to be an author. In Japan and Korea, he was the hobo-author who was (sometimes) masquerading as a war correspondent, not an author. In each field of authorship, his sense of what constitutes an author undergoes various permutations without damage or compromise of his fundamental, nonnegotiable understanding of himself as a writer. But, now that he was famous, the outside world

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the two, for London's list of things to do before he left the country include "arrange for Clough," an enigmatic note that at least signals a collegial relationship. His list also includes a note to "see Egan about correspondents' book" (which must refer to *In Many Wars*) and "resign—Tanabe" (Tanabe was the commanding general for the Japanese army).

would not let him forget that he was a novelist and short story writer, and this socially constructing identity-formation was an obstacle to his own interior attempts to further remake his ideas about authorship. It was a new tension in his career, and he would have to face it and overcome it for the rest of his life.

According to a report on London's arrest in Hearst's *New York American,* "Mr. London had a hearing before the Japanese Military Commission, and pleaded that he was unaware of the stringent rules guarding the coast fortifications at the present time before war had been declared, and professed his willingness to abide by all regulations in the future and do no act which could be construed as an offence against the courtesy of the military commanders." At the same time, however, he insisted that "he was acting entirely within his rights as a war correspondent in taking a few snapshots of the Japanese fortifications from the outside."[51] Clearly, he did not care what the rules were. There

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[51] The affair concluded with London being freed from prison and having his camera returned. The *American* reported it this way: "Minister Griscom without delay presented the appeal of Mr. London to the Minister of Justice in Tokio, and after the situation had been explained the Minister of Justice decided that there had been no intentional offence against the military rules and regulations, and directed the commandant of the fortress at Shimoneski to restore the camera to Mr. London, and all other property belonging to him which had been taken at the time of his arrest. "Jack London Free! He Was Not a Spy! The Novelist Had Penetrated the Forbidden Zone, Was Captured and Put into Military Prison," *New York American,* 7 Feb. 1904, Jack London Scrapbooks, vol. 4, reel 2). But Griscom, in his memoirs, provides the true story. He represented London's case to Baron Komura, the Foreign Minister, who agreed to let London go because Griscom assured

were no restrictions on the hobo-author, and as long as he acted from that premise, he got into trouble. At least two other times he violated the unspoken rules of the war correspondent, not counting his inability to dress the part (the regulations from the Japanese army for foreign correspondents included the injunction to "look and behave decently").[52] A photograph by Hare of thirty-four correspondents shows a preponderance

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him that London was harmless, but refused to return the camera. The minister, with his lawyer, explained that "the statute that the weapon with which a crime has been committed becomes the property of the court.' `There you are,' Baron Komura said to me. `Does that apply to every crime?' I asked the lawyer. `Yes, to every crime of every description.' I turned to the Foreign Minister. `If I can name a crime to which this does not apply, will you release the camera?' Regarding me doubtfully for a few seconds, Baron Komura replied, `Yes, I will.' `Well, what about rape?' Baron Komura's Oriental stolidity dissolved in a shout of laughter," and London had his camera. (Griscom, *Diplomatically Speaking,* 246).

[52] "Regulations for Press Correspondents," in *Jack London Reports,* p. 25. London and Dunn were detained in Sunan for a little over a week because they had traveled further than the Japanese military had allowed; they were escorted back to Seoul by the Japanese army. The second incident is reported variously but seems to come down to a punch thrown by London at a Korean servant, though in a public lecture the reporter wrote, "the Japanese were absolutely without honor in all dealings with the American correspondents. . . . It was a tale of long continued insult to which one listened, and the audience applauded heartily when Jack London knocked down the insulting Tokio hoodlum, Oshima. Of course, he was nearly courtmartialed out of Japan for it, but there

was not an American man in that large audience who would not have done just the same." ("Smart Set Is Improving Mind," *Oakland Tribune,* Jack London Scrapbooks, vol. 5). Robert L. Dunn says in his memoirs that London was arrested for punching a Korean civilian; Dunn claims he was ordered home because of the "international incident." London's diary makes no mention of it, and its chronology contradicts Dunn's account. Dunn says it happened in Seoul, but London had already decided on 25 May in Feng-wang-cheng to leave Korea; he notes in the diary, "Applied for pass to Tokio." See also London, letter to Kittredge, 22 May 1904, *Letters,* 1:429, in which he says he plans to go home, not because he was so ordered but because he imagines he will not be allowed "to go on the Russian side." He left the front and arrived in Seoul on 1 June. Because he spent a single day there, it seems highly unlikely that he had time to get into the altercation, get arrested, spend time in jail waiting for Richard Harding Davis to intercede with President Roosevelt (all presented as facts by Dunn; Davis and Roosevelt were friends), and then get released and told to leave the country. Charmian London, in her biography, says she heard of the incident from her husband, but, because she was "very rusty on the facts" she discussed it with Jimmy Hare in 1917 and says that Richard Harding Davis interceded with President Roosevelt to stop "any sudden execution by court martial." (Charmian London, *The Book of Jack London,* 1:422.) Given the time lag between the front and Tokyo, even if this did happen it isn't likely that Roosevelt interceded before it actually got sorted out as Charmian reports it. Charmian's account contradicts Dunn's in that she says it happened somewhere near the front. It seems that both Dunn and Charmian (via Hare?) exaggerated the incident. In a 26 May letter, Davis writes to Roosevelt, telling another version of the story: the servant came at London with

of military and pseudo-military attire, and a number of them look like Teddy Roosevelt the Rough Rider. London, in his most often reproduced image, looks like he did in London, 1902, except in mittens.[53]

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a rock, and London was tried and court martialed. See Davis, letter to Roosevelt, 26 May 1904, www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record/ImageViewer?libID=o45485&imageNo=1. Obviously Davis, being in Tokyo, heard this at best at secondhand, but none of it is true, and Roosevelt is hearing of it for the first time. On top of all this, the event didn't even make the newspapers. How is that possible, given that Roosevelt and Davis were supposedly involved?! Frederick Palmer's account thus seems the most accurate. "Soon after our arrival at the Yalu [London] knocked down one of our Japanese servants for threatening him. This brought on a diplomatic crisis with the staff, which we solved by explaining that London was a most gifted writer, with a strong sense of the pioneer American's *bushido,* which responded with a blow of a fist to an insult" (Frederick Palmer, *With My Own Eyes: A Personal Story of Battle Years* [Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1933], 242). That is, the Japanese command was upset that London had punched a Korean civilian, but once they heard London's justification they dropped the matter. London wasn't jailed, wasn't sent home because of the incident, and didn't need Davis or Roosevelt's intervention.

[53] See Jimmy Hare, "Some of the Authors," frontispiece to *In Many Wars, by Many War Correspondents,* and *Letters,* photographs between 1:378 and 1:379. London's habits of dress were constantly remarked upon in the press—hence the cover photo for this volume. In the fall of 1903, when he applied for admission to the Bohemian Club, a

newspaper columnist opined that he should not be admitted, not because of his impending divorce, because of the kind of shirts he wore.

Jack London's Shirt

> I hear that Jack London just squeezed through in his election for membership in the Bohemian Club. The new novelist is as unconventional in his dress as in his literary style, and never parts company with his negligee shirt. Mr. Tom Barbour, who is a mechanical engineer and a self-made man, who has made himself quite wealthy, opposed the admission of London. The Bohemians outside the club—that is to say, the professional Bohemians—declare that Mr. Barbour drew the line at Jack's flannel shirt, and they are intensely sarcastic over it. . . .
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> Another whisper comes to me that London's flannel shirt was only used as a cloak for the real opposition to him, and that his recent divorce suit was a more potent cause. I do not believe that anybody can find much in that divorce suit to enlarge the halo around the head of the rising author of "The Call of the Wild," but the world long ago made up its mind that Bohemians, whether of the literary or the stage variety are not amenable to the same rules of moral criticism as people who trudge in the other highways of life. Perhaps the negligee shirt at full-dress affairs and the divorce suit combined were the cause of London's narrow escape from being blackballed. Anyhow, he pulled through. [Unsigned blurb, *The Wasp,* 19 Nov. 1904, Jack London Scrapbooks, vol. 5, reel 3]

In this rather bizarre column, the writer brings together London's dressing habits, his status as a writer and newspaper correspondent, and his divorce, as if they all informed

each other to help create the most complete picture of the man, Jack London. The account begins with the assessment that *The Faith of Men* was evidence that

> the man who wrote "The Call of the Wild" had begun to seek popularity rather than fame. Then he decided to go to the Far East as a war correspondent, and it was a good decision. It was a pleasant thing to be a war correspondent when you know how to tell what you see and know how to see what to tell. But before he left he dressed himself in a sombrero and a bright blue coat lined with red flannel. The coat had brass buttons all over it, and Mr. London's hair streamed from under his hat into the happy air like a beacon. It was not a businesslike coat, nor had Mr. London a reputable looking hat. His pictures (dressed in both coat and hat) were exposed upon the elevated railroad stations and at street corners before he went to the war. They were attractive, but they did not seem to suggest the author of "The Call of the Wild." News came from San Francisco yesterday that your writer had been sued for divorce. Mrs. London has recorded in her complaint objections to certain details of Mr. London's trip to the Orient. An action for divorce is not to be discussed before the trial—bit that overcoat was inexcusable." ("Jack London, Whose Books Are Better Than His Coat—and What Befalls Him," *New York telegraph,* 30 June 1904, Jack London Scrapbooks, vol. 5, reel 3

In the following paragraph from a New York paper, his dress is linked to the quality of his writing:

> He wrote "The Faith of Men," which was excellently illustrated, and prominently published by a London weekly of some distinction. It was not good work. It looked as if the man who wrote "The Call of the Wild" had begun to seek

> popularity rather than fame. Then he decided to go to the Far East as a war correspondent, and it was a good decision. It was a pleasant thing to be a war correspondent when you know how to tell what you see and know how to see what to tell. But before he left he dressed himself in a sombrero and a bright blue coat lined with red flannel. The coat had brass buttons all over it, and Mr. London's hair streamed from under his hat into the happy air like a beacon. It was not a businesslike coat, nor had Mr. London a reputable looking hat. His pictures (dressed in both coat and hat) were exposed upon the elevated railroad stations and at street corners before he went to the war. They were attractive, but they did not seem to suggest the author of "The Call of the Wild." ("Jack London, Whose Books Are Better Than His Coat—and What Befalls Him," *New York Telegraph,* 30 June 1904, Jack London Scrapbooks, vol. 5, reel 3).

Sometimes the press linked London's dress to a favorable take on his writing and the trouble other members of the press created around the issue of his actual identity: "On the occasion of JL giving a lecture on "Experiences of a War Correspondent in Japan and Corea" at the Home Club, the reporter says, "And what a unique figure Jack London is, as he steps before an audience. Nothing in the world will induce him to wear the conventional evening dress of the ordinary lecturer—and he looked quite as if he had walked from town a couple of miles over the hills. He is simply unconventional to the last degree. One remembers with a smile how the staid old Atlantic Monthly people wanted him to sign his name "John London," "John" being much more dignified than the informal "Jack." But he would have none of it, for if they didn't take "Jack" they needn't take the manuscript either, so they must needs be content with the signature, for Jack

The *American* of course had a vested interest in portraying London as favorably as possible. It even concluded the news report with the gratuitous observation that the entire event "goes to show the desire of Mr. London to get as near to the real thing as possible in acting as the representative of the "AMERICAN." Either London had made a rookie mistake that could have been costly or, as the paper would have it, he would go to any length to get a story. From the point of view of the Hearst editors, however, as much fame that attached to London attached to the newspaper as well, and thus the newspaper mentions itself in connection with London at every possible moment. Many of the headlines for London's articles showcase London's fame—one article even carries his byline accompanied by the description, "special correspondent of `The Examiner,' author of `Call of the Wild,' `God of His Fathers' and One of the Very Few War Correspondents Who Have Been Able to Press on with the First Japanese army and to Witness the War as It Is Fought."[54] When he returned home in June and published his final summation, the *San Francisco* deemphasized his role as correspondent, calling him its "special commissioner" "who added to his literary fame new laurels" as its representative. (122). This is the first time that his association with a publisher developed this double strand of fame. London had never felt so publically needed. He realized that on a certain level by playing in this larger theater of operations it did not matter what he did, what he thought, what he wrote. His newspaper publisher could subsume his work under his status as a

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London is in a position to dictate to the publishers. ("Smart Set Is Improving Mind," *Oakland Tribune,* 17 Nov. 1904, Jack London Scrapbooks, vol. 5, reel 3.)

[54] London, "Jack London's Graphic Story of the Japs Driving Russians across the Yalu River," *San Francisco Examiner,* 4 June 1904 [written 5 May 1904].

reportable object. Instead of being a theatrical writer he was becoming, somewhat against his will, a theatrical actor.[55] *Martin Eden,* as we will see, is about rejecting this role and yet having no other to play.

Later, when he came home and collected his news clippings and pasted them into his scrapbooks (or asked Charmian to do it for him), he could see how his personal and professional affairs were imbricated in the press. Articles about London leaving for the East and about his taking photos of Japanese fortifications and of his release from jail appear among reviews of *The People of the Abyss, The Call of the Wild,* and of the first installments of *The Sea-Wolf* as well as of his separation and divorce from Bessie; in fact, on the day of his return from Japan, while talking to reporters about his Korean experiences, he was served with papers concerning his divorce, a moment duly reported by those covering his talk.[56] His literary reputation got mixed together in the public's mind with his public performance as a correspondent and with his status as a private citizen.

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[55] In "Koreans Have Taken to the Hills: How the Hermit Kingdom Behaves in Time of War," London describes himself as an actor in *koo-kyung*. "I no longer live an obscure and private life. All my functions, from eating to sleeping are performed in public" (74) He might be reflecting, not so much on his current situation, but his transformed status in the US.

[56] See "Jack London Returns from Orient, But Says It Is Not to Fight Wife's Suit for Divorce: While He Tells How He Outwitted Japan's War Lords, Law Clerk Serves Author with Summons," *San Francisco Call,* 1 July 1904, Jack London Scrapbooks, vol. 5.

Other newspapers besides the *American* were not partisan. One report circulated that "Jack London, the highly advertised war correspondent in the Stanley hat, has succeeded in being arrested the first day out. He seems to know how to sell stuff."[57] Again his attire signifies the kind of author he is. Another reporter combined London's inexperience with a loathing for his fiction: "Jack London, the infant phenomenon, has been jailed by the Jap. It is to be hoped they will burn some of his manuscripts."[58] A hometown newspaper spun his inexperience in a favorable way: "Talk about luck! Here is Jack London on his first trip as a correspondent, and he manages to get locked up and more talked about than all the rest of them put together. It's good luck and well deserved."[59] It's not that his work had not been attacked in the same way before. The *Dawson Weekly News* wrote when *The Children of the Frost* had been published that "in art the truest is not always the best. Jack London's stories of the Klondike, written in a comfortable Chicago office by a man who joined briefly in the stampede to the Klondike in '97, and who turned about and retired before reaching Dawson, are accepted on the outside as ideal realism, though the stories can hardly find readers here."[60] There's a certain amount of special pleading here, but the ratio of inaccuracies to the length of the report is so high as to indicate a need to aim at the famous. Another blurb linked his so-called poor writing to his war travels: "Jack London has gone to Tokio for a newspaper syndicate. After reading his recent potboilers [*The Faith of Men]* I have more than once

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[57] *The Daily News (Galveston, Tx.),* 7 Feb. 1904, Jack London Scrapbooks, vol. 4, reel 2.

[58] *Record (Boston),* 6 Feb. 1904, Jack London Scrapbooks, vol. 4, reel 2.

[59] *San Francisco Newsletter,* 6 Feb. 1904, vol. 4, reel 2.

[60] *Dawson Weekly News,* 27 Nov. 1902, Jack London Scrapbooks, vol. 4, reel 2.

found myself wishing he would go to and stay at a place where pencil and paper are not. London was a bright writer, but of late has succumbed to what Louis Stevenson calls the `damnation of the check book.' His easy writing is mighty hard reading."[61] These assessments and attacks are interesting not so much because they expose London's inexperience—we would be aware of that even if we hadn't read these news clippings—but because they combine shameless pronouncements on both London's personal and professional lives, as if they cannot be extricated from each other, as if one actually contributes to the other; he writes saleable fiction so therefore he wears a Stanley hat—or is it the other way around?

Further, these articles are on the same continuum that was so pronounced in the *The Sea-Wolf* reviews. He had become a target. His fame as a writer was changing in kind. From being a rising star in American literature, a rival to Kipling (or just another Kipling), he had arrived at a high place of achievement that brought with it the invitation to fatal critique. Of course he was not the only one. Richard Harding Davis, John Fox, Jr., and Frederick Palmer all were excoriated for their writings from Tokyo. They too were accused, not of being inexperienced, but of being inauthentic. Their reporting was suspected because their literary writings were assessed negatively, and the negativity came from the detection of their insincerity. Surely there is a certain amount of professional jealousy and territoriality. If you were a famous author who had chosen to

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[61] Concert Goer, "Major and Minor," *Musical Leader (Chicago),* 2 July 1904, Jack London Scrapbooks, vol. 4, reel 2.

report the news, watch out. Everything about you was fair game to anonymous staff writers who did not like being reminded of their anonymity and small pay.[62]

In Korea, he could only be the kind of author he was, no matter how much he wanted to experience the life of the war correspondent. He was a newspaperman who happened to be at war. When London pleaded with Griscom to help get his camera back, he told him that the camera was an essential tool of the war correspondent, just like a plumber's tools.[63] We can safely assume that Richard Harding Davis, Frederick Palmer, and others did not see themselves as plumbers. Again, London's working-class mentality leaks into his conception of himself as an author. But if he was separated from his compatriots by class, dress, and inexperience, he was joined to them in class terms within the context of Japanese society. As he jotted in one of his notebooks, "newspapermen are of very low caste," and what follows that remark is one of his worst racist rants: "The real Japanese, not the Japan of cherry blossom, or Fiji on teacups and fans—but the Japanese which is not civilized and the Japan which is Asiatic—which takes our science, but nothing else. Paradoxical—savages who strangely use our weapons—as if Indians should do the same. Their mental processes are different—courts in Japan—no justice—business men and contracts—will lose money—judge says unfair."[64] He almost replicates the

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[62] See The Wanderer, "`Marking Time in Tokio.'"

