Author under Sail

Jay Williams

Chapter 15: Revolution, Evolution, and the Scene of Writing

The Rhetoric of Revolution

Jack London was now so famous that in December 1904 Robert Collier, of *Collier's Magazine*—he who had hired Richard Harding Davis at $4000 a month to cover the Japanese-Russian War—wanted London to take a year "to loaf" and write "a free, spirited picture of human life; what men are working for, and why; from one end of America to another." Collier imagined a writer who could combine "Walt Whitman's largeness, something of Kipling's observant eye, something of Stevenson's humour and charm, something of Frank Norris' epic feeling. You are the only living writer who combines these qualities." (We will return to this seemingly odd combination of London and Whitman.) Only a month after the election of 1904, when Eugene Debs moved into third place among the candidates, charging London with new energy to become one of the most vocal critics of American capitalism, a leading magazine editor asked London to be the "American writer to tell the American people about America."[1] Not only was

[1] Robert Joseph Collier, letter to Jack London, 14 Dec. 1904, JL 5059.

London famous, he had become, at least potentially, the representative writer of the American people.

Loafing and writing across the continent was something London did in 1894 as a hobo. It still appealed to him, but he was realizing the diminishing returns from this authorial construct. We remember from chapter 12 that when London pitched *The War of the Classes* to George Brett he said that these essays would form a sociological study of "this gigantic, complex civilization of ours. And I am attempting to grip hold of it in order to exploit it in fiction, in what, if I succeed, will be the biggest work I shall ever do." He was primed and receptive to Collier's proposal, but he wanted to comment on life in America, not so much from the perspective of the hobo-participant, as he did in *The People of the Abyss* and his hobo stories and essays, but from an outsider's position who still had intimate knowledge of the streets. He made tentative notes about the project, entitling it *The American Abyss,* and he imagined it would be a series of articles eventually collected in book form. It would focus first on Chicago—"write up a barrel-house in Chicago"—and New York City—"a chapter on a flesh-&-blood prostitute. Take her around some, learn her life, causes, philosophy of life, generalizations on life, upon the things I take her to, etc." The one exception to his desire to stay above the scene was an idea to write about prisons. He wanted to "find out some hell-hole of a prison & have myself arrested & sent to it. A splendid chapter, to say nothing of newspaper articles."[2]

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[2] London, "The American Abyss: [Notes for a Sociological Study of New York and Chicago]," JL 438 and the typescript of these notes, JL 437. He wrote some of these notes on the back of his newspaperman's business card, which read "Jack London New

He wanted to advocate for prison reform, but from the inside out. This experientially informed subject-position was similar to the position of the hobo author, but it was more limited in scope. It had a focus that indicated a larger concept of authorial identity than the hobo author.[3]

After weighing his options and carefully considering the new directions his ideas about being author were taking him, he turned Collier's very lucrative offer down. In the next chapter, we will look more closely at a competing offer and the reasons he took that one and not Collier's. Collier, despite the attractiveness of his plan, did hit three sour notes with London, which may have been deciding factors. First, Collier's deal threatened to tie London to a single magazine for too long. He wasn't ready to be exclusive with his serializations. The second was that Collier wanted exclusive book rights; London knew he might be able to bargain with Collier on this point, but he was not interested in bargaining, as we will see in his similar interaction with Casper Whitney, the editor of *Outing,* who published *White Fang* despite his failed effort to get book rights. The third was Collier's reluctance for London to write overtly radical socialist essays: "Yours is not an academic socialism, I know, and I believe there are men and women everywhere whose wrongs have never had a voice, for whom you are peculiarly qualified to speak. Not that the note of rebellion need predominate, but that it might be made incidental to a sort of patriotic propaganda." "Patriotic propaganda" sounded just like "Fourth of July oratory," something London detested. To write while

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York Journal New York American Chicago American San Francisco Examiner Los Angeles Examiner."

[3] See the next chapter for a link between these notes and "The Apostate."

suppressing his political beliefs ran contrary to London's maturing sense of his authorial office. Although still very much a bohemian author, attracted to the life of travel, adventure, and writing, he was more and more intent on becoming a public scourge of American capitalism. He needed the appropriate public venue to do this, and Collier could not provide it.