[63] See Griscom, *Diplomatically Speaking,* 246.

[64] London, "Jap-Russ War Notes," USU. London spells out his understanding of the "caste" system in an interview he gave once he returned from Korea and Japan: "The Japanese does not in the least understand the correspondent or the mental processes of a correspondent, which are a white man's mental processes. The Japanese is of a military

analogy he made in *The People of the Abyss:* the poor of the East End are as isolated and unknowing of modern life as the Inuit, and there too we saw London's class anxieties at work. He did not want to be a savage, and in Japan and Korea he did not think of himself as a member of the lowest class. London's antagonism toward the Japanese is couched in racial terms, but it is as if he is borrowing the rhetoric of racism to express his class anger. For he knew, and he knew it right away, that two fundamental differences existed between himself and the Japanese army and its leaders and between himself and Japanese politicians. One was racial, and he had tried in the nineties to work out these differences in biosociological terms in his writings in the *Aegis.* The other was new to him, and it was based in a class difference of the Japanese's construction. When he was arrested for using his camera, the police asked him his "rank," "by rank was meant business, profession. `Traveling to Chemulpo,' I said was my business; and when they looked puzzled I meekly added that I was only a correspondent." (28) Obviously he had learned his place in Japanese society shortly after arriving.[65]

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race. His old caste distinctions placed the fighting man at the top; next comes the peasant after that the merchant, and beneath all the scribe. These caste distinctions are practically in force to day. A correspondent from the West is a man who must be informed by printed instructions that he must dress and behave decently" ("Jack London Back," *Nashville Tenn. News,* 6 July 1904, JL Scrapbooks, vol. 4, reel 2, HEH). Note how he quotes from the printed sheet of regulations correspondents were given by the Japanese military.

[65] By 1904, London was thoroughly familiar with Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study in the Evolution of Institutions* (Macmillan: New

In fact, the one moment in which he embraces (almost literally) a Japanese man out of a sense of brotherhood is when a group of Japanese "pressmen" attempt to get his camera back;[66] they too were plumbers, and when their spokesman told London of their

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York, 1899); as Cecelia Tichi points out, he and Cloudesley Johns had read it out loud together; see Tichi, *Jack London,* 000, and Cloudesley Johns, *Who the Hell* Is *Cloudesley Johns? An Autobiography,* HM 42387, 404. Veblen was William English Walling's teacher at the University of Chicago, London introduced Walling to Anna Strunsky by via letter to his brother Willoughby in 1900, and it's very likely that in 1903, when Walling and London met, London learned of Veblen; it's also equally likely that London found Veblen on his own or that Johns introduced him to Veblen. See James Boylan, *Revolutionary Lives: Anna Strunsky and William English Walling* (University of Massachussetts Press: Amherst, 1998), 51, and London, letter to Willoughby Walling, 31 July 1900, AW box 3a. In the first pages of *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, Veblen discusses the class structure of Japan based on occupations: "In such communities the distinction between classes is very rigourously observed; and the feature of most striking economic significance in these class differences is the distinction maintained between the employments proper to the several classes." (1) Given that he discusses "barbarian" or "feudal" communities, Veblen's ranking of the warrior and priest classes as highest and second highest may have informed London's Northland fiction as well.

[66] "Pressmen Sympathize with Mr. London" and "Pressmen Ask for the Selling of the Camera," *Osaka Asahi,* 3 Feb. 1904, 1; trans. Eiji Tsujii, "Jack London Items in the Japanese Press of 1904," *Jack London Newsletter* 8 (May-Aug. 1975): 56. Thanks to Jeanne Campbell Reesman's essay in the *Jack London Journal* 6 (1999): 134-74, for

efforts on his behalf, he says, in his very first dispatch, "I could have thrown my arms about him then and there—not for the camera, but for brotherhood, as he himself expressed it the next moment, because we were brothers in the craft. . . . We parted as brothers part, and without wishing him any ill-luck, I should like to help him out of a hole some day in the United States." It's important to note that the anonymous "pressman,"

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leading me to this article by Tsujii; see also Russ Kingman, *Jack London: A Definitive Chronology,* 48, where he writes, "Feb 3 Japanese reporters try to get Jack's camera back. Finally Lloyd Griscom, American Minister in Tokyo, gets his camera released." Richard O'Connor is probably the first to cite Griscom's story (repeated above), and he gets it wrong; he thinks London contacted Richard Harding Davis in Tokyo who then supposedly contacted Griscom; but, as I noted above, Davis didn't arrive in Japan until March. See Richard O'Connor, *Jack London: A Biography* (Little, Brown and Co.: Boston, 1964), 205-8. Campbell, who also cites the Griscom story, mistakenly writes that "there are conflicting accounts as to exactly how London got his camera back." (143; she repeats this analysis in Reesman, Sara S. Hodson, and Philip Adam, *Jack London Photographer* (Athens, Ga.: University of Geogia Press, 2010), 65) But there is no conflict. As London says at the end of his dispatch, after the Japanese brother leaves, "Just received a dispatch from the United States Minister at Tokio [Griscom]. As an act of courtesy, the Minister of Justice [Baron Komura] will issue orders to-day to restore my camera!" This account thus jibes with the account in the *New York American,* quoted above. The Japanese "pressmen" had appealed to the "Ward Court," that is, the local judge; they didn't have influence in Tokyo. How could they? They were of the lowest caste.

not London, is the one who initiated the talk of brotherhood, though London enthusiastically went along with it. For he bonded with those of the lowest classes, however temporarily, and here was one who wanted to help not just to return his camera but to salve their mutual supposed inherent inferiority.

Still, racism is racism—begged, borrowed, or stolen—and there is no excuse—class anxiety, illness, inexperience, intense sense of isolation and otherness— for London to employ its rhetoric. His scientific, religious, and social explanations all highlight his need to proclaim his difference from every other race. He didn't look for similarities, for those traits shared by all humans that make for true unity. The only similarities among races that he allowed were defined by class, and biology (as he understood it) trumped class. London was never far removed from his boyhood self who threw rocks at Chinese men in Oakland. If a Japanese "pressman" could identify with London, then London welcomed the bond; but if there was disagreement, London blamed the inability of races to think alike, to act in concert. His biological theories were as objectionable as his political theories were praiseworthy. His personal political and racial interactions were too fluid to be categorized definitively. He could take a personal kindness and make it into an expression of the brotherhood of man, or he could take a personal slight and make it the expression of a racial dynamic. He formed his racial and political theories independently of his own personal experience.[67]

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[67] My emphasis on teasing out the differences between the generalities and particularities of London theories and behavior comes from a debate within Jack London studies between Joan London and Reesman. In Joan London's biography, she writes, a propos the 1904 events and writings, "With an imperfect understanding of that which is usually

called the dialectic, specific prejudices dissolve so deceptively in an abstraction! Essentially and intellectually, Jack believed in the solidarity of the entire international working class against its common enemy, capitalism. Visualizing the revolutionary struggle, he saw workers of all races as comrades and brothers. But in a specific situation, when for instance, the hated `little brown man' was involved, the abstraction vanished and the prejudice returned, tempered, and sometimes camouflaged entirely by subtle rationalization." (285) Quoting this passage (though, fatally, without the first sentence about the dialectic), Reesman writes, Joan London "gets the pattern backward. It is in the specific situation that London is least racist; like socialism, race for him had its personal and its abstract formations, and he is better in the particulars than in the theories." (Reesman, *Jack London's Racial Lives,* 7). Reesman would undoubtedly agree that his general theory about white Anglo-Saxons being rapacious is "better," so it is hard to see how she arrives at this position contrary to Joan London. Also, unlike Joan's work, we find in Reesman's analysis an attempt to minimize London's racism—he can be "least racist," as if being a little bit racist is better than being a lot racist—and inaccurate: his general characterization of the Anglo-Sazon appears in his essays and his Klondike fiction. Further, as Joan shows, it is impossible to separate out his socialism and racism, but she is unwilling to condemn his general ideas because he was so right about theorizing revolutionary politics. But certainly she would agree that his general ideas about races were, in fact, racist. There simply is no point in trying to find an area in London's thinking that isn't infused with racism, great or small. True, his racism is not of the KKK or Nazi Party kind. He did not advocate extermination. But at this point he did advocate social hierarchies based on racial makeup. Biology governed all, according to

He incorporates this personal resentment into his conception of what it means to be a war correspondent. In fact, by incorporating so much of what he thinks and how he feels he validates the *Examiner*'s confluence of war news and news of the war correspondent, and this confluence transforms the correspondent into a modern-day personality, famous for being famous. This confusion of object and subject does not happen simply because there is so little to report, and it occurs for two different reasons. The paper is motivated commercially. Personalities sell. London's motivation is different. From the very beginning, London writes himself into his reports, as if he is trying to explain to himself what it is he is doing. Again, partly this is the voice of his inexperience, but it is also an expression of his authorial office. One of the most fascinating moments in his reports is his attempt to explain to the Moji police why he took the photographs he took. Instead of simply saying, "I took them because a war correspondent has to find details of everyday life to help explain what the war means to the common people," or, as logical, "I took them because I had suspended my role as a correspondent in favor of being a simple tourist and wanted photographic reminders of my time in Japan," he offers the enigmatic explanation "because I wanted to. . . . For my

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London, and only a change in his understanding of the biological makeup of the races would get him to change his mind about the sociopolitical relations among races—that is, until he got home and was excoriated by fellow socialists for his racism. Then, following the train of thought begun in the Edgar Sonne case, he began to give more weight to environmental causes and less to biology.

pleasure." (29).[68] Then he turns, theatrically, to us, and here he converts his resentment into something larger, personal but also philosophical:

> Pause a moment, gentler reader, and consider. What answer could you give to such a question concerning any act you have ever performed? Why do you do anything? Because you want to; because it is your pleasure. An answer to the question, `Why do you perform an act for your pleasure?' would constitute an epitome of psychology. Such an answer would go down to the roots of being, for it involves impulse, volition, pain, pleasure, sensation, gray matter, nerve fibers, free will and determinism, and all the vast fields of speculation wherein man had floundered since the day he dropped down out of the trees and began to seek out the meaning of things.

Hoping that his interlocutors would meet Herbert Spencer, London's favorite author (up to this point) on psychology, in the afterlife who then would explain why London took the photographs, London can only shrug his shoulders and repeat, "because the act of taking them would make me happy." He is not evading or humoring the police (at least, not simply). He really is concerned about the foundational reasons that drive humans to pleasure, and being a hobo-author is only an insufficient description. The real reason is "to seek out the meaning of things." This is what humans do, and this is what he was doing in taking photographs. Further, in describing his photographic subjects to the police, London says that he described them so many times that "I have dreamed about

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[68] Here we may recall his insistence on the bedrock formulation for human psychology, "I LIKE." To like something, in London's worldview, is to express a biological imperative. One cannot help but like what one likes.

them ever since, and I know I shall dream about them until I die." (29). Linking dream states to photography and then, in the next paragraph, to the very beginnings of mankind ("the day he dropped down out of the trees") is a constant intellectual construct in London's thought and shaped his ideas about authorship.

The other war correspondents (that is, those who made it to Korea; we have to exempt men like John Fox and Richard Harding Davis who made no attempt to do so) had none of these concerns and in fact worked assiduously to keep themselves out of their reporting. This is a marker of their professionalism, something London felt unencumbered by because he did not see himself as a war correspondent. A number of them subsequently wrote memoirs of their time during the war because their experiences, as were London's, were too interesting to be unwritten. Thanks to Frederick Palmer, David Fraser, Robert Dunn, and others, we get a view of London at work on the (Peking) road. There were several contingents of correspondents. Dunn and F. A. McKenzie were the first group to be in Korea because Lloyd Griscom, the senior American diplomat in Japan, chose them (and others) to be in the first group to go to Korea; they arrived first, before London, because they were the first to figure out the fastest way to get there. Palmer, who best understands what the Japanese military thought of foreign correspondents,[69] quotes "a secretary of legation in Tokyo": "`The Japanese were

[69] "Nearly a hundred European and Americans, used to entirely different food and conditions of life from the natives, turned a hotel into a barracks, and with persistent address asked for privileges from the Foreign Office. In time such a force, each representing a competitive property, can wear even the Japanese smile of politeness down to a studied grimace. We had and have the conviction that the army would preferably

have had neither correspondents nor attaches in the field. the lives, the millions of dollars, the national aims at stake were not ours; we came only by courtesy as foreigners. A correspondent kills no Russians; he may, if indiscreet, give information to the enemy." (27) One can't help but think that Palmer's commonsensical understanding of the Japanese position contributed to his ability to proceed with the army all the way to Liaoyang whereas London left too early. We can hardly call his early departure unprofessional. After all, he did not consider himself a professional journalist, and he had certainly by the time fulfilled his contract with Hearst. Chalk it up to inexperience and impatience, a personal defect.

He would have stayed longer if he had had the background in war news reporting that people like Palmer, Hare, William Maxwell, and David Fraser had. Maxwell, special correspondent for *The Standard* covered the war till its end, "the only observer, European, American or Japanese, present . . . at the last assaults and surrender of Port Arthur" (William Maxwell, *From the Yalu to Port Arthur: A Personal Record* (Hutchinson and Co.: London, 1906), v). See also David Fraser, *A Modern Campaign or War and Wireless Telegraphy in the Far East* (Methuen & Co.: London, 1905), 87-88. Fraser worked for *The Times.* In a chapter entitled "Kuroki's Strategy," he writes, "The army that crossed the Yalu with so much dash, rudely disturbing Russian notions of Japanese military capacity, had rested at Fengwanching for six long weeks. To impatient Europeans attached to this force there may have been a suggestion of inglorious ease about these weeks, for it is not altogether obvious that a splendidly organized army, perfectly equipped for the field, can be doing yeoman service by sitting still in front of the enemy whose confounding is its *raison d'etre.* Yet it may be fairly claimed for

absolutely prepared for this war and all possible contingencies save one. . . . They overlooked the coming of a small army of correspondents representing the public opinion of two great friendly nations [Britain and the US]."[70] In his interview with Field Marshall Marquis Yamagata on the day of the declaration of war, Palmer asked how the military kept its secrets so well. Yamagata demurred, saying that even Japanese newspapers were

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General Kuroki's army that its very passivity did more to complicate the situation for the Russians than an advance would have done." (174). Is this a mark of inexperience? Merely impatience, a personal characteristic? Or is it simply unprofessional? See also David Fraser, *A Modern Campaign or War and Wireless Telegraphy in the Far East* (Methuen & Co.: London, 1905), 87-88 for his story of running into JL on the way to the Yalu and JL entertaining Koreans watching them eat by popping his choppers in and out of his mouth. Fraser worked for *The Times.* In a chapter entitled "Kuroki's Strategy," he writes, "The army that crossed the Yalu with so much dash, rudely disturbing Russian notions of Japanese military capacity, had rested at Fengwanching for six long weeks. To impatient Europeans attached to this force there may have been a suggestion of inglorious ease about these weeks, for it is not altogether obvious that a splendidly organized army, perfectly equipped for the field, can be doing yeoman service by sitting still in front of the enemy whose confounding is its *raison d'etre.* Yet it may be fairly claimed for General Kuroki's army that its very passivity did more to complicate the situation for the Russians than an advance would have done." (174). This excellence in reporting exceeded London's conception of his authorial role in the war zone.

[70] Palmer, *With Kuroki in Manchuria,* 27.

"not yet enough advanced to be discreet."[71] Because London spent so much time with Palmer, even to the point of quoting him in one of his notebooks about how one could report war news accurately without being censored, he knew why the Japanese army imposed severe restrictions. London's anger (fueled by compatriots like Dunn who also should have known better) at the restrictions is simply the resentment of a fiercely competitive individual who lost.[72] The Japanese employed the tactics of stalling and restraint in order to keep their military affairs secret; it had nothing to with supposed

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[71] Frederick Palmer, *With Kuroki in Manchuria,* 15.

[72] In an interview back in the States, Dunn, in response to a question about how he had been treated by the Japanese, said: "We were treated almost as badly as we could be treated. The Russians are white people, the Japs are not. The Russians tell you what you can and cannot do, and they are willing to allow you to send out the news so long as it does not injure their cause. The Japs hold out hope, detain you and rob you. They tell you that you may go on to-morrow, but to-morrow never comes. In the meantime they sell you equipment at outrageous prices. After having lied to you for weeks and months, their officers will laugh good-humoredly, pat you on the back and say you will get your credentials next week. They hate the foreigners, but they put up with them because they have to do it" Very little separates Dunn's attitudes from London's. ("Little Respect for Wily Japs," *Rochester (NY) Democrat and Chronicle,* July 1904, Jack London Scrapbooks, vol. 5 reel 3, HEH).

differences between Eastern and Western ways of thinking, though London felt no restriciton to explain his "loss" in racist terms.[73]

When we read London's dispatches in their chronological order, we are struck by the absence of racism early on. In fact, when he is in Chemulpo, he hires Dunn's interpreter, who had quit because Dunn called him "boy." London treated him, at least initially, with respect, calling him "Mr. Yamada." (36-37).[74] However, in his fourth

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[73] A reporter for an Oakland was kind to London when he discussed various reactions to the Japanese strictures placed on correspondents; see "Another View of the Japanese," *Oakland Tribune,* 6 Dec. 1904, Jack London Scrapbooks, vol. 5, reel 3. Richard H. Barry, the *Oakland Chronicle* reporter is quoted saying the Japanese treated him very well and that after a while he was given access to the front and able to write and photograph everything except strict military secrets. The article's unnamed author says that London and Davis "left Japan imbued with the impression that the Japanese have a secret dislike and contempt for all white men. Perhaps this adverse opinion is due to temperament. At any rate, it is not the one held by Mr. Barry, who has had the advantage of a longer and wider acquaintance with the Japanese than that enjoyed—or born—by Messrs. London and Davis. Mr. Barry wore no literary honors on his sleeve, and seems to have recognized that military exigency cannot be subordinated to a desire to be obliging. Perhaps he did not assume that the Japanese were his social and mental inferiors, and by exhibiting a feeling of frank companionship, failed to create an atmosphere of antagonism."

[74] "I am afraid Yamada is a bad egg," McKenzie wrote to London while they were in and around Chemulpo. "He was arrested and taken to Pingyang the other day, he says for betraying military secrets to you. He has also, I hear, been getting drunk and assaulting

report, his racist rhetoric bursts forth and continues till the end. He issues generalizations about Koreans, Japanese, and all "Asiatics." "For the Korean is nothing if not a coward, and his fear of bodily hurt is about equal to his inaction." "The Asiatic is heartless. The suffering of dumb brutes means nothing to him. . . . The Japanese may be the Britisher of the Orient, but he is still Asiatic. The suffering of beasts does not touch him." (44, 46-47). In an encounter with a wronged Korean, he pronounces, "in his short life he had learned, what all Asiatics learn, that it is a characteristic belonging peculiarly to the white man, and that from the white man only is it obtainable." (85). (We recall the brief notebook jotting he made, "courts in Japan—no justice" quoted earlier.) When the Japanese conduct a frontal assault on the Russian lines at the Yalu River and suffer heavy losses, he asks why and answers, "But the Japanese are Asiatics, and the Asiatic does not value life as we do," even though he then offers an alternative, which other war correspondents believed to be the case: "perhaps it was to settle this doubt and to gain at the outset land-prestige equal to its sea-prestige that prompted Japan to make a frontal attack." (104). But London refuses to believe it. He even stoops to using the epithet "`little brown man'" to describe the Japanese (49). And then there is his concluding interview, back home at last, in which he characterizes the Japanese as "a precocious child" and asserts that "the Japanese does not in the least understand the correspondent or

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people. I found that he was in debt here, twenty nickels for food, and twenty two silver dollars, which he borrowed. I paid it back. Did I do right? He owed the money to Mr Won" (F. A. McKenzie, letter to London, 12 Apr. 1904, JL 14361). A year later he told London that "I have come round to your views about the danger of a Japanese triumph to the rest of the world" (McKenzie, letter to London, 1 June 1905, JL 14362).

the mental processes of a correspondent, which are a white man's mental processes. . . . The Japanese cannot understand straight talk, white man's talk."[75] (125) London simply will not allow the Japanese the privilege of exercising delaying tactics to preserve the secrecy of their military movements. Palmer probably talked to London until he was blue in the face, to no avail.

By mid May, encamped in Feng-Wang-Cheng north of the Yalu River, he is ready to write an essay of generalizations, uninhibited by any hint of race prejudice. Entitled (of course) "The Yellow Peril," the essay nonetheless carries forward all that he had learned from his time in the Klondike observing ruthless whites decimating Native Americans and their culture through greed and corruption, and it replays themes from his earlier essay "The Salt of the Earth," especially with its concerns with racial superiority and warfare.[76] For the most part the essay is about the differences among the Koreans (still cowardly and inefficient), the Chinese (industrious, open to the new ideas of "the machine age" [345]), and the Japanese ("a fighting race" [345]). These are delineated to

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[75] Although Asians cannot understand "white man's talk," London grants an excellence to Korean poetry: "These [poems] are sweet, are they not?" he writes to Charmian. "They are the only sweet things I have seen among the Koreans." (London, letter to Kittredge, 12 Mar. 1904, *Letters,* 1:419 n. 2).

[76] See volume one of the current study, pages 263-65. What I am calling two-mindedness is evident in "The Salt of the Earth." On the one hand, he deplores racial injustices perpetrated against African-Americans; on the other hand, the Anglo-Saxon oppression of them indicates only the "scientific" "truth" of evolution. Again, biology trumps politics, "the white light of science" trumps ethics.

show who the West has to fear most, and the result is the combination of Japanese managers and Chinese workers: "The Chinese has been called the type of permanence, and well he has merited it, dozing as he has through the ages. And as truly was the Japanese the type of permanence up to a generation ago, when he suddenly awoke and startled the world with a rejuvenescence the like of which the world had never seen before. The ideas of the West were the leaven which quickened the Japanese; and the ideas of the West, transmitted by the Japanese mind into ideas Japanese, may well make the leaven powerful enough to quicken the Chinese."[77] Later we will see how this idea concerning the relationship between the Japanese and Chinese gets fictionalized in "The Unparalleled Invasion."

This is the true "peril" that the West faces. But the peril is couched in terms of "race adventure," and according to London races wax and wane. Now the Anglo-Saxon reigns supreme, but, knowing that its tenure will end, London asks who then will take its place as the dominant race of the world (for it's always a competition for land and resources, and warfare is eternal)?[78] "Why may not the yellow and the brown start out on an adventure as tremendous as our own and more strikingly unique?" (347). Even though the Japanese can imitate and borrow Western science and technology, they are "imitating

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[77] London, "The Yellow Peril," *San Francisco Examiner,* 25 Sept. 1904, p. 45. This passage is elided and mangled in *Jack London Reports,* 347.

[78] "In another collection of my essays, *Revolution,* you would have found an article entitled `The Yellow Peril.' I go no further than this data, which covers my entire writing experience, to show you that I have never believed that war would pass away entirely from the earth" (London, letter to J. Baxter, 28 Oct. 1915, *Letters,* 3:1510).

us only in things material. Things spiritual cannot be imitated." The West, that is, the Anglo-Saxon, may be a violent breed but "back of our own great race adventure, back of our robberies by sea and land, our lusts and violences and all the evil things we have done, there is a certain integrity, a sternness of conscience, a melancholy responsibility of life, a sympathy and comradeship and warm human feel, which is ours, indubitably ours, and which we cannot teach to the Oriental." (348) A better description of the Malemute Kid could not be found. The Anglo-Saxon may have "strayed often and far from righteousness. . . . the colossal fact of our history is that we have made the religion of Jesus Christ our religion. No matter how dark in error and deed, ours has been a history of spritiual struggle and endeavor. We are preeminently a religious race, which is another way of saying that we are a right-seeking race." (348-49). Here then we have the London of the Klondike.

We are prepared for the next thought, which should be something like this: the Japanese, or "Asiatic," is not a religious race, is not "right-seeking," and has no soul or heart; just remember how they treat animals. But if we thought that London was interested in racial binaries, we would be mistaken. "Religion, as a battle for the right in our sense of right, as a yearning and a strife for spiritual good and purity, is unknown to the Japanese. Measured by what religion means to us, the Japanese is a race without religion. Yet it has a religion, and who shall say that it is not as great a religion as ours, not as efficacious?" He then quotes Inazo Nitobe: "To us the country is more than land and soil from which to mine gold or reap grain—it is the sacred abode of the gods, the spirits of our forefathers. . . . To us the Emperor is . . . the bodily representative of heaven on earth, blending in his person its power and its mercy." This is Shintoism as

explained to the West by a Christianized Japanese who became a Quaker, a professor of agronomy, and a California resident while writing *Bushido, the Soul of Japan* (1901), an immensely popular book.[79] Further, according to Nitobe, "the tenets of Shintoism cover the two presdominating features of the emotional life of our race—Patriotism and Loyalty."[80] Here is a way for London to understand in a new and positive way what he had previously regarded as Japanese fanaticism and disregard for life. Nitobe's book may not have been the best book on Japanese thought and culture for London to read, but it managed to temper his race prejudice. For "The Yellow Peril" concludes, not with racist invective and a call to arms to prevent what he sees as the next race to rule the world (London was very susceptible to comic-book drama or, perhaps better, apocalyptic thinking), but rather a balanced accounting of his own racially limited way of thinking: "No great race adventure [and here he means the "Asiatic"] can go far nor endure long which has no deeper foundation than material success, no higher prompting than conquest for conquest's sake and mere race glorification. To go far and to endure, it must have behind it an ethical impulse, a sincerely conceived righteousness." So, we the "gentler reader" might think that London is arguing that the "Asiatic" will fail because of his or her own limitations and thus the Anglo-Saxon has no reason to worry. But, again, we are surprised by London's objectivity. "But it must be taken into consideration that the above postulate is itself a product of Western race-egotism, urged by our belief in our own righteousness and fostered by a faith in ourselves which may be as erroneous as are

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[79] See Inazo Nitobe, *Bushido, the Soul of Japan: An Exposition of Japanese Thought* (Tokyo: Shokwabo, 1899).

[80] Ibid., 10. This sentence comes immediately after the sentences quoted by London.

most fond race fancies."[81] (350). The fact, says London, is that we anticipate the decline of the white race, but we don't know how the conflict between White and Yellow and Brown will develop, though we will know in the twentieth century.

So, London came home from the East with his racism and race pride intact though tempered by his two-mindedness. Biology always trumps politics, and he was no further from a socialist dream of the brotherhood of man than he was in July 1904. Joan London has him yelling in a political meeting held in the fall, "What the devil! I am first of all a white man and only then a Socialist!"[82] Did he mean to say that the Koreans he reveals so touchingly (by accident?) in his photographs and the Japanese correspondents he called brother were inferior to the white man? Was his servant, Manyoungi, whom he brought back to the US a threat to the West? Were the differences between races so insurmountable that no political action could be taken to address worldwide capitalism? Obviously not. In his assessment of the 1904 election, he reverses his racist outburst in that political meeting his daughter cites and declares that socialists in Japan are brothers to socialists in Russia who are brothers to those in America.[83] We do not know the

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[81] Although London read Foster's *American Diplomacy in the Orient,* marking passages that "proved" China's "hatred of foreigners" and the "menace" that entitled to the West (435), Foster believed that the Christianization of the East—both China and Japan—would alleviate the "threat." London note next for page 435 is "The Yellow Peril," but in no way would Foster agree with London's conclusion in "The Yellow Peril" that the West as well as the East suffer from "race-egotism."

[82] Joan London, *Jack London and His Times,* 284.

[83] London, "Great Socialist Vote Explained."

context of his outburst about being a white man first (not that it would excuse it), but the context for his political analysis is clear: socialism could not win at the polling place (not that London believed in the long-term efficacy of electoral politics) unless socialists presented a united worldwide front. London's capacity to hold two contradictory thoughts at the same time—all Asians are heartless, Asians I know have heart; Asians do not think the way white people do, all Asians and whites belong to the brotherhood of man—gets him into trouble with us who have learned that racial essentialization can lead to genocide. But London, who did not have a genocidal bone in his body, felt no contradiction; he let one thought process end before it could call into question the other. Context was all. Socialist politics became utopian—a dreaded word for him—when confronted with the realities of race and biology. It's not that biology invalidated politics; one could still fight for the cause, and London never gave up trying. But biology limited what one could achieve politically, and the inequality of the races meant that the brotherhood of man was that much more difficult to achieve. To identify with the poor of all countries was to act as if they were equal in all respects. London always worked from the premise that all men and women are created unequally, and biology limited the ways in which that inequality could be addressed.

If London as an Anglo-Saxon was biologically determined to both love and detest his own race, then so too could an "Asiatic" hold contradictory thoughts simultaneously. In March, London wrote about a confrontation he had with a *yang-ban,* a nobleman and magistrate. London wanted to convince him to stop robbing the people of Sunan. As the conversation developed, London shifts our attention to Manyoungi, who is watching the proceedings: "In his head was the ferment of a new idea, the Western idea of the rights of

man. In his head were mutiny and revolt. In his head, though dimly perhaps, were the ideas of Revolutionary France. In his head were hatred for the *yang-ban* class and defiance. But in the soul of him was the humility of generations, a thing not to be downed in a day by any idea of the head." (87). In short, breeding bests class struggle. "I do verily believe," concludes London, about himself as well as about Manyoungi, "that his humble demeanor was as much reflex action as that of the new-born fly-catcher bursting its head through the shell and snapping its beak at the first passing insect." (87) Both he and Manyoungi—and Manyoungi stands in for all "Asiatics"—were at last united in their likeness to the reflex actions of other animals. In this limited and ultimately unsatisfactory way, biology and politics could be united as well. The promise of "Negore, the Coward," which Charmian detected, would have to wait to be fully realized. London's experiences in Korea did little to change his worldview.

As an ironic coda, in 1907 London, as well as other correspondents, received a medal from the Japanese government for their excellence in covering the war. No record of London's reaction exists, though he did carry it with him for part of the *Snark* voyage.[84] He may have thought it would help smooth out any troubles he might encounter with the Japanese, a kind of talisman that showed how correspondents might not be such an inferior class after all.

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[84] See Alvig A. Adee, letter to London, 28 June 1907, and "Town Talk: Local Newspaper Men Decorated," JL scrapbooks, vol. 8. Adee was acting Secretary of State. The latter item was undated and its place of publication cut off. It begins with a bit of irony: "The Emperor of Japan has just decorated several American newspaper correspondents who achieved more or less fame and big expense bills during the late war."

Class Warfare

After London returned home from Japan, he did not write a single word for publication for two and a half months. He then took ten days to write *The Game* in September. After that he wrote a newspaper account of the November election, a short story that takes place in Korea ("A Nose for the King"), the introduction to *War of the Classes,* and a play based on his short story "The Scorn of Women." The short story is the only interruption is this sustained period of theatricality. Sport and politics and the aftereffects of the war reporting all reinforced London's desire to make his theatrical mode literal and try to write a play. After he completed *The Game*, his principal authorial activity for the rest of the fall and well into the winter of 1904-1905 was composing and revising his play, arranging for actors, and considering various plans for production.

Spoiler alert: As we will see in chapter 17, after he failed to have *The Scorn of Women* dramatized, London wrote another play—*A Wicked Woman*—in the summer of 1906. His literal theatrical writing mode did not dry up after 1905. It is important to study these two obscure plays, among other reasons, because they represent the beginning of a long vein of playwriting that continues into the next decade with his support for those who wanted to turn his stories into movies. This support reached an apotheosis when he collaborated with Charles Goddard and George Sterling to write a version of Goddard's *Hearts of Three.* It was the final, full-length work that London completed before his death. He called it his "moving-picture novel," an attempt to categorize a new blend of genres; instead of first writing a short story and then rewriting it for the stage, as he did

with *Scorn of Women* and *A Wicked Woman,* he started from a mix of generic forms—novel plus movie script—to yield an experimental artform.

But all that is in the future (and in volume 3 of the present work). As in the past, his theatrical mode of writing insulated him from the life-and-death demands of the absorptive mode, expanded his concept of himself as an author (can a short story writer be a novelist be a newspaper writer be a playwright?), and, now, protected himself from the turmoil of being a public figure. Uncomfortable with being an actor on the public stage, he wanted to work behind the curtain.

There was another consideration involved in postponing a major absorptive novel. Brett felt, as he had in December 1902, he was releasing too much material too quickly. London did not share that concern as long as he was alternating absorptive and theatrical writing. But publishing socialist essays at this point in London's career raised a related concern for Brett. When London asked Brett back in August 1903 if he were interested in publishing what eventually became *War of the Classes,* Brett replied that he was, but that he had a caveat. We should talk in person, he said, and they did in the first week of January 1904, just before London left on the *S. S. Siberia*, so we do not know all of what they discussed.[85] But Brett gives us an idea of the major topic of discussion in his letter to

[85] We do know they discussed, besides *War of the Classes,* a new novel that Brett hoped London would undertake. Two weeks after Brett and London met, he wrote to London in Korea, "I trust that you may have decided by this time to write that Indian race story of which I spoke to you. I have thought it over often since we talked of the matter and am more than ever persuaded that it is a possible book and involves the chance of a considerable success. It has occurred to me that your hero might have some such visions

London in 1903: “You have achieved a very considerable success with the publication of your "Call of the Wild" and you are to publish, beginning in the January *Century,* a new novel, which will be free for book publication towards the end of 1904 [*The Sea-Wolf*], and your name will be very considerably before the public in connection with these two books for some time to come, and the whole matter is of such great importance from every point of view that” Brett wanted to meet in person and spell out all the possible

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of the past as would enable him to dream of the crossing of the Behring Straits by the northern Chinese tribes, from which, it seems to me, the preponderance of evidence derives the origin of the American Indian.” (Brett, letter to London, 23 Jan. 1904, JL 3008). London replied, “Yes, I have thought often, of that Indian race-story, but it’s a stubborn thing, and the get-at-ableness of it has so far eluded me. It’s a big thing—if it can be done, and if I can do it.” (London, letter to Brett, 4 June 1904, *Letters,* 1:431). London never wrote this novel, but he did take notes on it, making it sound very much like the stories in *Children of the Frost:* “Point of view:- At the time of the coming of the first settle[r]s; how the Indian lived; how he hunted and what; how he lived and married (minor love interest); the eruption of the white settlers and how he was viewed and the Indian sentiments and feelings of him and whether the Indian at that time foresaw the extinction of his racel the love story between the white settler and the Indian girl (major love interest). The whole to be absolutely from the Indian standpoint except that possibly it may need to be spiritualized, not to say sentimentalized” (London, “Brett’s Idea for a Novel: [about Indians],” JL 490.) This note is cut from a full page of paper, suggesting there were more notes to the novel. The hints provided by Brett suggest that *Before Adam* grew out of some of these ideas that London had.

ramifications, both short-term and long-term. The immediate matter was the timing of the publication of his socialist essays. The larger matter was two-fold and interconnected: How to maintain his image of a successful novelist and how to maintain the momentum of his sales. That is, Brett's fear—partly fueled by the negative reviews he had received from his readers for the manuscript of *War of the Classes*—began with the premise that London had become famous in 1903 as a novelist, a fiction writer. Brett anticipated that the fame of *The Call of the Wild* would help drive sales of his next novel, and it did. So, Brett did not want to dilute the brand, to put it in twenty-first-century terms. A collection of socialist essays, no matter how good, would take attention away from Jack London, Novelist. It might even damage his sales, for some buyers would not want to read anything written by a revolutionary. Obviously, Brett was ignoring the political content of these two novels in order to make his argument.