He was also writing fiction with a new imperative. His contractual security with George Brett and Macmillan and Company forestalled any concerns about book publication. Brett, amazingly enough, even consented to publish *Scorn of Women.* Having temporarily finished his long flirtation with the theater world (he would return to playwrighting in the next decade), London returned to his more accomplished vocation and began writing stories that he wanted to represent his best work. Experimentation in one genre was necessary for maintaining expertise in another. His artistic accomplishments coupled with his fame now produced a surprising turn of events: In early 1905, he sold the serial rights to *White Fang* before he had even begun it.[4]

On 4 December 1904, he told Brett about his new novel idea. London now trusted Brett completely; we remember when in early December 1902 he had begun *The Call of the Wild* and hid it from Bret's sight.[5] It's possible that London was prompted to write *White Fang* by a newspaper article that he clipped and saved in his scrapbook the day before. "The Call of the Tame: An Antithesis," by Flora Haines Loughead, is both a book review of *Call* and a report about a real dog named Bones, born in the North and brought

[4] See London, letter to Brett, 7 Mar. 1905, *Letters,* 1:470.

[5] See London, letter to Brett, 4 Dec. 1904, *Letters,* 1:454.

back to San Jose.[6] "I'm dropping you a line hot with the idea," wrote London. "I have the idea for the next book I shall write—along the first part of next year. Not a sequel to *Call*

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[6] See Flora Haines Loughead, "The Call of the Tame: An Antithesis," *San Francisco Chronicle,* 4 Dec. 1904, Jack London Scrapbooks, vol. 5, reel 3. Earle Labor unqualifiedly asserts that London got the idea for *White Fang* from this newspaper article, and he may be right; that repetition of the word *antithesis* in the headline for the story and in London's letter to Brett is strong textual evidence of the link. But, typical of Labor's dismissive attitude toward London's creative process, he says London read the article and "was quick to see the marketing possibilities." (Labor, *An American* Life, 210). London began a story neither because he knew it would sell nor because he had read a single source; he always had a combination of aesthetic, political, and intellectual reasons to begin a work, and he always relied on several sources. Even if he did get the idea from Loughhead to write a story about a wolf-dog who is "rescued" from the North, he tried out various ideas in essays and stories between December 1904 and July 1905. And he was reading other possible sources like Stewart Edward White's *The Silent Places.* London wasn't going to follow Loughead's lead; he would transform her idea completely, as we will see, according to his return to the absorptive state and his principal concern about the nature of his imagination. At most, Loughhead gave him the direction his plot should take, which, given London's propensity to revisit plots from previous stories, would probably have occurred to him sooner or later.

Weirdly, nine years later, London wrote a fan, thanking him for liking *The Call of the Wild.* In the very next sentence, he wrote, "Now I am wondering if you have ever read my Call of the Tame-----the tale of a wolf-dog of the Northland who drifted south to

of the Wild. But a companion to *Call of the Wild.* I'm going to reverse the process. Instead of the devolution or decivilization of a dog, I'm going to give the evolution, the civilization of a dog.—development of domesticity, faithfulness, love, morality, and all the amenities and virtues. And it will be a *proper* companion-book—in the same style, grasp, concrete way. Have already mapped part of it out. A complete antithesis to the *Call of the Wild.*"[7] That week he also wrote to Charmian with the same message, but he sent her his preliminary notes (which don't survive, but which he described as "the *motif* for my very next book").[8] The *motif* or theme at least initially was the ethics of evolution and how Darwin forecasted the evolutionary basis for human cooperation.[9] London was

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California and came into the domestic fold. The name of the book is WHITE FANG." (London, letter to Nielsine Larsen-Ledet, 5 Nov. 1915, JL 12339). London (deliberately?) misreads his novel three different ways: it is not the call of the tame; White Fang does not "drift" south; and he "came into the domestic fold" in the North while living in Weedon Scott's cabin.

[7] London, letter to Brett, 5 Dec. 1904, *Letters,* 1:454-55.

[8] London, letter to Charmian Kittredge, *Letters,* [? 5 Dec. 1904], *Letters,* 1:455.