London, however, objected to an indefinite publication date for *War of the Classes*. He felt that because many of the essays were on contemporary newspaper articles and current sociological data they would soon be outdated. From Korea, stewing in Seoul after being sent back from Sunan and the front by the Japanese authorities, he wrote to Brett complaining that his publisher, when they had met in January had probably read only the first essay, that is, "The Salt of the Earth." "If this is so, would you mind glancing at some of the later-written essays, `The Scab,' `The Class Struggle,' `The Tramp,' etc., with the object of a change of conclusion regarding the expediency of not issuing as a book for an indefinitely long time to come. The later-written essays, to me, seem to have a timely importance. I'll abide by what you say, but just give a second

thought to them."[86] But Brett had already made up his mind and said so in a response to London's April letter that London didn't get until he returned to the US: "I read the whole of the essays in `The Salt of the Earth' and enjoyed them a good deal personally, but my opinion as given to you in regard to their publication was deliberate and intentional and I should be sorry if you decide to put them out at this time. Of course we will do in the matter just as you wish but it seems to me that it would be a mistake to publish, especially in view of the early appearance of `The Sea Wolf' in book form, which cannot fail, I think, to be very successful indeed."[87] London backed off, allowing for Brett's experience in publishing to dictate matters, but only temporarily. In one of his most fascinating characterizations of his own authorial production, he wrote to Brett in November 1904, both wondering what had happened to the plans for publishing *War of the Classes* and prodding Brett to get the book out amongst the public: "Not to utterly forget the *Salt of the Earth,*" wrote London, less than a week after the stunning success of Eugene Debs's third party candidacy, "why couldn't that book be brought out this summer, after *Sea Wolf* has run its run?—That is, if it can be brought out without loss to you. You know I have a sneaking liking for it [hah! more than "sneaking," one should say], and I have waited pretty patiently while my favorite child was set aside for my mongrel fiction children."[88] We might want London to mean by "mongrel" something like a work of art that combines elements of fiction and nonfiction. But, no, London

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[86] London, letter to Brett, 3 Apr. 1904, *Letters,* 1:422.

[87] Brett, letter to London, 5 May 1904, JL 3009.

[88] London, letter to Brett, 17 Nov. 1904, *Letters,* 1:452.

means it as an epithet. That he could call *The Sea-Wolf* "mongrel" shows how deep he was in his theatrical mode and how committed he was to socialism.

Brett caved, as we all know he would, but not without a final reminder, couched in his usual antiseptic publisher's idiom, of the possible negative impact of publishing socialist essays. You must make it up-to-date, he said, "because its publication will have a considerable effect on the future popularity of your other work. I myself read the `Salt of the Earth' with a great deal of interest and pleasure but I conceive that, its appeal being to a somewhat different audience than the usual book audience, that it might act detrimentally on the book audience if we are not careful to make it just as good as it can be." He even warned London that cheap editions of Ghent's *Benevolent Feudalism* and Brooks's *Social Unrest* had failed miserably and had cost the company money, so a cheap edition of *The People of the Abyss* that London had proposed would not be feasible.[89] The result of their meeting and correspondence was, first, the delay of *War of the Classes* until 1905 (but only till the spring), second, London holding back on production, and, third, a nearly anonymous book cover for *War of the Classes*: a dark maroon color (suggesting revolution, but perhaps not a violent one) and a blank front—no title, no name; the spine alone carries the title and London's last name. London thus made concessions to his publisher. At this height of his popularity, Brett told him that "you have the public very much at your feet and can command practically one of the best audiences that this country affords to any novel writer of this day or generation."[90] Brett once again asserts that London has earned a high place in American literature.

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[89] Brett, letter to London, 3 Dec. 1904, JL 3020.

[90] Brett, letter to London, 9 Nov. 1904, JL 3018.

Nonetheless, London saw no reason not to risk that popularity and even that high place in the American canon, if it meant publishing essays he believed in. Money was a concern, but, again, it was not a driving force, a constituative component of his authorial identity. As if an afterthought, he responded to Brett's assessment of his popularity by only noting that "as my earning capacity increases, my output diminishes. With all the top-notch magazines offering me from 8 to 10 cents per word, I am writing nothing for them."[91] Here is yet another clear signal of an artist following the demands of his interior life.

War of the Classes went through a number of title changes, from *Salt of the Earth* to *The Struggle of the Classes* to its final appellation, and two changes to its initial table of contents. At first, London wanted to include "The Salt of the Earth," his 1901 essay about war and race. But once Brett had accepted the volume for publication and determined to have it come out in spring 1905, London pulled the lead essay—it really didn't have anything to do with class warfare and he may have felt, especially after writing "The Yellow Peril," that it wasn't as up-to-date as the others—and retitled the collection after what he thought was its strongest essay, "The Class Struggle," though he told Brett "if you, or any of your people, should hit upon a better title, I should be glad for the opportunity to consider it."[92] Brett himself decided he liked the title *The Class*

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[91] London, letter to Brett, 17 Nov. 1904, *Letters,* 1:452.

[92] London, letter to Brett, 6 Jan. 1905, *Letters,* 1:463. Later, in June, before the British publication of the volume, London told Brett that Heinemann insisted that he make changes in the text to retain "the fair name and fame of Rockefeller or Collis P. Huntington, whose misdeeds are pretty historically correct by this time." But he was adamant about how the text should appear in America: "But I do not want to see thse

Struggle best of all, but somebody somewhere decided to make it parallel with nearly all of London's titles and used the genitive construction *War of the Classes*.[93] When London submitted his preface, written 12 January 1905, he also submitted a new table of contents, which showed he had decided to pull "What Communities Lose by the Competitive System" as well; it too had only been tangentially related to the major theme of the class struggle.[94] By the end of December, in accord with Brett's plans for bringing the book

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alterations appear in any copies of *The War of the Classes* which are to be sold in America. It would be damnable so far as I am concerned—the toning down of my original historically-correct statement." (London, letter to Brett, 20 June 1905, *Letters,* 1:493). London placed his foreign publications on the same level as magazine publication, merely outlets for making money. American book publication was timeless and usually reflected his true authorial intentions.

[93] See Brett, letter to London, 8 Feb. 1905, JL 3027. Between 8 February and 3 March, someone—apparently neither Brett nor London—decided on the final title change. See Brett, letter to London, 3 Mar. 1904, JL 3030, the first letter Brett uses the final title.

[94] See London, "The War of the Classes: [preface and table of contents]," JL 1378. See also London's heavily revised version of "What Communities Lose by the Competitive System" at hrc.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/landingpage/collection/p15878coll31#nav_top, the Jack London Collection, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas, Austin. In the previous chapter I mentioned that this revised page proof shows London at work as a conscientious reviser. True, but this time he was revising for book publication and then decided not to include the essay after all in *The War of the Classes.* It is interesting, however, to note the changes London made in the text as he sought to update it. In the

out in the first half of 1905, he was ready to update and revise the essays and to add a preface.[95]

We should complete the analysis of the preface to *War of the Classes* even though we have jumped ahead of the composition of *The Game* and other, shorter works. The preface, the first published work written after "Big Socialist Vote Is Fraught with Meaning" and before a major essay, "Revolution" (which I will turn to in the next chapter), shows how much some of the issues of the previous year still lingered. It begins "When I was a youngster I was looked upon as a weird sort of creature," a kind of monster, but not because he was a leopard or wolf man (he would be signing his letters "Wolf" in a few months), but because he was a socialist. And not because he himself had decided on this characterization but because the press had constructed his own monstrosity for him: "Reporters from local papers interviewed me, and the interviews, when published, were pathological studies of a strange and abnormal specimen of man." The preface does not present the book as a whole, summing up the arguments and justifying each essay's inclusion. London had decided to let the essays speak for themselves. Instead, he told of his experience of having the two major political parties co-

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paragraph about the "natural selection" of farmers and soldiers, he added a few sentences about industrial workers: "This has been true of all workers until very recently, when the rise of the trade unions' gave to skilled labor shorter hours, higher wages, and some small measure of independence; but it is still true of the far larger class of unskilled and unorganized workers." That is, skilled workers will perpetuate themselves because they are now working in safer and more financially secure conditions.

[95] See London, letters to Brett, 8 Dec. 1904 and 22 Dec. 1904, *Letters,* 1:455, 459.

opt his and other revolutionary socialists' ideas. The history of socialism in America up to 1905, according to London, was one of defanging. This process was another characteristic of the class struggle. Socialism, according to the bourgeois, was tolerable when it was "a sweet and beautiful utopian dream." Many of its ideas were regarded as impossible, and those that weren't were "stolen" (like municipal ownership of utilities), and so "the workingmen had been made happy with full dinner-pails." It is a commonplace today to remark on the tameness of turn-of-the-century socialism and how issues like child welfare and the eight-hour work week were considered radical then, but tame now; London knew it and called it what it was: capitalism's effort to save itself by incorporating what it needed to survive from that which threatened its existence. It was all about suppressing class warfare. But, as London notes at the turning point in his preface, echoing his most recent socialist essay ("Big Socialist Vote Is Fraught with Meaning"), the November 1904 election reignited class warfare. Far from being tamed, asserts London, "Socialism is a menace. It is its purpose to wipe out, root and branch, all capitalistic institutions of present-day society. It is distinctly revolutionary, and in scope and depth is vastly more tremendous than any revolution that has ever occurred in the history of the world." The bourgeois regard class warfare as a "terrible and hateful thing," but socialism, reinvigorated, "is a world-wide class struggle between the propertyless workers and the propertied masters of workers." When London describes socialism as "a menace, vague and formless," he echoes his very first essay on socialism ("What Socialism Is") as well as his foundational text for his political philosophy, "The Communist Manifesto." Socialism, like Communism, is a specter that haunts America. London the haunted author knew a thing or two about ghosts, and it was a relief to him to

be able to place the ghost outside himself.[96] This is a fundamental characteristic of all his theatrical writing.

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[96] London, "The War of the Classes: [preface and table of contents]," JL 1378. The most interesting change London made in the manuscript comes in the final, impassioned sentence. In the manuscript, he wrote first: "The capitalist must learn, first and for always, that socialism is based not upon the equality, but upon the inequality, of men. Next he must learn that no new birth into spiritual purity is necessary before socialism become possible. He must learn that socialism deals with what is, not with what ought to be; and that the material with which it deals is the `clay of the common road,' the warm human, fallible and frail, sordid and petty, absurd and contradictory, even grotesque, and yet, withal, shot through with flashes and glimmerings of something finer and god-like, with here and there sweetnesses of service and unselfishness, desires for goodness, capacities for renunciation and sacrifice, the wonder of love, and at times and with conscience, stern and awful, at times blazingly imperious, demanding the right—the right, nothing more nor less than the right." Later, he crossed out "the wonder of love." He believed man was capable of love, but perhaps it struck him as too personal, that is, devoid of political charge. Also, London's acknowledgment of the old canard that socialists with money cannot be socialists shouldn't go by without remark. This is, as he says, a condescending characterization of the moneyed classes: "they told me that my views were biased by my empty pockets, and that some day, when I had gathered to me a few dollars, my views would be wholly different—in short, that my views would be their views." London regarded his wealth as a rebuke to the capitalists in two ways: socialism

The (Writing) Game

In December 1902, when London and Brett had signed their two-year contract, London was intent on giving Brett a collection of Klondike stories, *Tales of the Fish Patrol, The Kempton-Wace Letters, The People of the Abyss, The Flight of the Duchess,* and *The Mercy of the Sea.* Because *The Sea-Wolf* fulfilled the contract in the place of *Mercy,* London owed Brett only one book for the time period 1903-1904. *The Game* became that book, though Brett made it clear that, like *The War of the Classes,* any new novel had to appear in 1905. When London asked Brett in July 1904 for an increase in his monthly advances to $250, he prompted Brett to revisit the current contract with the intention of renewing it for another year. Brett noted that London's books' earnings were short of his advances so far by $2000, so he proposed that he keep Heinemann's payments to London. He also wanted, besides the sixth book called for by the 1902 contract, a volume of short stories or something like it in case *Tales of the Fish Patrol* could not come out because they were still being serialized by *Youth's Companion.* It took very little negotiating, then, for the 1902 contract to be renewed. As Brett wrote, "I am, of course, at all times most anxious to meet your wishes to the fullest possible extent."[97] Fuck yeh! exclaimed London.

In October 1904, Brett began making plans for Macmillan's spring list and asked if London would have a novel for the spring.[98] London replied, "No, I'm pretty sure I'll

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allowed for working class wealth and he used his money in the service of others, not as a means to propagate wealth untethered to labor.

[97] Brett, letter to London, 20 July 1904, JL 3011.

[98] See Brett, letter to London, 4 Oct. 1904, JL 3013.

have no spring book. In the three months since my return, I have written nothing at all, with the sole exception of story enclosed herewith—which I hope may interest you as an attempt to do the ring."[99] At this point he considered *The Game* a rather longish short story.[100] Sometime previous, in 1904, he had jotted down the outline for this story in a date book he kept irregularly: "Prize fight story Young girl (maybe pretty candy-store girl) in love with sailmaker fighter who taking care of mother & younger children & buying home for them, needed the money--$5 to $50 purses---Lovemaking pure & innocent She's going to see the last fight—her marriage—they had bought housekeeping goods that day—peephole arranged from dressing room—opponent big, & black, & beastly, Her own man, fair, beautiful, clean cut face, fair hair---fight all from her point of view—as she sees it the terrible yells of the audience---& when he goes down, count of ten, award fight—Carried into her dressing room, the doctors—`He will never fight again.'"[101] Instead of an African-American fighter, London's protagonist ends up fighting

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[99] London, letter to Brett, 10 Oct. 1904, *Letters,* 1:448.

[100] See London, letter to Mrs. Sydney Armor, 10 Nov. 1904, www.icollector.com/Jack-London_i11898813. Sydney Armor was a member of the Ruskin Club. See also London, "Magazine Sales No. 3: Feb. 1903 to July 1907," JL 934. He entered *The Game* in this short story sales notebook between "Negore the Coward" and "The Nose" ("A Nose for the King"). He received $600 (around $13,000 in today's dollars) from *Metropolitan* (after being rejected by *Century* and *McClures*) and 21 pounds (around $100 or $2600 in today's dollars) from *Tattler* in England, after his agent James Pinker sold it.

[101] London, diary, 1904, JL 594.

a white man. And then there is the matter of the ending. Not only will his protagonist never fight again, but at some point London decided he must die.

Brett was interested; unfortunately, because his initial response is missing its first page we do not know what he said, exactly. In the next few days, however, he wrote again, saying "you will see that I have been thinking a good deal about the story since I read it and have been more and more impressed with its power and vividness." He suggested a way to enlarge it: turn it into a series of stories featuring Joe Fleming the boxer because "I feel sorry that it is too short to be published alone in book form. . . . If it were collected with some others on the same subject I should expect it to attract a good deal of attention, and while perhaps it could not have any very wide sale with the ordinary book public it would still pay for itself and might, outside of the ordinary book public, do very well indeed."[102] London demurred, saying that "I've been thinking it over, your suggestions, and I don't think I'd care to tackle a series of stories on the ring. Besides, it would be impossible to run this same character through the different stories; for he has his beginning and end right here in this one story."[103] Brett immediately replied that, yes, of course, he dies (Jack! Give me a little credit, for God's sake), but the series should not feature him as the hero "because his ending is not only tragic but very mournful under the circumstances, and the public likes, as I think I have told you before, to have its endings cheerful wherever it is possible to do so. [See your own essay "The Terrible and Tragic in Fiction," Jack] Such a character . . . might very readily furnish a string of very good stories as a part of his career, and it might not perhaps be necessary

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[102] Brett, letter to London, 20 Oct. 1904, JL 3015.

[103] London, letter to Brett, 25 Oct. 1904, *Letters,* 1:450.

from the artistic standpoint to kill him off at the end, but to make him retire from the ring."[104] Brett knew London didn't want to enlarge the book this way; from London's point of view, the book began from a point that made his death at the end inevitable. But Brett thought that London, if he just had time to consider the proposition, might decide to delay publication until he had worked out a satisfactory way to extend the story. So Brett once more pushed him to expand the novella, this time abandoning the idea of a series of stories and advocating the addition of 3-4000 words.[105] London had mixed feelings about this new tack: "It's the hardest kind of work to do that adding, but I believe I can do it—simply recast the first portion of it, keeping a grip in accord with the last portion, which cannot be added to."[106] Brett now felt that London could be pushed further, so he made his offer: add 3-4000 words, we'll illustrate it heavily, and then "sell it to the public outside of the ordinary reading public, i.e., the large number of people who are interested in sports of all kind but who do not ordinarily read books at all. If we succeed in getting this audience for the volume it would, I think, interest your public for your other books considerably."[107] London would subsequently argue that the book could appeal to everyone—"it is one of my best efforts. It is the unusual thing. Has novelty and all that. Also, it is all things to all people. Those who stand for prizefighting, will like it. Those who dislike prizefighting, will find it an endictment of prizefighting. Those who know nothing of prizefighting will be curious, etc. etc. Also, it has good healthy sentiment,

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[104] Brett, letter to London, 31 Oct. 1904, JL 3017.

[105] See Brett, letter to London, 3 Dec. 1904, JL 3020.

[106] London, letter to Brett, 8 Dec. 1904, *Letters,* 1:456.

[107] Brett, letter to London, 15 Dec. 1904, JL 3021.

love, etc."[108]—and in acceding to Brett's desire for more words in virtual exchange for signing a royalty contract, he argued that it was "the best short thing I have done. The motif is tremendous, the subject vastly more interesting to the average man and woman than they or you would think, while the novelty of it—well, it's pretty novel for a literary effort, that is all."[109] Brett stayed mum about London's estimations. He was happy enough to have London commit to enlarging it by 1200 words after submitting the manuscript and then, in page proof, by another 1000 words.[110]

And, in the end, Brett won out on serial publication. At first, London wanted McClure to take it on. He would, but only as a small book. "It is all so magnificently real," he told London. It is so real that it is more "faithful" to reality than a cinematic representation, "and you do get wonderful physical effects with your writing!" Here is the

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[108] London, letter to Brett, 6 Jan. 1905, *Letters,* 1:463.

[109] London, letter to Brett, 22 Dec. 1904, *Letters,* 1:458. He didn't immediately comply with the injunction to expand; two months later he told Brett, "I shall set about expanding "Game" to 15000 words immediately" (London, letter to Brett, 24 Feb. 1905, folder 3, box 63, Macmillan Company records, NYPL). A week lat

[110] On 1 March, London wrote, "Here's the `Game.' Originally 13,600 words, I have added 1200 words, making it now 14,800 words. Pretty close to the 15,000 you wanted" (London, letter to Brett, 1 Mar. 1905, folder 3, box 63, Macmillan Company records, NYPL). Brett only had to express minor disappointment, when receiving the manuscript on 8 March, that it was still shorter than he had hoped—about half the length of *The Call of the Wild*—for London to quickly agree to add another 1000 words. See Brett, letter to London, 8 Mar. 1905, JL 3031, and London, letter to Brett, 31 Mar. 1905, *Letters,* 1:474.

cinema of attractions—a topic I will pick up later in chapter 16 when I discuss London's lecture tour—a realism so striking that its power affects the viewer's very body. This is the first time that London's work is compared to the movies, and in the next decade the comparison will become a cliché. McClure's assessment, however, is a continuation of his insistence on photographic realism, on fiction that acts as a human document. So McClure thought the novella "a remarkable piece of work," but, much to London's frustration, McClure said, "I think you know why we cannot publish it in the magazine."[111] It is not too short for a book, but it is too long for the magazine. So McClure pushed yet again for a book, and again London replied with silence.[112]

Metropolitan Magazine felt no compunction. With London's revised manuscript in hand, the editor told Brett he wanted to divide it between two issues after all. Brett thought it a good plan because to run it in one issue would harm book sales. London, however, insisted otherwise: "It would be absolute ruin to it to divide it. You see, it is a thing without plot, and must be read in one sitting."[113] There were limitations in London's mind to a magazine's treatment of his text. Brett, after London pronounced his

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[111] McClure, letter to London, 4 Nov. 1904, JL 14220.

[112] Later McClure would try a different tack. London wanted the British serial rights to "Law of Life," and McClure decided to give them to him only if London would agree to give McClure first look on story manuscripts. Then he decided to add even more pressure and said he would publish "Law of Life" only until he had another story; see McClure, letter to London, 17 Feb. 1905, JL 14223. This is the kind of business practice that London—and Brett—detested.

[113] London, letter to Brett, 17 Dec. 1905, *Letters,* 1:457.

opposition to breaking the serial into two parts, told London that though they were "diametrically opposed" he could nonetheless see how London's position wouldn't hurt his own. "In the long run," Brett wrote, reinforcing London's own plan for combining serial and book publication, "an author is judged almost entirely on his reputation, not by the things which he publishes serially in magazines—which, after all, are read and most of them forgotten a month after they come out—but by his published books, which being in a permanent and easily accessible form, really tell towards his standing in the world of letters and before the public."[114] The publisher knew how to give way in order to ultimately win, and win he did, though only because London decided to lengthen the story.

Brett lost out on a different issue: payments. He initially offered London a lump-sum payment of $1500, but London, citing his dissatisfaction over possible lost royalties for *The Call of the Wild* asked for an agreement based on royalties, which Brett gave him. London's was not an unreasonable complaint, but it didn't take into account the money Macmillan earned as a result and Brett's subsequent willingness not only to publish everything London wrote—they could afford the gamble—but also his general attitude of giving London whatever he wanted, including huge advances and loans. Further, as Brett pointed out, it would have been too costly to bring out *Call,* short as it was, with no illustrations, under a royalty agreement. Illustrating *Call* had doubled its production costs. Brett explained to London that the "quantity price" for a novel that sold for $1.50 (as all London's novels did) was 76 or 77 cents. The publisher had royalty, manufacturing, and marketing costs for each novel (besides salaries and overhead); the manufacturing cost

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[114] Brett, letter to London, 22 Dec. 1904, JL 3022.

for *The Game* was 28 cents per copy. Brett, as Matt Bokovoy has pointed out to me, was being incredibly straightforward and honest with London, a not so common attribute of relationships between publishers and authors. London appreciated the transparency greatly.[115]

Even with London's additions, the text still wasn't book length. Because Macmillan could use the magazine's illustrations as part of the agreement to serialize it, Brett decided he could hire a second illustrator and not increase the production cost too much more.[116] His idea was to use "decorative illustrations to fill out the pages and full page decoration and illustration to make up the bulk. In this way I think I shall be able to make of the story about 180 pages and if you can add a few words, as I suggested, in the proof anywhere it will, of course, aid me materially."[117] The book combines the work of London, Henry Hutt (hired by *Metropolitan*), and T. C. Lawrence (hired by Macmillan). So London went from half-heartedly hoping that Brett would have some interest in it to complying with his publisher's wishes to expand it considerably. Again, it wasn't about the money; it was about seeing it appear on its own in book form.

Neither London's prediction that everyone would be interested in it nor Brett's prediction that sports lovers would buy it proved to be true. At the beginning of 1907, the sales were so dismal that Brett asked London permission to sell off their overstock of four thousand copies at fifteen cents a copy. The binding alone of each copy cost thirteen cents, so Brett was taking a financial hit of some magnitude. "It seemed to me," said

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[115] See Brett, letter to London, 27 Dec. 1904, JL 3024.

[116] See Brett, letter to London, 8 Feb. 1905, JL 3027.

[117] Brett, letter to London, 8 Mar. 1905, JL 3031.

Brett, "that the book had human interest of a very decided kind, and I expected that it would be very widely read by the younger men." But, he admitted, his experiment in publishing had failed: "It appears that the younger man who would be likely to read a book of this kind does not, as a matter of fact, read books at all, but confines his reading to the newspapers and periodicals."[118] London agreed, and Brett dumped *The Game.*

The Game is, among other things, about gaming and its various manifestations. This point may seem obvious, but boxing is not the only game it is about. In fact, the idea of gaming is bohemian by nature; gaming is play, and we recall how London kept boxing gloves in his bohemian bungalow in Piedmont, as well as kites and fencing swords.[119] In

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[118] Brett, letter to London, 16 Jan. 1907, JL 3087. See Brett, letter to London, 31 Jan. 1907, JL 3091.

[119] Of course there are alternative readings of what *boxing* and *game* mean. Boxing gloves adorn the cover of Cecelia Tichi, *Jack London and a Writer's Fight for a Better America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), meaning that they represent London's tenacity for fighting capitalism in the public sphere, a thesis I agree with; for Tichi, it is a short mental and cultural distance to travel from boxing at home with Charmian to writing boxing stories to being "prepared for combat against the unbridled capitalism that he saw as the root cause of the pandemic of human misery and degradation" (43). The boxing gloves are emblematic of the brawling public intellectual Jack London whom Tichi so brilliantly recovers from one hundred years of neglect. I also find truthful resonances in Anna Strunsky's observation: "His was not a vulgar quest for riches. In his book `The Game' he explains the psychology of the prize fighter to whom the ring is symbolic of the play and the purpose of life itself. To become inordinately rich

a 1903 letter to Charmian Kittredge, he linked kites and boxing as attributes of a life lived "placidly and complacently."[120] As an interviewer once said about him in 1905,

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through the efforts of his pen was his way of `playing the game.' It appealed to his sense of humor and his sense of the dramatic to house members of the I.W.W., comrades of the road or Mexican revolutionaries in a palace. The best was none too good for them or for any man. Not only had the abyss not been able to swallow him up; the abyss had risen with him." (Anna Strunsky, "Memories of Jack London," *Greenwich Village Lantern* 1 (Dec. 1960): 8. Not incidentally, this essay appears in a bohemian newspaper, which also featured articles entitled "Sex Mores in the Village," "24 Hours after You're Broke," and "King of the London Bohemians." After death, London had moved not only into the history of American socialism and American letters but also into the history of American bohemianism.

[120] This is another typically complicated statement from London. He loved kite flying and boxing, but he could denigrate them as illusions to keep oneself happy in the face of the knowledge of deeper, more meaningful realities. The complete passage is as follows: "I have experienced the greater frankness," he told Charmian, "with a man or two, and a woman or two, and the occasions have been great joy-givers, as they have also been great sorrow-givers. I do not wish they had never happened, but I recoil unconsciously from their happening again. It is so much easier to live placidly and complacently. Of course, to live placidly and complacently is not to live at all, but still between prize fights and kites and one thing and another I manage to fool my inner self pretty well. Poor inner self. I wonder if it will atrophy, dry up some day and blow away." (quoted in Sinclair, 83; this is from a portion of a letter London wrote to Charmian that the editors inadvertently

"Bohemian in his tastes, careless as to dress, the author of the `Sea Wolf' is a man who would attract attention anywhere and in any gathering."[121] He often called writing "the

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left out of *Letters.* See Jay Williams, *The Call,* for the complete letter. See also Charmian London, *The Book of Jack London,*). He was constantly debating with himself the value of bohemian pursuits, and though his concern about lying to himself is deeply felt, so too could be his celebration of the supposed placid and complacent life of kite flying and boxing. When he discussed Shaw and pessimism and life's illusions with Blanche Partington in 1904 (see footnote 107 for more discussion of this letter), he wrote that he found so much of life amusing and "were it not amusing, it would give me the hurt of tragedy. I know the amusement is illusion, but I insist upon the illusion; I must insist if I would continue to live. It is my last big illusion, the straw of the drowning man. For the same reason I cherish other illusion. The urge of the red blood in me toward woman is the urge of Dame Nature toward progeny. But I work off the red blood in me in other sense-delights, (heaving on ropes, diving from springboards, skylarking, and what-not [don't forget boxing and kite flying, Jack!]), in such moments of sense-delight I firmly believe that I am realizing and vindicating the life that is in me—illusion, of course illusion, but if you should tell me when at the summit of such delights that it was illusion, I should be offended and irritated and recoil from you (as you and other women recoil from Shaw), as something unhealthy that made not toward life and surviving." Here, in the middle of his so-called long sickness, he avows the "illusion" of play that sustains life (London, letter to Blanche Partington, 30 Aug. 1904, *Letters,* 1:440).

[121] "Fifteen Minutes of Socialism with Jack London," interview with London, *Chicago Inter Ocean,* 26 Nov. 1905, 1, Jack London Scrapbooks, vol. 5. Adam Ruh and Gary

game," as he did in an interview with Emanuel Haldeman-Julius in 1913, an appellation that both captures the ease and difficulty of bohemian employment.[122] In an early letter to

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Scharnhorst note London's support in the interview given to Jewish victims of pogroms, though they carelessly assert he was an anti-Semite. See "`Fifteen Minutes of Socialism with Jack London: A Recovered Interview,'" interview with London, ed. Adam Ruh and Gary Scharnhorst, *Studies in American Naturalism* 2 (Summer 2007): 66-77.

[122] At times London could grow quite vehement in his momentary distaste for the authorial life. As he said to Haldeman-Julius, "I assure you that I do not write because I love the game. I loathe it. I cannot find words to express my disgust." (London, "The Pessimism of Jack London," interview by Emanuel Julius, *Western Comrade* (June 1913): 91; rpt. in *Jack London Journal,* no. 3 (1996): 189-91. When I reprinted this interview in the *Jack London Journal,* I had not collated its first appearance in the *Milwaukee County Leader* with its later appearance in the *Western Comrade.* If I had, I would have noticed how this long section on authorship was added in the latter. London was not thrilled with this interview, given Julius's supercilious attitude; Julius concluded the interview by asserting that he knew the source of London's "pessimism": "I feel positive that your liver is out of order." Given Julius's disparagement of people like Bernarr McFadden and Horace Fletcher, Julius was simply poking fun at the older London's seriousness. But London regarded his "pessimism" as a personal flaw and not to be trifled with. As he once told Blanche Partington, "I should like to tell you about the `disgust' phase of my nature. I do not brag about it, I am not proud of it, but I recognize it as a fundamental of my nature, and I have known it ever since I first knew anything about myself as a little boy" (London, letter to Blanche Partington, 2 Dec. 1915, *Letters,*

Anna Strunsky, he linked through simile the ambition to publish in good magazines to kite flying: "Let me tell you," he said to Anna, "that anything you write would be accepted by the *Overland,* and further, that I wish you to fly your kite far higher than that."[123] Later, in 1914, he would call the military battles in Mexico "The Red Game of War," further enlarging upon his ideas of what could be called a game. But now, in 1904, gaming was an attractive combination of entertainment for entertainment's sake, luck, thrill, and potential tragedy. Even the writing of it was bohemian in intent. In the same letter that he informed Brett that he was "hard up" and needed money to buy land and a home for his daughters and pay onerous legal fees for his divorce, he told Brett, in a letter I quoted above about his popularity and sales, that even though the magazines were offering more than ever, he had written a novel independent of financial need: "*The Game* is not a magazine story—I don't expect to find a magazine that will dare touch it."[124]

For even, or especially, tragedy—the fearsome, unacknowledged desire for an unhappy ending—lurks in the background of the life of a bohemian. The bohemian lifestyle, so often portrayed as happy-go-lucky, lazy, and carefree is in reality an incredibly difficult path to follow. Deliberately divorcing oneself as much as possible not only from money but also from mainstream culture, bohemians struggle on a daily basis. The central question of what one does with oneself during the day if one does not have a

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3:1526. See the next chapter of the current work for a brief discussion of London's so-called long sickness.

[123] London, letter to Strunsky, [May 1900?], *Letters,* 1:187.

[124] London, letter to Brett, 17 Nov. 1904, *Letters,* p. 452.

routine—a routine job, a routine marriage, a routinized life—becomes, for most people an incredibly difficult question to answer. When the day is unstructured and each day requires invention, the value and stress on the imagination accelerates. At the same time, as a compensation for the immense reliance on the interior life, the physicality of life becomes emphasized as bohemians celebrate the body that social norms (especially at the turn of the century) want to keep hidden. The game of boxing perfectly mirrors this in a couple of ways. Women were not allowed to attend boxing matches not only because they were violent but also because they were erotic. As London puts it in *The Game,* when Genevieve sees Joe disrobe in the ring, "her face was burning with shame at sight of the beautiful nakedness of her lover. . . . The leap of something within her and the stir of her being toward him must be sinful. But it was delicious sin, and she did not deny her eyes. In vain Mrs. Grundy admonished her. The pagan in her, original sin, and all nature urged her on." (111). London thought Charmian was game, so the word also means that readiness, that willingness to participate in bohemian life. To build one's body for the sport of throwing and receiving punches is to delight in one's physical capacity, an emphasis on the body's pleasure that deeply infuses bohemian thought. To become an athlete is simply taking to the extreme the act of lying nude on a beach. Of course violence is also fundamental to boxing, and it would be a mistake to say that violent behavior is unknown in the bohemian world. But violence is not what London celebrates about boxing. It is incidental to the real thing. And the real thing is performance, graceful movement and intelligent design and execution under deathly pressure as Hemingway (or Freddie Mercury) would say. Thus the cover of *The Game* features a ghostly figure not

unlike Atropos, one of the three Fates, who, eye-balling a life line, is ready to snip it with scissors.

London, who violently objected to Hutt's illustrations for *Metropolitan*—"it seems to me that they would ruin the sale of any book ever written. . . . They are preposterous"—loved Lawrence's work, which included the cover.[125] "The running illustrations," wrote London to Brett, "of the text by Mr. Lawrence, including the Love and Death motives, are splendidly sympathetic in themselves, and also tremendously illuminative of the text." The deathly, spectral quality of the story is picked up from the cover in the final of three initial illustrations just before the text begins. We see the figures of a happy couple dancing with cupid inbetween, and then we notice above them a pair of skeleton hands holding strings that manipulate the family as if they were puppets. Love and Death are also on stage, and box, eternally.