[9] For a historical recuperation of Darwin the evolutionary ethicist, see Robert J. Richards, *Darwin and the Emergence of Evolutionary Theories of Mind and Behavior* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). For those who believe in the centrality of Herbert Spencer's thought to London's life—and there's no denying that he read, absorbed, promoted, but also critiqued Spencer's work—see ibid, p. 246: "The central problem with which Spencer struggled and in terms of which his scientific efforts must be understood is that of moral behavior: more precisely, how the natural processes of evolution could

beginning to think how biology might support at least some aspects of socialism. We will also see how the novel dovetailed with its immediate short story predecessors in terms of their treatment of the emotional content of landscape and its connection to the imagination.

As he told Brett, he had no intention of starting *White Fang* right away. He thought he would begin writing in February while on board *The Spray* with Cloudesley Johns, a kind of duplication of his writing scene for *The Sea-Wolf*, but he abandoned the effort and wrote "Revolution" instead.[10] After the trip was over and he had written two short stories, he learned from Casper Whitney, the editor of *Outing,* that they wouldn't publish the novel until spring 1906. Still, he thought he would try again. He asked his

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produce a moral society." London grasped this "central problem" and then disagreed with Spencer's sociological solutions. Spencer was no radical revolutionary socialist. He was also, as Richards elaborates, limited in intellectual curiosity. "A letter from a friend captured the young Spencer's habit of mind: `You talk of your power of writing a long letter with very little material; but that is a mere trifle to your facility for building up a formidable theory on precious slight foundations.'" (250). One could say that Spencer's famous "adamantine line of demarkation he draws between the knowable and the unknowable" is the highest instance of his way of thinking, a line that London rendered soft; he believed in the unknowable (especially if it rendered both the deist and the atheist "imbecile"), but pursued it anyway. His mind, like Darwin's, was constantly curious. (London, letter to Cloudesley Johns, 12 June 1899, *Letters,* 1:86, 85).

[10] See London, letter to Brett, 21 Feb. 1905, *Letters,* 1:468. As a result of this trip, Johns became active in the Socialist Party and gave his first lecture that summer.

friend the librarian Frederick Bamford for material on wolves—their mating and cub-rearing practices.[11] But three days later, when he got the information Bamford had sent him, he decided to set it aside again, blaming *Outing*'s publication schedule for his procrastination.[12] Instead, he wrote his review of *The Walking Delegate,* "All Gold Canyon," and "Planchette." Finally, on 27 June, he completed his first thousand pages.

He had other concerns in late 1904, early 1905. Revolution was in the air. In the presidential election of 1900, the socialists and Eugene Debs placed fourth, behind even the Prohibition Party. In 1904, they placed third, gaining almost 3 percent of the popular vote while the Prohibition Party did not earn 1 percent. The socialists had quintupled their vote total in a short span of time. The enthusiastic and rapidly growing response of American voters to the socialist cause electrified London and other socialists. This event prompted a turning point in his political writing exemplified by three pieces he wrote in the winter of 1904-1905: "Great Socialist Vote Explained" for the *San Francisco*

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[11] See London, letter to Bamford, 8 May 1905, *Letters,* 1:480.

[12] See London, letter to Brett, 11 May 1905, *Letters,* 1:481. Because *Outing* does "not expect to publish it in the magazine until the first part of 1906. . . . while I am all ready to begin it, I have put back beginning it for a month or so, in the meantime turning out some short stories." If he really was ready to write it, he would have jumped on it, for he had just asked for half payment upon receipt of manuscript and half "when publication begins." (London, handwritten note at bottom of Whitney, letter to London, 18 Apr. 1905, JL 20301). Instead, he was still trying out ideas for the novel in the stories he was writing. That, and he was deep into stories of the Southland, not ready to return to the North.