The novel is puppet theater, though it is a play almost entirely without dialogue, especially in the fight chapters. Boxing, being a bohemian event, is also an art event, a staged theatrical event. The fight is portrayed as an event seen by two audiences: the audience of men ringside and the audience of one woman looking through a peephole, as if she were Jack London behind the curtain to avoid public scrutiny. *The Game,* then, is also a theatrical novel about the theatricality of fame. The beginning scene—so completely novel for readers of Jack London's fiction who expect to be brought into a cabin in the north, or on the trail, or on a ship—is fraught with fame. Joe the boxer not only garners "open-mouthed awe" from the elevator boy and the neighborhood kids but also from the owner of the carpet store in which the story begins. We are in an odd

[125] London, letter to Brett, 31 Mar. 1905, *Letters,* 1:474.

geographic, psychological, and commercial space—not quite the elemental space of the trail or sealing ship (which the boxing ring is allied with) and not quite an interior space of Clubland (where a number of London stories from 1897 and earlier took place). As with Joe, fame has dislocated London from his usual fictive haunts and taken him to a place where he and his main character are not completely comfortable. True, Joe's uncomfortableness stems mostly from a source other than his fame (which we will return to), but Joe, at twenty, is portrayed as an innocent, a young man unused to everything of life except the moments he lives in the ring. He may not be adept at handling his public, but as a fighter that skill will come (would come, that is, if he hadn't been killed in the ring). As Helen Dare, a reporter for the *San Francisco Call* put it in an article she wrote about James Britt—an article that London cut out and pasted in his copy of *The Game*—"The fighter, I gather, has his public to consider and conciliate, to win to him, just as much as has the actress who prepares a gown and manner and private character for the especial discovery of the interviewer who purveys her to the reading world and the fighter in consequence says not what he has to say, but what he thinks he ought to say."[126] In all facets of his life, then, the boxer must be an actor, and we've seen how uncomfortable London was in being a public figure.

James Britt returns in the matter of *The Game.* London pasted his own report for the *San Francisco Examiner* (10 September 1905) on the Britt-Nelson fight in his copy of *The Game,* partly because the fight was so similar to what he had described in that novella. We have to remember, however, that London reported on the first Britt-Nelson

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[126] Helen Dare, "The Conquering Hero as He Sees Himself," *San Francisco Call,* 14 May 1905, n. p.

fight in which Britt won the lightweight title in 1904.[127] But in the second one, Britt, the intelligent one, lost to "the beast" Oscar "Battling" Nelson. Joe boxes against John Ponta,

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[127] The report was brief and probably for that reason has never been reprinted before. Still, it is significant, especially in light of its close proximity to the composition of *The Game:* "Few of those who saw last night's championship struggle questioned the justness of Referee Roche's decision. Those who did were ignorant of the commonest rules of boxing. Britt demonstrated his superiority over his Danish adversary at nearly every stage of the contest. Nelson has much to learn. He is not a clean fighter. He had a habit of using his head that would cost him the decision in most rings. He butted Britt repeatedly on the jaw and body and twice on the forehead. Nelson's deadliest work was done with his skull He cut a gash several inches long on Britt's brow with his head in the twelfth round, from which the blood rushed into his eyes, almost blinding him. Trough the twenty rounds Nelson did not land a half dozen effective blows at long range. He has no idea of distance and he swung repeatedly with such force as to lose his balance when Britt was several feet away. The Dane's capacity for taking punishment is his strongest forte. He is simply dead to all sense of pain. His powers of endurance are phenomenal. Britt staggered him again and again with well directed blows on the jaw and body, but could not stave off his rushes. In the seventeenth round Britt had Nelson apparently hopeless. He drove him clear across the ring with a shower of right and left swings on the jaw. Nelson's arms were down and it looked to be a question of how many seconds the fight would last. Then when Britt was tired out, Nelson freshened up and forced the fighting for the remainder of the round. Britt's well earned victory after the battle that wavered first one way and then the other, stamps him the best man of his weight and

who "was too decided an atavism to draw the crowd's admiration. . . . He was an animal, lacking in intelligence and spirit, a menace and a thing of fear, as the tiger and the snake are menaces and things of fear, better behind the bars of a cage than running free in the open" (we are reminded of the battle between the intelligence of Humphrey van Weyden and the bestiality of the Leopard Man-Wolf Man Wolf Larsen). (119) In his account, which is another of his newspaper contributions that strains against convention and then bursts out in essayistic analysis, London quickly disposes of the news in the short lead paragraph (Britt got beat) so that he can turn to why Britt lost.[128] To understand why,

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inches in the world." "Jack London a Critic," *Columbus Dispatch*, 20 Dec. 1904, Jack London Scrapbooks, vol. 5. This article appeared in other papers as well.

[128] One reporter strenuously objected to London's unconventional reporting:

> London gave us a philosophical dissertation which might have been written before the fight, and much of his descriptive matter would have been consigned to the Editor's basket if it had been written by a thirty dollar a week reporter. He wasted a lot of space trying to expound the thesis that intellect is no match for brute strength in a twenty-four foot ring, almost a self-evident proposition, but not aptly illustrated by the Colma mill, since that involved mainly a question of brute strength. It was not intellect, but the weaker brute that lost. To maintain that all the intelligence was on the Britt side is absurd. It was intelligence that impelled Nelson to make the best use of his strength, which he knew to be superior to that of his opponent and most effective when incessantly exercised. It was through lack if intelligence that Britt ignored the value of his own superior cleverness and placed too much reliance on his inferior vitality.

London tells us, we need to know what the phrase *abysmal brute* means. It's as if London really doesn't care who had won or how. Only the characters and the drama count. "Let me explain," says our guide, and we should keep in mind that in 1910 London will write another boxing novella entitled *The Abysmal Brute,* "by abysmal brute I mean the basic life that resides deeper than the brain and the intellect in living things. It is itself the very staff of life—movement; and it is saturated with a blind and illimitable desire to exist. The desire it expresses by movement."[129] We are reminded of a number of characters in the Klondike stories—for example, the recent "Love of Life"—reduced from civilized human beings to almost unidentifiable masses of protoplasm whose will to life keeps them in motion. It is the state beyond the atavistic, beyond the primitive. "It came into the world first. It is lower down on the ladder of evolution than is intelligence. It comes first, before the intellect. The intellect rests upon it; and when the intellect goes it still remains—the abysmal brute." It doesn't define just humanity. "We see it in a horse, tied

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The counterargument is just as plausible as London's, and equally so is this reporter's retort to London's claim that this fight exemplified a spotless sport vastly superior to the uncleanliness of capitalism: "tis as touching and edifying as naivete in a modern author" to suppose that the fighters were unmindful of "percentages of gate-receipts and picture privileges" (The Saunterer, "The Eloquent Parallel," *Town Talk,* n.d., though probably mid September 1905).

[129] London, "Brain Beaten by Brute Force: Dane's Perpetual Motion More Effective Than Britt's Mental Superiority, Says Jack London," *San Francisco Examiner,* 10 Sept. 1905, 1. One might suspect that the newspaper provided the headline. In fact, London did. See London, Britt [Nelson prizefight]: [article], JL 493.

by too short a rope, frantic, dragging backward and hanging itself. We see it in the bull, bellowing and blindly charging a red shirtwaist; in the strange cat, restrained in out hands, curving its hindquarters in and with its hind legs scratching long, ripping slashes." How we got from a momentary event like a boxing match held in September 1905 in Colma, California, to the eternal moment of a cat or a bull or a horse fighting an elemental battle is testimony to London's conception of what a newspaper article could do and what a newspaper was for. London's readers want a lesson on what constitutes and defines a human being. It is necessary knowledge for understanding what happens in a boxing ring. So when London says, "the best man won—according to the rules of the game," we know now that *the game* means something bigger, grander than mere boxing. Game is life at its limit meaning. There are other games as well, and the article ends on that note. After detailing the blows during each round, London concludes, "All hail to both of them! They play the clean game of life. And I, for one, would rather be either of them this day at Colma than a man who took no exercise with his body to-day but instead waxed physically gross in the course of gathering to himself a few dollars in the commercial game." That is, let us celebrate the bohemian life, which is vastly superior to the game of simply earning money.

In fact, *The Game* is about a boxer who is on his way to abandoning the better life. In the novella's opening scene, Joe is buying carpets for a new house for his new bride who insists he give up fighting. This is the major conflict of the novella: Joe "saw only the antagonism between the concrete, flesh-and-blood Genevieve and the great, abstract, living Game. Each resented the other, each claimed him; he was torn with the strife, and yet drifted helpless on the currents of their contention." (29-30). Later, during

the fight, Genevieve admits to herself that the Game is mysterious to her: “The Game had not unveiled to her. The lure of it was beyond her. It was greater mystery than ever. She could not comprehend its power. What delight could there be for Joe in that brutal surging and straining of bodies, those fierce clutches, fiercer blows, and terrible hurts? Surely, she, Genevieve, offered more than that—rest, and content, and sweet, calm joy.” (150-52) But just as the Game itself is a mystery so too is the part of Joe that belongs to the Game. As London sums it up at the end, “She was stunned by the awful facts of this Game she did not understand—the grip it laid on men’s souls, its irony and faithlessness, its risks and hazards and fierce insurgences of the blood, making woman pitiful, not the be-all and end-all of man, but his toy and his pastime; to woman his mothering and care-taking, his moods and his moments, but to the Game his days and nights of striving, the tribute of his head and hand, his most patient toil and wildest effort, all the strain and the stress of his being—to the Game, his heart’s desire.” (179-80). This Joe has a face she doesn’t recognize. It seems to be made of steel: “She had though she knew him, all of him, and held him in the hollow of her hand; but this she did not know—this face of steel, this mouth of steel, these eyes of steel flashing the light and glitter of steel.” (165) As London had written in 1901 about the Jeffries-Ruhlin fight, Joe was a denizen of the Machine Age.

Joe is not an author figure. He “lacked speech-expression. He expressed himself with his hands, at his work, and with his body and the play of his muscles in the squared ring.” (18) Genevieve isn’t either—despite her similarity to London hiding behind the wall/curtain and watching his actors act—and London takes pains to explain why: “Her vocabulary was limited, and she knew little of the worth of words.” (54). Still, Joe is

subjected to a number of significant pressures and displays a number of qualities that London would designate as authorial. He works with his hands and gets paid per performance. The pressure of family is the same, especially remembering the pressure exerted in late in 1898 on London when he was on the verge of giving up his writing career to support his family as a mail carrier. There is "the chance of a lucky punch" or strike in both occupations. "`Lost of chance,'" says Joe at one point. (91). Perhaps most importantly boxing is theater, and like theater men are the principal audience. Boxing has its acts, its main characters and subordinates, its opening scenes that set the stage for the later action and then the denouement and climax. Comedy, if the fight isn't close (*the fight was laughable* is a common idiom) and tragedy if someone dies. And, of course, there is the newly found fame.

Only when we read Jo and Genevieve's reticent and embarrassed response to the carpet store proprietor's self-insertion into their plans for a fresh, clean living space (upon hearing of their plans "he rolled his eyes ecstatically for a moment, and then beamed upon them with a fatherly air") do we feel the return of the pre-Russian-Japanese War Jack London. He explains their response as a class response. If they had been middle class, their blushing would have been "prudery," "but which in them was the modesty and reticence found in individuals of the working class when they strive after clean living and morality." (35) We applaud the class distinction at the same time we wonder if before the carpet episode they lived an unclean, immoral life. Carpets, of course, cannot cover up what ultimately leads to death. Genevieve Pritchard changes the course of Joe Fleming's life not just from the proletariat to the middle class, from bohemianism to

mainstream culture, but from life to death. She is the unwitting catalyst of the tragedy of Joe Fleming.

The publishing history of *The Game* ends with the return of James Britt. London, so interested in reviews after the debacle of *The Sea-Wolf,* now went on the offensive. In a letter to the editor of the *New York Saturday Times,* he excoriated their reviewer who—once again—called his story false to life. After recalling the review of *The Sea-Wolf* by someone who supposedly knew all about the sea yet criticized London for inaccurate details about sailoring, London told the editor that "I doubt this reviewer has had as much experience in such matters as I have. I doubt if he knows what it is to be knocked out, or to knock out another man. I have had these experiences, and it was out of these experiences, plus a fairly intimate knowledge of prize-fighting in general, that I wrote *The Game.*" And then London insisted that the event in question—could someone be hit with such force that they would be thrown backward onto the canvas, crushing his skull and dying?—was something that actually happened "in the very club described in my book. . . . Incidentally, this young fighter worked in a sail-loft and took remarkably good care of his mother, brother and sisters." We'll never know if London is telling the truth. But to cinch his argument he cites Jimmy Britt. In a moment that is remarkably like Woody Allen pulling Marshall McLuhan from behind the scenes to support his opinion against some pontificating douche-bag in a movie line in *Annie Hall,* London quotes "a letter from Jimmy Britt, light-weight champion of the world, in which he tells me that he particularly enjoyed *The Game,* `on account of its trueness to life.'"[130] Later, Britt, in an informal conversation with a *San Francisco Examiner* reporter, pointed to something

[130] London, letter to the editor, *New York Saturday Times,* 18 Aug. 1905, *Letters,* 512-13.

about London's talent, not only as a fight reporter, but as an author in general. He said, "`That fellow Jack London is all right. He can `see' a fight.'" The interviewer repeated the remark to London and added, "For real realism that word `see' just fills the bill." London agreed whole-heartedly: "Real writing is the power of sight, of `seeing' the thing." About this same time, he told Brett a propos a proposal from the French writer Georges Dupuy to translate the Klondike story collections, "I call him an artist, and by the word I mean not `painter' but `temperament.' He sees."[131] As the epigraph, for the present volume has it, and as London wrote in *Martin Eden,* "He, by some wonder of vision, saw beyond the farthest outpost of empiricism, where was no language for narration." In later years, London took the "the power of sight" beyond realism.

But a boxer's validation doesn't end there. Sometime in August Britt called London on the phone to tell him that he was going to review the book for the *San Francisco Examiner.* The connection was bad, so London sent him a note: "Dear Britt: There is nothing so conducive to the popularity of a book as good, healthy criticism. Be honest and say what you think about it—god, bad or indifferent. Take a full-arm swing at its deficiencies. Review it critically. I assure you I will not be offended. If you don't think it is lifelike, say so." Britt reviewed the book favorably and noted especially the lines that had caused so much doubt in the *Times*'s reviewer: "Here is a paragraph of the beginning of the end. `The whole back of his skull. Never saw anything like it in my life.' To me those are the most intensely realistic lines of the book."[132] As London had called it, and

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[131] London, letter to Brett, 19 Nov. 1904, 1:453.

[132] Jimmy Britt, "Jimmy Britt Reviews `The Game,' Jack London's Story of the Ring: Tale of Pugilist is True to the Life," *San Francisco Examiner,* 27 Aug. 1905. London

Macmillan had said in its spring catalog for new fiction, "The Game: A Transcript from Real Life."[133] London had created a human document, and Jimmy Britt had authenticated it. This is the beginning of the confluence of three streams of intellectual conceptualizations—what is fiction, what is sight, and what is photography—that blend into the grandest question of all: what is the best medium of artistic representation?

At some indeterminate time, London wrote out notes for an impassioned essay derived from his prizefight reporting. Entitled, presumably tentatively, "Britt," the notes excoriate those who decry prizefighting for its violence but who condone industrial and military violence. Deaths in the ring, points out the enraged author, number far fewer than those in factories and in war. Among the hypocrites, London counts his usual triad of guilty parties: plutocrats, religious leaders, and academics. They celebrate the mind over the body. They grow fat from lack of exercise, so they cannot appreciate the multiple values of boxing. They are cowardly in two ways. They refuse to learn the game, and they play the devious game of commerce. "Cowardly to ignore the flesh," writes London. "These men . . . who sit around at desks and chase the dollar with tremendous exercise of craft, deceit, and guile—and ride in cars, etc. and who consult doctors for

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summed up his reviews to Cloudesley Johns, which sound in general like those he received for *The Sea-Wolf*: "*Game* reviews are interesting. One paper says classic—next say `Rotten, rotten, rotten.' Most say disgustingly brutal, and then along comes *Life* and says it's a shame I've become a candy-puller in the literary kitchen when thereare so few meat-cooks!" (London, letter to Johns, 2 Aug. 1905, *Letters,* 1:508.

[133] Brochure included in London, *The Game,* HL 337698. See London, letter to Anna Strunsky, 19 Sept. 1904, *Letters,* 1:444.

their miserable bodies' sakes—who hold up hands at the thought of a prizefight—and who complacently sit down and gorge themselves on roast beef, rare and red, and pursuit of dollar, will not protect the machines in their factories—and permit said machines to mangle, batter, and destroy out of all humanness thousands of workmen every year."[134] The notes form an intellectual background for all of London's prizefighting stories and show how the word *game* has multiple meanings that celebrate the body over the mind, that expose the hypocrisy of capitalism, and that warn the workingclass heroes of the ring that even the glory of their sport can betray them.

After he finished *The Game* on 29 September, he continued in a modified theatrical mode and wrote "A Nose for the King," the only short story he wrote that is set in Korea; a Korean, he said, told him this story when he was overseas.[135] He elaborated in a note to himself that may or not have been sent as a cover letter to the *Black Cat.* He wrote, "A Nose for a King" "is not strictly the product of my own imagination. The germ of the story, the nose-idea itself, I got from a Korean nobleman in Korea. The shaping of it into a story, the working out of the idea, etc., is mine. I was arrested by the Japanese soldiers in the village of Sunan, in Northern Korea; and while held in the village a number of days, killed time by visiting and interviewing the Korean provincial officials who had not fled. They in turn visited me, and on one such return visit, swapping yarns through my Korean-Japanese interpreter, the nose-idea, in crude form, was given to me. I made a note of it at the time and labeled it `A Black Cat Story.'" Yet a page from his

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[134] London, "Britt: [notes for prizefight story]," JL 492. Again, the Huntington cataloguer has mislabeled a folder; nothing in these notes indicates that "Britt" would be fictional.

[135] See London, letter to Johns, 8 Dec. 1904, *Letters,* 1:456.

Korean notebook reads, "Short Story—humorous—about the man with the nose—see on[e] of my Korean books, probably the one by a missionary."[136] It's possible that he alludes to the book on Korea as a possible background source, but it may be that this unknown book actually has the nose story in it. In any case, besides giving us a blow-by-blow account of the progression of a story idea, London reveals once again an uneasiness about the working of the imagination. The imagination, according to London only provides an idea. The imagination is not the process by which one converts such an idea into a story. What faculty governs that process is something we would call an act of the imagination is something London is reluctant to call an imaginative power. The "shaping" is "mine" is as far as he will go. And, again, it is all based on experience and believability, for he wrote this explanation so that the editor would believe the story idea. Everyone believes that he converted an idea into prose and story form; that is entirely believable. What is up for challenge, at least in London's mind, is the sudden, unbidden appearance of a story idea. He attributes that to the workings of a (Korean man's or missionary's) imagination, and then seeks to justify it by grounding it in the social experience of visiting various real Koreans. The imagination is too untrustworthy not to justify its presence.

Because he wrote it for a *Black Cat* story competition, he was not motivated to return to this genre for its own sake; in fact, he wouldn't write another short story for seven months, so the competition and his loyalty to *Black Cat* must have fueled his

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[136] London, "Article on Squeeze: [note]," JL 453. This notebook page contains several reminders to himself, including the note on the nose story, a note on a possible article on "squeeze" or blackmail ("include mapus with the squeezers"), and two Japanese sayings.

desire, but only so far. The manuscript, typescript, and magazine publication all exist and show how thoughtful his revisions were even for a story he wasn't whole-heartedly invested in; he revised in three different stages: once while writing in pen, once again in manuscript but with a pencil, and then a final time as he typed it. He called it "a skit, written, typed, and sent off in one day," downplaying yet again the effort he put into constructing and revising a story, displaying sprezzatura, the typical bohemian attitude toward artistic creation.[137] He had a title problem, first choosing "The Nose" and then allowing *Black Cat* to change it to "A Nose for the King." Unlike "Moon-Face," a mostly theatrical skit (though much more horrifying) that he had submitted to a similar contest and lost, "A Nose for the King" won third prize and $350, a sum consistent with his earnings.

There are absorptive qualities to this story. Yi Chin Ho is a condemned man, that is a ghost, who tells a fabulous tale for lots of money to escape death. He is a liar who sells a picture on a piece of paper to someone for a vast sum of money. So he is a false author figure, a corrupt politician who redeems his crime by paying the money back that he had stolen, but does it by robbing an innocent man by selling him fake art. The story is told with key repetitive phrases—"a wart," "much-to-be-respected"—that infuse the story with lightness and humor that follows from the dark humor of cutting off someone's nose to save someone else's face. And it is a story of a story of a story. Still, it is in the end a sketch that has staged scenes, very little plot, and a preponderance of dialogue that drives the action forward.

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[137] For *sprezzature* in San Francisco's sixties bohemian culture, see Peter Richardson, *No Simple Highway.*

George Bernard Shaw in the Klondike

Having written a short story that shares many similarities with a play, he was ready to write a play taken from one of his short stories and so enter the literal theatrical mode for the first time in his career. The years 1904 and 1905 represent his most intense involvement with theater, if only because he was now learning the game. In the past, he had hovered about the edges of the theater world, immersing himself in reading plays, and George Bernard Shaw (as well as Henrik Ibsen, as we saw in volume 1) was a particular favorite.[138] "I have read all of Shaw's plays and carefully studied them," he told an interviewer in 1905. "To me he is one of the biggest men alive, an intellectual giant." In fact, discussing Shaw's work led him to make one of his most profound statements about his own art. "You can't go into the subject of art anywhere without being brought right up against the theory of socialism. . . . You have got to get right down to the root of a subject and you will find socialism the basis of art."[139] Not surprisingly, then, he wrote a brief set of notes about this time for something he called

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[138] As soon as he got back from the Klondike he wrote a dramatic poem ("The Return of Ulysses"), and he was attending plays, even though he did not have much money. "I have at least seen *Cyrano de Bergerac*," he told his friend Edward Applegarth. "I wouldn't have missed it for a ten dollar gold piece at this moment, badly as I need it." A review favorably compared the staging to that of Richard Mansfield's in 1898, and in 1904 Mansfield himself expressed interest in staging *The Sea-Wolf.* (London, letter to Edward Applegarth, 6 Dec. 1898, *Letters,* 1:28, 1:28 n. 2.

[139] "Fifteen Minutes of Socialism with Jack London."

"Marlowe ----- Play.": "Bring in an Inventor, and Inventor's daughter. Have Inventor's machine throw out a lot of men. Also, how he was robbed by the Capitalist. An act in Capitalist's house, showing tenderness and refinement and the views they hold on Charity, Discontent of Workers; Reform must spring from the individual, thrift, drink, etc., etc. Criticism of Capitalists by their servants. Very brief. A contrast--------Capitalists father refusing $50 for widow of killed workingman (careless), and then giving his own daughter thousands for some little gewgaw she wants to buy."[140] The Machine Age not only features speed and efficiency and new possibilities for prose style but also the elimination of jobs and the alienation of the workforce from the creation of goods and services.

While he was plotting and then writing *The Game,* his close friend and on-again, off-again lover Blanche Partington (the theater critic for the *San Francisco Call;* later we will see her influence during the writing of *The Star Rover*) encouraged him to write a play. Shaw's work was always forefront. She wanted him to go with her to see Shaw's *Candida* ("I [am] just wild to see *Candida*," he said in return), which was playing in San Francisco, and, after prompting him, he declared, for the first time, "Gee! I'd like to write half a dozen *real* plays, even if they were unactable and were never acted."[141] Blanche was not the first one to pester him about play writing. He told Blanche that his sister-in-law Corinne Maddern "is very anxious to get me interested in the stage. . . . She likes to be able to introduce me to theatrical people, believing, no doubt, that it helps her standing

[140] London, "Marlowe - - - A Play," JL 921.

[141] London, letter to Blanche Partington, 16 Aug. 1904, *Letters,* 1:438.

with them—and she has a daughter and ambition for that daughter."[142] Once he had completed *The Game,* he told Charmian that he was "beginning again to consider tackling a play." On the same day, 4 October 1904, he told Blanche that since Mansfield and Ethel Barrymore (more about whom later) were "still after me," "I'm beginning to warm to the idea, and if I get the chance should like to try my hand at a couple of curtain-raisers—perhaps as a beginning. Gee! I'd like to turn out a good play just once!" Hardly an expression matching the ambition of a novelist turned temporary playwright like Henry James, but still it is an honest proclamation of a desire to experiment with his writing talent and to enlarge his authorial office.

He chose "The Scorn of Women" as the basis for his new play, he said, because "it is not a short story," but a skit.[143] It's difficult to understand his characterization, since

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[142] London, letter to Blanche Partington, 19 Sept. 1904, *Letters,* 1:443.

[143] London, letter to Anna Strunsky, 13 Oct. 1904, *Letters,* 1:450. Perhaps the most significant change for the purpose of understanding London's textual representation of authorship between story and play is the addition of the comical Dave Harney. In a moment that is meant as comedy but in reality is deadly serious for our consideration of London's constellation of ideas, Harney buys a newspaper from the mail carrier newly arrived in the Klondike store. All the Klondike denizens are starved, not just for real food, but for news, and suddenly with his purchase Harney has a monopoly on it, which he will trade only for sugar. London thus works into his play the theatrical connections between newspaper writing and playwriting. Perhaps the most important change structurally between story and play is the added emphasis on the theme of the defeat of hypermasculinity. Because London needs to extend the time it takes to delay Vanderlip's

it is false. “The Leopard Man” is a skit. “A Nose for the King” is a skit. “The Scorn of Women” is a deeply realized story, reliant most of all on the careful depiction of character. Unlike London’s skits, this story is driven by a strong narrative voice, not dialogue. And when the climactic moment arrives, not Flossie’s arrival, but rather Freda’s confrontation with Mrs. Eppingwell, the moment is impossible to render otherwise than in narrative: “It was another flashing, eternal second, during which these two women regarded each other. The one, eyes blazing, meteoric. . . . The other, calm-eyed.”[144] The gaze of the women into each other’s eyes establishes and confirms their equality, and no amount of dialogue could carry this scene with the same power.

He had trouble with this scene. Sometime in the fall, he read Stewart Edward White’s *The Silent Places,* a Klondike novel. On the endpapers, he carefully wrote out revisions for the second act and the all-important confrontation between Freda and Mrs. Eppingwell. He wrote a full page of dialogue between the two, including Freda’s pretension to snare Vanderlip; she tells Eppingwell that she always already wants men, any man: “`Men, just men.’” But what follows that line in a parenthetical note to himself indicates the late composition of these notes: “Better, this as it stands is a bit too gross.’”

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departure to the water hole so that Flossie can arrive in time to meet him, London chooses to create a long scene involving Vanderlip’s near-raping of Maloof. That Maloof defeats him with a strength superior to masculine muscular culture shows how indebted London was, thematically, to Ibsen and Shaw.

[144] London, “The Scorn of Women,” 424. The scene as reproduced in the play uses the same language, but of course cannot carry the same intensity; too easily does it melt into melodrama.

We don't have a copy of the original version of this scene, so we don't know what he meant by "gross." But here in the back of White's book he reached a state of tasteful indirection to convey Freda's all-important sensuality. The dialog he wrote in the back of White's book appears in the final version.

Under London's explanation of why he chose "The Scorn of Women" as the basis for his play lies the real reason he chose it: in order to get his play performed, he needed to convince an actress (he knew no actors) to promote it, and "The Scorn of Women" features two strong women characters, perfect for the women in theater with whom he was becoming acquainted. Just as Freda Maloof had a mystical power over men, so London had his own kind of power over women. As London worked on the play, word got out to the papers. The first reports were that Ethel Barrymore was interested in acting in it. One chatty item ran,

> I had a little talk with Miss Ethel Barrymore the other day about that play Jack London is going to write for her. She met London while she was in California not long ago, and was much taken with him. She thinks he and Joseph Conrad are the only two persons who are writing big things now. The new play by London will have the snows of the Klondike for background, and will present rough types of character. Just what her role will be Miss Barrymore was disinclined to reveal.
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> "The whole thing is a bit indefinite," she said, "because—would you believe it—Mr. London knows almost nothing about the stage. I mean, nothing about the technique of the stage. He asked me many funny questions about exits and entrances. He will be compelled to study a good deal before he writes the

play, but he will do it; and I am very sure that the piece will be well worth while when he has completed it."[145]

To learn about "exits and entrances" he turned again to Shaw, and in the fall of 1904 he, Charmian, and Blanche Partington were reading and discussing (separately) *Widowers' Houses* and *Man and Superman;* he even gave an edition of the latter to Partington.[146] In October he told Brett, "I don't imagine I'll tackle a long effort until the beginning of the year. I expect to potter around the next couple of months writing several short stories, and trying my hand at a play—not a serious big effort of a play, though I'd like some time to write a really big play."[147] On 3 November he had finished the first act and on 25 November he was finished with the second;[148] he was calling it *The Way of Women,* and on 29 November gave the first act to Charmian to read.[149] By 2 December he was into the

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[145] Edfrid A. Bingham, "Nance O'Neil, Ethel Barrymore, Mrs. Fiske and the New `Carmen' Divide New York Interest," *Denver Post,* 4 Dec. 1904, Jack London Scrapbooks, vol. 5, reel 3. See also Sarah Connell, "California Literature," *Town Talk,* Christmas 1904, scrapbook, vol. 6, reel 3, "Ethel Barrymore's Plans," *The Wasp,* 10 Dec. 1904, scrapbook, vol. 6, reel 3, and unsigned, "A Klondike Drama," *Town Talk,* n.d., Jack London Scrapbooks, vol. 5, reel 3.

[146] Charmian Kittredge, diary, 1904, JL 217.

[147] London, letter to Brett, 10 Oct. 1904, *Letters,* 1:448.

[148] See London, *Scorn of Women,* typescript, JL 1140.

[149] See Charmian Kittredge, diary, 1904, JL 217.

third act—on this day he gave Partington the second act to read[150]—and by 5 December he was done. "Not a big effort," he told Strunsky. "Wouldn't dare a big effort. An experiment, merely.—Lot's of horseplay, etc., and every character, even Sitka Charlie, is belittled."[151] The experiment took two forms. First he was experimenting with a new

[150] See London, diary, 1904, JL 594. In the back of this diary, he took notes, probably from Partington, on the first two acts of the play.

35 perhaps kill- "As I was saying," etc up to `a dancing girl

36 perhaps kill "spit upon me, etc."

Look up act III For what time maid makes it when she looks at clock

34 "As custodian of the community's morals"—kill "not" & "I hope"

32 "And why not?

34 Freda's last speech sag, make shorter Maybe "ah, and why not?"

p. 7 – cut out "on a sled"

p. 7 "not till midnight at the welocbar [?] by the hospital

p. 7 make Loraine call back Floyd to tell him about ball

17 kill "gloming"

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18 kill "conservation estimate"

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17 figure on changing Mrs. C.[?] descriptions of Vanderlip [?]

Work up Van der Lip's enter[?]

Mrs. McFee at end, strike out "contaminated"

"Well, now a decent body can make her purchase."

P. six—Vanderlip "and queens, too, didn't you say?"

[151] London, letter to Strunsky, [2 Dec. 1904], *Letters,* 1:454.

genre. Second, he experimented with theatrical conventions. He had written a play with no leading man and two leading women. Try as he might to hide his pleasure in completing the work, nonetheless he began to actively pursue women who might be interested in starring in it and help get it produced.

In late December 1904, he went to see Mary Shaw in G. B. Shaw's *Mrs. Warren's Profession* in San Francisco and then had dinner with her. "Liked her better than any actress ever met," he told Cloudesley Johns.[152] Mary Shaw, whose career was ruined by those who disagreed with her socialist politics, took on controversial, overtly feminist roles, including that of Mrs. Warren in Shaw's play, for which she was arrested in New York City along with the producer under the Comstock antiobscenity laws. In fact, when London was interviewed in Chicago shortly after his marriage to Charmian Kittredge in 1905, the first question the interviewer asked was his opinion of her arrest and the censorship of a play about prostitution. "It seems to me," said London, "it was the most ill-advised action I have ever heard of. Instead of compelling the producer to withdraw the play, it should be produced in every city of the country, and its effect would be beneficial."[153] In a confluence that only cements further the connections between boxing and the theater, Shaw gave his play its title because "the tremendously effective scene . . . in which [Mrs. Warren] justifies herself, is only a paraphrase of a scene in a novel of my

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[152] London, letter to Johns, 21 Dec. 1904. See Charmian London, *The Book of Jack London,* 2 vols. (Century: New York, 1922), 2: 13, where she says London saw a San Francisco production of the play. I haven't been able to find independent confirmation of this.

[153] "Fifteen Minutes of Socialism with Jack London," *Inter Ocean,* 26 Nov. 1905, 29.

own, *Cashel Byron's Profession* (hence the title, *Mrs Warren's Profession*), in which a prize-fighter shows how he was driven into the ring exactly as Mrs. Warren was driven on the streets."[154] When an interviewer asked London if he would write "a modern `Cashel Byron' for Jimmy Britt," he knew exactly what he was talking about—after all, *Cashel Byron's Profession*'s plot is similar to London's own work on boxing—but he dodged the question of Shavian influence and said, instead, "I've never seen Britt act."[155] For London, when boxing is play, it is bohemian. For both London and Shaw, when boxing is income generating, it represents, like prostitution, capitalistic exploitation of the worker. The theater thus gave London access to cutting-edge artists who were unafraid to promote causes he agreed with.

Although Mary Shaw proved uninterested, London thought Blanche Bates might be. She was starring in a play in San Francisco, and London went to see it and her, twice in January. His attention to her was so pronounced, at least to some observers, that the newspapers took it as the beginnings of a romance and then an engagement.[156] But there

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[154] Quoted at en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mrs._Warren%27s_Profession. The source is a letter Shaw wrote to the *Daily Chronicle,* 28 Apr. 1898.

[155] London, "Jack London, Dramatist," interview by Ashton Stevens, *San Francisco Examiner,* 27 Aug. 1905, 47. Shaw's book was cited in a number of reviews of *The Game.* For example: "The love of the prize ring--`the game'—is its theme, nothing new in itself, since we have had `Cashel Byron's Profession'" (unsigned review, "A Hero of the Ring," *New York Post,* 17 June 1905, Jack London Scrapbooks, vol. 6).

[156] London said in print: "I once showed a rough draft of it to Blanche Bates—and therefore some enterprising newspapers reported me engaged to her. That's my sole

may have been a different (or merely an additional) reason. London sent Bates the first draft, and she panned it. “First and foremost,” she wrote,

> no actor’s word amounts to much really—regarding a play—but, from my point of view and the one criticism I make is—that the thread is too slender to hang a three act play on. In reading, of course, the manuscript has the grip that all good stories have—But it is fine reading—not fine acting possibilities—that grips. The motif, its handling and the third act scene could make a full one-act play—or the act of a three act play—the masquerade act is fine for setting—for comedy relief—and for the background of a great big dramatic scene. But—for a long play—there must be minor threads of interest—all heading to the main plot, necessarily—yet each one interesting in itself. There are so many suggested in this—and that could be worked out gloriously. First—Freda in her glory queening it over men—showing how those furs, et al—come to her—a dance hall. Show the scene between the Capt. and her—show his infatuation for her—anything to

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experience in submitting plays. The illustrations in the Oakland papers showed even the parson blessing us.” The reporter then asked: “How did Miss Bates take it?” “Justly indignant,” London replied. “She said it was ridiculous to be engaged to me and I was reported to have said that while I knew the value of advertising, yet I was loath to accept advertising of this sort. The experience makes me rather dubious about submitting the play a second time” (London, “Jack London, Dramatist,” interview by Ashton Stevens, *San Francisco Examiner,* 27 Aug. 1905, 47). Actually, he learned of her reaction in a letter to him months previous: “Mr. [Joseph] Noel called upon me, relative to that absurd Tribune story—isn’t it beastly?” (Blanche Bates, letter to London, Jan. 1905, JL 2181).