Examiner, the preface to *War of the Classes,* and perhaps his most famous essay, and certainly his most infamous lecture (based on the essay), "Revolution." The preface, which we have already examined, acts as a hinge between the *Examiner* piece and "Revolution." All three share ideas, phrases, tone, and rhetoric. In personal terms, this election brightened his life and gave him hope for the future of his country. London, after he wrote *Martin Eden,* declared that, unlike his main character who commits suicide, the people had saved him; that is, his belief in the common man's ability to rise up against the master class seemed affirmed. If indeed London was depressed during this time—he called it his "long sickness," though it seems to have been a bout of the blues occasioned by his breakup with Bessie, and it certainly didn't hinder either his creativity or his production—he might have been alluding to the effects of the 1904 election, which elevated his mood considerably.[13]

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[13] On the face of it, the blues seemed as far from his door as possible. Excited about his new ventures into the theater and playwrighting, ecstatic over Eugene Debs's vote totals in the 1904 election, and busy loving both Blanche Partington and his soon-to-be-bride Charmian Kittredge (and there may have been others), he nonetheless claimed he was losing interest in life. Of course his very public breakup with Bessie London (especially for someone who sought so hard to protect his inner life from public scrutiny) the minute he returned from Japan was upsetting, even depressing. Two months later, though, he seems to have regained a fair amount of emotional balance. We recall from the previous chapter how important George Bernard Shaw was to his writing in 1904. In a 30 August letter, London tells his paramour Partington that Shaw knew the difference between living with life-sustaining illusions and living with naïve optimism. Explaining to

Blanche why she as a woman was irritated by Shaw, he wrote, "Why shouldn't Shaw irritate you? Truth is usually the most irritating thing in life. . . . As a man, had I a few of the commoner illusions left to me, I'd be intensely obtuse to Shaw, or intensely irritated by him. . . . All the optimism in me (which is the life germane) would rise up in revolt. Only the life survives that finds life good, and life can be found good only through illusion. . . . But you may ask me, therefore, how I manage to continue living, having lost the commoner illusions? And I answer, by replacing them by a single illusion, by an attitude of non-seriousness, by watching the serious worms write most seriously and by being amused thereby." Not only does this passage remind us of his depressed state in December 1898 but also of his debate between the white logic and the optimist in *John Barleycorn.* In other words, if indeed he were depressed during 1904-1905, it was no different from other times. Joan London and Andrew Sinclair trace the "long sickness" to 1901 (Joan chalks it up to the end of his relationship with McClure (229-30), Sinclair to his debts and failing marriage to Bess (81-82)), but it could be traced back even further than 1898. We recall his very early essay "Pessimism, Optimism, and Patriotism" from 1895 in which he aligned a pessimistic outlook on life with the working class. London was a born pessimist, who tended to the extremes of joyousness and self-pity. So, when Charles Watson asserts that 1904 was a period of "Nietzschean `long sickness'" (supposed proof of which may be found in his "relatively desultory and unproductive year"), or Labor, who copies Sinclair in titling the chapter for 1904 "The Long Sickness," attributes the depression to marital and love difficulties, we see an attempt to construct some kind of emotional narrative arc for a life that routinely and quite naturally moved from depression to joy, over and over, year after year. It's easy, though, to be seduced by

"Revolution" is the culmination of the thought processes begun with "Great Socialist Vote Explained" and continued with the preface to *War of the Classes*. I should say that all three essays are intellectually founded on the political essays he wrote in 1903, "The Class Struggle" in particular. London renewed his enthusiasm for the cause after the election because electoral politics had proven more efficacious than he had

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London's grandiose rhetoric; of course when he is depressed it isn't mere depression. No, it must be "a long sickness," and it must be just like Nietzsche's. London may even have used the term as an excuse to Charmian to explain why he didn't want to settle down with a single woman. The truth that he found out about relationships is that marriage, however distasteful, is preferable to the instability of successive lovers. Charmian knew that London's "long sickness" was, in addition to all its other connotations, a euphemism for delay in attaching himself to her permanently. In her catalogue of books read in 1904-5, she writes about four works of Nietzsche (*A Genealogy of Morals, The Antichrist, The Case of Wagner,* and *Thus Spake* Zarathustra), "How he helped and comforted me, thru' his [that is, Nietzsche's] `Long Sickness' to understand the Long Sickness of one I loved, and who helped me all thru' my Long Sickness of body and mind. Dear Nietzsche!" (Charmian Kittredge, "Books I Have Read," JL 171). Of course one might read this as the gratitude of someone who had to witness the severe depression, however temporary, of a lover. But, to me, it reads more plausibly as the hopeful gratitude of a person who might see her unrequited love turned into mutual affection. See the previous chapter, footnote 107, for London's comment to Blanche Partington that he regarded his pessimism as a character flaw, not something he was proud of. It's as if he knew he had done Charmian wrong.