> suggest the complication that would issue—and the battle between the wife's force for good—Freda's force for the worst that is in him. Make him the leading male character—Vanderlip is impossible as that—there must be a manly, interesting hero-chap—no matter what messes he is in—he must not be made ridiculous. Enlarge the Lisznayi not physically but dramatically—then Freda's efforts to get Flossie there—are the whims of a spoiled woman jealous of her power over men. At present, Sitka Charlie is the most satisfactory and best drawn and sustained character in the play. There! This may be all bosh to you—but it is as I honestly feel about it. There is a great big chance there—and it's up to you!"[157]

London ignored her suggestions. He wrote to Charmian, "Blanche Bates, in suggestion of making a struggle between Freda and Mrs. E. for Capt. E, violates the eternal art canon of *unity*. It is another story. I violated all the conventional art-canons, but not one eternal art canon. I wrote a play without a hero, without a villain, without a love motif, and with two leading ladies."[158] But in the end he knew that what he had gained from unconventionality he had lost in coherence. In early January, he told a reporter that his play was still in its first draft and that "of course I shall rewrite it entirely—probably

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[157] Blanche Bates, letter to London, Jan. 1905, JL 2181.

[158] London, letter to Kittredge, 2 Feb. 1905, *Letters,* 1:466. Five years later, in a copy of Macmillan's published version of the play, he wrote to an actress and acquaintance Margaret Anglin almost exactly the same words: "What do you think of it!—several leading ladies and no love-motif!" He was proud of his unconventionality. See London, *The Scorn of Women* (Macmillan: New York, 1906,), 498878.

several times."[159] He then spent February and March revising the play with Charmian's help; he added quite a bit of dialogue in the first act. In late February, he explained a plot device to her that she had found objectionable, and he did not change that. Sometime in February, he completed the draft and expected Charmian to simply type it up and mail it to James Pinker, his British agent, and to Minnie Maddern Fiske, his wife's cousin and successful actor who had expressed interest in reading it. But Charmian had more questions and suggestions. In late March they worked on it together; her diary for 22 March 1905 says, "Most of day at Mate's. Working hard on Scorn of Women. Finished corrections and criticisms etc." And then on 23 March, she writes, "Finished sorting and

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[159] Jack London, "Jack London's `Call of the Wild' Draws Him to Poetry and Song," interview with Constance Skinner, *Los Angeles Examiner,* 8 Jan. 1905, Jack London Scrapbooks, vol. 6, reel 3. Skinner, "poet, historian and novelist, [was] at that time drama and music critic of the *Los Angeles Examiner*" (Cloudesley Johns, *Who the Hell* Is *Cloudesley Johns? Jack London Journal,* no. 5 [1998]: 118). She had written a "parody on Porter Garnett," which London read while on the *Snark* and mailed to Sterling (London, letter to Sterling, 17 Feb. 1908), *Letters,* 2:737). She was according to Cloudesley Johns and rather enigmatically so "another member of our household," meaning, probably, that she rented a room in Johns's mother's house in LA (Johns, *Who the Hell* Is *Cloudesley Johns?* 118). And she met and befriended Sophie Treadwell after Treadwell had graduated from Berkeley and probably was instrumental in getting her into the journalism racket. One can only imagine the two of them sharing notes after Sophie interviewed London in 1914. See chapter 23.

doing up play."[160] He was now ready for feedback from the third and final actor to look it over.

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[160] Charmian Kittredge, diary, JL 218. Charmian's typescript includes instructions to the director of the play, published here for the very first time:

> IN EXPLANATION
>
> Have left things to actors themselves. Have merely indicated nature of characters, which same must be amplified by actors, they must furnish the details. I merely indicate. As for instance, I merely indicate the Scotch accent, etc., of Mrs. McFee. It is for the actress to realize her Scotch, making whatever changes in text that seem fit, so long as the spirit of the text is retained. This must be insisted upon --- keep the spirit of the text, though the text itself be changed.
>
> The same indication on my part applies to all the parts of the play, to Dave Harney, to composition of scenes, to everything. Rearrange at will the disposition of actors and groups to suit stage demands, but retain the spirit of my arrangement of actors, groups, and situations.
>
> It must be left to the actress who takes Freda's part, the dress she wears in acts II and III. It must be a dress showing her off to advantage phusically, the arms should be bat, or bare part way up with loose sleeve-arrangement so that, in aAct III, Vanderlip 's hand can wander up her bare arm.
>
> Her silvery scornful laughter must not be overdone. Must not be harsh nor raw. It mus be most delicate and silvery.

In Act III, Freda must exert herself in every way for the lure of Vanderlip. She lures his stomach with food, his nerves with cigar, his sex by her physical charm and willingness and yieldingness, his imagination by her imagination, etc.

In Second Act Freda practically bludgeons Vanderlip. She is all things to all men. She knows all men. She masters all men. And the method she employs on Vanderlip in Act II is quite different from the method she would have employed on say Prince, or Capt. Epingwell, just as different as they are different from Vanderlip. In Act II she bludgeons Vanderlip. In Act III she lures and seduces him.

For spirit of play, for spirit of interpretation, read my short story from which it is adapted, "The Scorn of Women," to be found in collection entitled "The God of His Fathers," published by McClure, Phillips, and CO.

GENERAL EXPLANATIONS

At the masked ball, all men wear moccasins. The women wear dancing slippers, though the women that enter from street have on street-moccasins outside slippers, and remove street-moccasins after entering. No white collars, no white shirts, no gloves, are worn anywhere in play. Men and women wear large, gauntleted-to-the-elbows mittens made of moose-hide. With dog-drivers and miners these mittens are connected by a leather thong which passes loosely across the neck—so that when they remove mittens the mittens dangle on either side at end of thong.

Minnie Maddern Fiske, forty years old, was a successful actor and married to Harrison Grey Fiske, her agent and manager of a theater in New York City they operated together for six years. She was also Bessie Maddern London's first cousin. Initially, Minnie liked the play and passed it on to her husband.[161] Due to various delays and the

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Some men and women wear parkas. (A parka is a garment made like a generous shirt, falls to the knees, with hood on it which can fit over the head and ears and leave only the face exposed.)

Only newcomers, tenderfeet, wear beards. The most an old-timer or experienced man in the country ever wears is a mustache.

When any enter is made from the street, ears must always be covered wither with earflaps of cap or with hood of parka, and the mittens must always be on the hands.

In Act I street moccasins are not removed on entering. In Acts II and III street moccasins are removed on entering.

In every scene there is a stove—the most essential property. Nor must it be neglected. Wood must be put in by somebody every little while. In general, it will always be good business to shove a few sticks of wood into stove. The stove-piping of the stoves must be observed , must be carried out overhead. There are no brick chimneys in the Klondike.

All lights are kerosene lamps or candles.

In masked ball, with exception of Capt. Eppingwell, actors and actresses may wear what dress-costumes may be deemed appropriate.

[161] See Minnie Maddern Fiske, letter to JL, 24 Apr. 1905, JL 6135.

distance between coasts, she wasn't able to send Fiske's comments until July. The Fiskes now saw insurmountable problems: too much depended on Freda; the play lacked a male lead; and the plot was not strong enough. Minnie did see something noteworthy in the play: "It seems to me to be more of a revelation of Klondike life and Klondike types than a play in the technical sense. It occurred to me that it might be well if the play were called `A Night in Dawson', and undoubtedly something unique and deeply interesting could be evolved in the way of a new sort of play,--that is to say, a play that was a photograph of an average 12 hours in Klondike life."[162] Undoubtedly, the Fiskes were correct in their analysis, but this final comment points to something else. She called it "a photograph," meaning that its realism was that of the supposed one-to-one correspondence between object and photographic representation. The realism appealed to her, and she was the only of London's readers to understand that he was aiming for "a new sort of play." But she didn't understand that the lack of a hero, the lack of a plot, and the emphasis on Freda was all intentional.

By the time London received these comments, he had moved on from theatre. His response is grateful and respectful, but he stood his ground. He knew he had failed: "I am afraid that in this, my first effort, I too bunglingly expressed my idea; what I did try to write was a play that departed frankly from stage-conventions, and cut itself off sharply from stage tradition." It was a play about women and how they cooperate and live according to altruistic, that is, socialistic principles. He knew the play didn't work technically, but he remained committed to writing his kind of play. Having thoroughly

[162] Minnie Maddern Fiske, letter to JL, 24 July 1905, JL 6139.

imbibed the work of Ibsen and Shaw, he told Minnie that "big dramatic art . . . cannot very well rest on the stereotyped-traditional-conventional."[163]

In May he had told Brett that he was waiting for comments from Fiske, and Brett responded with a slight note of awe at London's multidimensional artistic talent.[164] While

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[163] London, letter to Minnie Maddern Fiske, 2 Aug. 1905, *Letters,* 1:507-8. In his interview with the Chicago reporter for the *Inter Ocean,* London praised Shaw highly: "I have read all of Shaw's plays and carefully studied them. To me he is one of the biggest men alive, an intellectual giant. He knows so much that the people fail to understand him and his aims. . . . Mr. Shaw is revolutionary in his philosophy and attacks the established order of things. . . . Some university professor can get a freak idea about the food that he eats, or decide to walk in the grass barefooted, or do something else that is incongruous and against the established. He will not be interfered with so long as he does not do any harm. But let him get revolutionary ideas about economics and out he goes." And then London made his statement about the socialism being the foundation for art ("Fifteen Minutes of Socialism with Jack London").

[164] See Brett, letter to London, 17 May 1905, JL 3035. London had asked him to remain silent about the project, and Brett answered, "I shall not, you may be sure, say anything about it, but shall rejoice to hear when the question is settled of your success in this still another direction." Poor Brett. He was still recovering from the news that London was running for mayor of Oakland, and of course he was entirely supportive and seemed to imply that he thought London had a career to look forward to in politics: "I believe you would make a great figure in public life if you stuck at it," he wrote, "and the mayoralty of such a city as Oakland would give you a first rate opportunity as the first step" (Brett,

they waited he got some positive feedback from another source: Ada Lee Bascom, to whom he had sent the play while she was writing a play based on "The Great Interrogation." "It [is] a remarkable play for a first effort. It has atmosphere, and it is a novelty . . . potent factors." She thought Moloof, Harney, Sitka Charley, and "The Scotch Woman are finely drawn characters," but she mistook Vanderlip as a hero and for that role "I do not think it would appeal to an audience." The only suggestion she made was to bring in Flossie a bit earlier to establish Freda's fine character sooner. Freda was the principal attraction, and Bascom thought the play would be hit.[165]

It wasn't until mid 1906 that London felt it was time to publish *Scorn of Women* in book form. He sent the manuscript without warning to Brett, with a note saying he still hoped it might be produced: "I am dickering around with these very unsatisfactory actor-folk, and when it is staged, having already published a small first edition, it might then be good policy to bring out a second edition."[166] It must have come as a surprise to the publisher to hear London's plan—they had been corresponding regularly for the past several months about what should be published and when, and London had not mentioned the play—but Brett instantly agreed to the idea of "a small first edition." First, theater managers do not like to put on plays when they have already been published in book form. Second, "there is not very much demand for plays printed as books, although

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letter to London, 19 Apr. 1905, JL 3032). On the one hand, Brett feared London's *War of the Classes* would hurt the sales of his fiction; on the other hand, he imagined London's political career would be beneficial. Fame, apparently, is always good.

[165] Ada Lee Bascom Marsden, letter to London, 7 May 1905, JL 14758.

[166] London, letter to Brett, 26 June 1906, *Letters,* 2:586.

usually a good play will manage to sell an edition of a thousand copies in the course of time even if it is not acted. Of course the situation is somewhat different if the play should be put on the stage and should become really popular, in which case it has some small sale but never anything really to boast of in the way of numbers."[167] They both knew, without saying it, that this play was not going to be popular. London replied that he saw the wisdom of Brett's analysis and told him to hold off, but London's patience lasted only two months.[168] By September, Brett told him the play had been sent to the printer to generate first and second page proofs, and they agreed to have the play come out in November. Its blank cover, lack of illustrations, and small print run guaranteed its nearly invisible appearance in the marketplace.[169]

When he had felt satiated by the theater, he again turned to Shaw to explain his turn back to fiction. Explaining to an interviewer who had asked him when he would write another play, he said, "I'm up to my neck now on a novel. . . Then I've got to lecture. I've got lots of work to do. A year of other work must intervene before I can come back to playwriting. And as Shaw has said, I hope to `come fresh from life instead of stale from the stage.'" Not that he had exhausted his theatrical impulse entirely, but he had grown tired quickly of the theater world's conventions and had redirected his creative energies to genres he knew best. The theater world, however, began to see the inherent

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[167] Brett, letter to London, 6 July 1906, JL 3071.

[168] See London, letter to Brett, 17 July 1906, *Letters,* 2:592.

[169] See Brett, letter to London, 13 Sept. 1906, JL 3075. Brett mentions a letter from London authorizing Macmillan to publish the play, but that letter seems not to exist. See also Brett, letter to London, 22 Oct. 1906, JL 3079.

theatricality of his work, and he started getting offers to dramatize his stories; *The Sea-Wolf* and *The Game* drew particular attention. Ada Lee Bascom, a well-known playwright ("A Bowery Girl" and "Three Men in a Flat"), wrote a one-act play based on London's short story "The Great Interrogation."[170] An agent named Helen McCaffry enticed

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[170] As reviewed by London's friend Blanche Partington, the play appealed because of London's strength in drawing character and writing dialogue, but the "stagecraft is poor; production is somewhat too literary and needs touches of playwright." Partington is under the impression that London wrote the play, but Bascom was solely responsible for its construction (Blanche Partington, "London's Play Is a Success, *San Francisco Call,* 22 Aug. 1905, n. p., Jack London Scrapbooks, vol. 6, reel 3). The playbill, however, lists the authors as London and Bascom. Both of them attended the premiere and spoke to the audience afterwards. London, "in his customary revolutionary garb," gave all credit to Bascom (ibid.). Bascom's sister actually wrote a thank-you note to London "for your graceful speech in my sister's behalf" (Bascom [no first name given], 23 Aug. 1906, JL 2167). Yet, a few days later, in the office of the *San Francisco Examiner,* London told an interviewer, "`I'll tell you just how it came about. I wanted to learn how to write Past, Present and Future all at one time. I wanted to develop those in dialogue, while the story ran on—not the dialogue of playwriting, but of short story writing. Now you know it's darn easy to stop your story and revert to the Past, or speculate on the Future—you simply stop your story and tell it in the third person. But I wanted to keep things moving, and just for practice, you might say, I wrote the little story of `The Great Interrogation,' which is practically the same as the play Mrs. Bascom and I have made from it." Later in the same interview, when the interviewer commented that the play was convincingly real

London to collaborate with playwright (and, later, screenwriter) Harriet Ford on a play set in the Klondike.[171] Even *Scorn of Women* continued to generate some amount of

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and "seemed mightily to convince a theatreful of soft city dwellers," London commented, "I had collaboration in that. The good old popular conventions were not all omitted. In fact, I've written only one play without collaboration," that being *The Scorn of Women* (London, "Jack London, Dramatist," interview by Ashton Stevens, *San Francisco Examiner,* 27 Aug. 1905, 47). These comments suggest he helped write the play, but in a letter to Bascom he writes, "In the matter of the dramatization of my story, `The Great Interrogation' it is understood that my name shall appear as collaborator and the proceeds from royalties of the play shall be divided equally between us. You have my permission to arrange for the production of the piece" (London, letter to Ada L. Bascom, 27 Apr. 1905, *Letters,* 1:477). In "Jack London as Playwright," George Adams concludes London did not contribute to the writing of the play as a play, and I concur. When he signed his contract with Bascom, he did not retain dramatic rights, something he would have done if he had considered himself a coauthor. I think London, in the interview, is simply alluding to his contribution as the original author of the plot and characters. Bascom is the one who put it together as a play. In fact, a few days after meeting with London, Bascom wrote that "you have the material, I have served a long apprentice-ship in stage-craft, and if you will we may effect a money making combination. . . . If you will furnish the story, I will put it in dramatic form, and I am confident I can market it to our mutual advantage" (Ada Lee Bascom Marsden, letter to London, 20 Jan. 1905, JL 14755). By May she was finished. See Marsden, letter to London, 19 May 1905, JL 14759.

[171] See Helen McCaffry, letter to London, 4 Mar. 1906, JL 14181.

interest; Minnie Maddern Fiske's husband wrote to London in the fall of 1905 to tell him that he had discussed its possible production with a theatrical agent, Alice Kauser, and if he was willing to send the manuscript to her she might be able to get it staged. London, after striking out with a different agent, Elizabeth Marbury, in 1906, did indeed turn matters over to Kauser, though ultimately to no avail.[172] This facet of his theatricality proved even more attractive later when filmmakers began searching for good material.

For now, though, he felt it was time to turn his back to his audience, like Miles Davis, turning inwards to reignite his relationship to the ghost within, and produce a deeply absorptive novel. In fact, in early December he had completed notes for its "*motif*." He was going to begin with the ghost dog in the wild and then bring him home: "evolution, instead of devolution; civilization instead of decivilization." He did not have a title yet, but it would emphatically not be called "`Call of the Tame.'" It was not a "sequel," but a "companion."[173] It would be called *White Fang,* and soon London discovered that the ghost of the imagination adapted very well to a domesticated environment without losing any of its terrifying aspects.

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[172] See Harrison Grey Fiske, letter to JL, 5 Oct. 1905, JL 6133. See especially London, letter to Elizabeth Marbury, 11 Dec. 1906, JL 12599, in which he describes Kauser as "my agent."

[173] London, letter to Charmian Kittredge, [? 5 Dec. 1904], *Letters,* 1:455. See also London, letter to Brett, 5 Dec. 1904, *Letters,* 1:454.