thought it ever would. It had laid the groundwork for the real revolution. Previously, he had thought elections, at worse, were a distraction and a detour from the real work of revolutionaries. Now he saw it as the first step. In one of his clearest statements of what concrete steps socialists would take to institute the new regime, he wrote, "the working-class, socialist revolt is a revolt against the capitalist class. The Socialist party aims to capture the political machinery of society. With the political machinery in its hands, which will also give it the control of the police, the army, the navy and the courts, its plan is to confiscate, with or without remuneration, all the possessions of the capitalist class which are used in the production and distribution of the necessaries and luxuries of life. By this it means to apply the law of eminent domain to the land and to extend the law of eminent domain till it embraces the mines, the factories, the railroads and the ocean carriers." This, then, is the goal "of the American citizens who have raised the red banner of revolt." Class struggle, saw London, could be conducted, at least initially through the electoral process. His conclusion illuminates his change of tactics. Tired of the pointless violence of strikes, he writes, "It is not a strife of lockout and blacklist, strike and boycott, employers' associations and labor unions, strike-breakers and broken heads, armed Pinkertons and injunctions, policemen's clubs and machine guns. It is a peaceable and orderly revolt at the ballot box, under democratic conditions, where the majority rules."[14] He was also characterizing the socialist movement as a law-abiding movement

[14] London, "Great Socialist Vote Explained," *San Francisco Examiner,* 10 Nov. 1904, n.p. Jack London Scrapbook, vol. 6, reel 3. London wrote to Anna Strunsky after the article appeared, saying, "Austin Lewis called the Socialist-Vote article in *Examiner,* `socialism of 1860'" and then humorously remarked, "I'm afraid I've grown old and

to broaden its appeal. In "Revolution," however, he made his complete feelings about the electoral process known. If voting worked, fine. But "if the law of the land does not permit [the socialists'] peaceable destruction of society ["at the ballot-box"], and if they have force meted out to them, they resort to force themselves. They meet violence with violence. Their hands are strong, and they are unafraid."[15] Note the emphasis on hands, for hands will become a synechdoche for both union power and union weakness in *The Iron Heel* and *The Valley of the Moon.*[16]

An editorial in the *San Francisco Call* foretold the future. If William Randolph Hearst (who labeled London in a sidebar accompanying his essay as "one of the world's greatest authorities on socialism"), Jack London, William Jennings Bryan, and the entire Democratic Party were to combine under the banner of socialism, then America would not be merely a classless society. It would become a private-property-less society. "That

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crystallized." (London, letter to Strunsky, [2 Dec. 1904], *Letters,* 1:454. Austin thought Proudhonianism was outdated and favored a centralized state apparatus to control the economy, not local community control.

[15] London, "Revolution."

[16] Sometimes, even in *The Iron Heel* and *The Valley of the Moon,* hands signify atavistic tendencies. See Agnes Malinowska, "From Atavistic Gutter-Wolves to Anglo-Saxon Wolf," *The Oxford Handbook of Jack London,* ed. Jay Williams (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 44-45. Atavistic strength, however, is not incompatible with modern progressive and revolutionary acts to change society.

is the purpose of Socialism."[17] London himself had quoted from similar editorials in his preface to *War of the Classes.* "The Democratic Party of the Constitution is dead. The Social-Democratic Party of continental Europe, preaching discontent and class hatred, assailing law, property, and personal rights, and insinuating confiscation and plunder, is here." Hysteria and fear among the ruling classes were palpable, and London was intent on exploiting it all. Like an attack dog, he went for the throat. As we will see in the next chapter, his political speeches during his 1905-1906 lecture tour enraged thousands.

For London—as for the *Chicago Chronicle*—the rise of socialism wasn't just a matter of national politics. It was a true international movement. As he said in the preface, socialism "presents a new spectacle to the astonished world,--*that of an organized, international, revolutionary movement.*" In his analysis of the election, London quoted a 1904 statement from Japanese socialists to Russian socialists enjoining them to repudiate the "imperialist" war between their states. "For us Socialists, there are no boundaries, race, country or nationality." In "Revolution," he quoted the same statement to make the same point, and he further elaborates: Socialism "passes over geographical lines, transcends race prejudice, and has even proved itself mightier than the Fourth-of-July spread-eagle Americanism of our forefathers."[18] In "Great Socialist Vote Explained" he cites the formation of socialist groups in Cuba at the end of the Spanish-American War, and the same sentence appears almost verbatim in "Revolution."

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[17] "The Socialist Campaign," *San Francisco Call,* 15 Nov. 1904, Jack London scrapbooks, vol. 6, reel 3.

[18] London, "Revolution," *Revolution and Other Essays* (New York: Macmillan and Company, 1910), 5.

Revolution was an international event, there were 7 million socialists worldwide to make it happen, and in his new major essay he took pains to list the numbers of socialists in a dozen foreign countries. As Joan London said, "Although Jack [after his time in Korea and Japan] did not alter his opinion of the Japanese, he soon confined open expression of his dislike to friends, and in public utterance made an effort to keep his socialistic perspective."[19]

In "Revolution," he also repeated his emphasis in "Great Socialist Vote Explained" on the transmission of socialist thought through print. Contrasting populism's temporary success with socialism's years-long rising popularity, London grounds that popularity in the education of the masses through circulars, newspapers, pamphlets, and magazines written and produced by socialists. In "Revolution" he briefly reiterates this point: "This revolution is unlike all other revolutions in many respects. . . . It has also a literature a myriad times more imposing, scientific, and scholarly than the literature of any previous revolution." Here we see the originary thought that led to his participation in the Intercollegiate Socialist Society in 1905-1907. We tend to forget that London's massive outpouring of socialist writing was only part of an even more massive international print culture of socialist thought. As a result, the propagation of socialism was an educational program as much as it was a political movement, and London established himself as a leading professor. As Jason Martinek says in his recent study, "If American socialists in the Progressive Era had a central axiom, it was `Workers of the World, Read!' Indeed, for turn-of-the-twentieth-century socialists, reading was a radical

[19] Joan London, *Jack London and His Times,* 284-85.

act. . . . The printed word, they believed, was `mental dynamite.'"[20] Literacy rates had risen in America at the turn of the century to coincide with the so-called golden age of magazine publishing; it was the last historical moment that books and other printed matter had little competition from other media. In a telling analysis, London contrasts the failure of populism and the People's Party with the rising success of socialism and finds that the print-based educational program of the latter gave it the substance and staying power that populism lacked. "Behind the Socialist movement in the United States is a most imposing philosophic and scientific literature. It owns illustrated magazines and reviews high in quality, dignity, and restraint; it possesses hundreds of weekly papers which circulate throughout the land, single papers which have subscribers by the hundreds of thousands, and it literally swamps the working classes in a vast sea of tracts and pamplets."[21] For London, just as writing had its absorptive and theatrical qualities, so too did reading. When one wrote in a theatrical mode, one hoped to instigate action in the

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[20] Jason Martinek, *Socialism and Print Culture in America, 1897-1920* (Pickering and Chatto: London, 2012) , 1. In analyzing the factors that allowed socialist publishing startups like Charles H. Kerr, Wilshire Book Company, and Appeal to Reason Publishing Company to become successful, Martinek points to the decrease in second-class postage as a key factor that kept costs down. Martinek's conclusion about the centrality of the post office and mail carriers in disseminating the word of socialism should make Jonathan Auerbach's heart sing: "The Post Office was an agent of change in the Progressive Era and contributed to socialism's spread" (Martinek, 4). See Jonathan Auerbach, *Male Call.*

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

reader. The reader then took this imperative and became an actor in the political theater. Later in the twentieth century, the Black Power movement would discover these same truths, and not surprisingly both movements were largely working class in origin.

London emphasizes the transmission of ideology through print for another reason. Newspaper editors are "parasites themselves on the capitalist class by moulding public opinion." Unwilling to indict all editors—he was after all routinely given a public platform in Hearst's *San Francisco Examiner*—London nonetheless moans "of a loss of pride in his species"—not the human species but rather the species of newspapermen, and its not entirely unlikely that London was recollecting that moment in Japan when he embraced a Japanese reporter for offering help out of a predicament. But even the clear-eyed, sympathetic editor is "ruled by stomach-incentive, is usually afraid to say what he thinks about" socialism and the class struggle.[22] So, newspapers become a place to lecture from, and in this way, as Cecelia Tichi has conclusively shown, London became a prominent public intellectual, judged apart from his success as a novelist.

Not surprisingly, London repeats two tactics in "Revolution" from *The People of the Abyss.*[23] First, in the latter he compared the lives of the London poor to those of First

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[22] London, "Revolution," 36, 37. In the next chapter I discuss this issue in connection with his lecture tour.

[23] London makes the connection explicit between *The People of the Abyss* and the speech "Revolution." When he delivered the speech at the University of California, Berkeley, he said, "When I was in London writing my book `The People of the Abyss," I went down to Kent with a London cockney to pick hops." He then cites his friend's poverty and that of England's and Europe's struggling poor as causes for the increase in socialism's

Peoples and found that modern capitalism, despites its machinery and modernity, had failed to provide basic necessities that so-called primitive peoples took for granted. The same was true in America, though now, instead of using Native Americans as his example, he turned to "the caveman," a harbinger of his novel *Before Adam.* (We will see in chapter 16 how London's earliest draft of "Revolution" grew out of his experience in the East End and how *Before Adam* can be read as a socialist tract.) "The caveman" becomes the ally of the socialist: "Why is it that millions of modern men live more miserably than lived the caveman? This is the question the revolutionist asks." ("Revolution") The second tactic is to catalog a number of newspapers articles about the despair of the poor, the stories of suicides and starvation. Having considered writing an essay about the poor of New York City back in 1902-1903, and thinking back on his recent note taking for an *American Abyss,* he now was able to use his old research to great effect.[24] "In the city of New York 50,000 children go hungry to school every morning," he writes, and so, for the sake of the children, we must have revolutionary socialism. Capitalism kills kids! Another newspaper article he used cried out "Mother Strangles Two Babies," the story of Mary Mead and how poverty drove her to kill two of her three children.[25] Given the sensationalistic intent of these articles one might equate

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membership (London, "Jack London to University Students," *People's Paper,* 18 Feb. 1905, 1). Thanks to Dan Wichlan for providing me with this text.

[24] See volume 1, 415.

[25] "Mother Strangles Her Two Babies: Tried to Kill a Third and Drank Poison—Crazed by Her Hunger," undated, uncited newspaper clipping, Jack London Scrapbooks, vol. 27. I estimate its date as 1905 because it is surrounded on its page by articles that are dated

London's use of newspapers with Donald Trump's citation of the *National Enquirer* for facts about Hillary Clinton's alien baby or whatever preposterous tale he wanted to tell during and after the 2016 campaign. It is too easy, however, to equate the sensationalism of 1905 with that of 2016. After one hundred years of newspaper stories about domestic tragedies even worse than the Meds', we crave an intenser form of print sensationalism, something that unfortunately relies on the fictional. Facts about the poor and starving have lost their shock value. But, for London, that interpellation of newspaper articles with "Revolution" gives his fervid rhetoric an empirical grounding, a hallmark of his way of constructing a human document.

The final point to make about "Revolution" is its advocacy for a bohemian economics that would ground a bohemian lifestyle. True to all bohemians, London wanted all people to partake, if they so wished, of an easier, softer way of life. As he says in the essay, capitalists aren't to be deplored because of their wealth. Being a rich man himself, that would be hypocritical. No, the awfulness of capitalism is the mismanagement of the distribution of wealth, a theme he promoted in "What

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1905. It is followed on the next page by two more sensational newspaper articles that London used: "Asked Vagrancy Sentence," undated, uncited newspaper clipping, and "Gas Ends the Life of a Man Who Would Not Beg, Steal nor Starve," undated, uncited newspaper clipping, Jack London Scrapbooks, vol. 27. For maximum pathos, the editors illustrated the latter item with a reproduction of Robbins's suicide note superimposed on his penciled portrait.

Communities Lose by the Competitive System."[26] As we saw in volume one of the present work, American society needs to be reorganized along economically altruistic lines for the country to regain its soul. America, in its post-Industrial Revolution state, has everything it needs to feed its entire populace. This is the Machine Age, but unfortunately we have let the machines master us. The soulless machines have created a soulless economy. "With the natural resources of the world, the machinery already invented, a rational organization of production and distribution, and an equally rational elimination of waste, the able-bodied workers would not have to labor more than two or three hours per day to feed everybody, to clothe everybody, house everybody, educate everybody, and give a fair measure of little luxuries to everybody. . . . Not only would matter be mastered, but the machine would be mastered." The goal is not simply to revise the production and distribution of wealth. That is the means to the real end. The real end is honest leisure time and luxury. The goal is to work, not twelve or ten or even seven and a half hours a day. Bohemian Jack wants everyone to enjoy life to its fullest, and you can't enjoy life if you are working more than two or three hours a day. "In such a day incentive would be finer and nobler than the incentive of to-day, which is the incentive of the stomach [in his earlier essay he called this competitive economics]. . . . On the

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[26] One more theme, though in minor key in 1904-5, was the intersection of religion and politics. Just as he was contemplating writing his Christ novel while working on "What Communities Lose by the Competitive System," so too he thematized the congruence between revolutionary socialism and Christianity: "Not only is it a cold-blooded economic propaganda, but it is in essence a religious propaganda, with a fervor in it akin to the fervor of Paul and Christ."

contrary [people] would be impelled to action as a child in a spelling match is impelled to action, as boys and girls at games, as scientists formulating law, as inventors applying law, as artists and sculptors painting canvases and shaping clay, as poets and statesmen serving humanity by singing and by state-craft [note the conjunction of poet and statesman, which is a way of saying the absorptive and the theatrical]." Spelling bees, games, scientific discovery, art: all become the same because all are created in a time of genuine leisure. The brotherhood of man is an admirable utopian dream, but London adds to it the dream of "the spiritual, intellectual, and artistic uplift" caused by right economics leading to honest, moral leisure time.

In general, then, "Revolution" derives directly from the preface to *War of the Classes* and "Great Socialist Vote Explained," and, further back, from his work from 1903--"The Class Struggle," "The Scab," and of his reviews of Brooks and Ghent's work—and even further back from his first expositions on populism, pessimism, and public ownership of utilities. It grounds socialism on the power of print culture. In short, "Revolution" represents the culmination and distillation of his socialist thought. If there is one essay from which radiates all the intellectual influences on and future implications of London's socialist thought, it is "Revolution." Consider, too, how London made use of it while writing *The Iron Heel* in 1906. For these reasons, it took the place for the most part of "The Class Struggle," "The Tramp," and "The Scab" when he chose to give a speech.

But he also placed it at the top of his speeches queue because he had now decided to distance himself from those who were antagonists to the Cause. Thus, it completely alienated him from middle and upper classes in the Bay Area who had embraced him as a

great writer and, they thought, a part-time tame socialist. He reveled in the alienation. Johns went with him to deliver "Revolution" in Stockton, California, in 1905. He reports, "We ran up to Stockton [on the *Spray*] and were met at the wharf by a committee from the socialist local. . . . Jack was chuckling over the idea, knowing that most of the comrades in Stockton were polite parlor socialists who would be startled by his insistence upon the class character of the socialist movement."[27] After giving the speech, he berated the audience, viciously: "You are drones that cluster around the capitalistic honey-vats. You are ignoramuses. Your fatuous self-sufficiency blinds you to the revolution that is surely, surely coming, and which will as surely wipe you and your silk-lined, puffed up leisure off the face of the map. You are parasites on the back of labor."[28] Note that one

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[27] Johns, "Who the Hell *Is* Cloudesley Johns?" ed. James Williams, *Jack London Journal* 5 (1998): 123.

[28] Quoted in Mark Zamen, *Standing Room Only: Jack London's Controversial Career as a Public Speaker* (Peter Lang: New York, 1990), 104. This quotation from the reporter on the scene may be a combination of what London said after his speech and what he said in the speech. In "Revolution," we find this line: "They [members of the capitalist class] are like the drones clustered about the honey-vats when the worker-bees spring upon them to end their rotund existence." Johns reports that after the lecture, "one agitated comrade told him mournfully, while others nodded their grieved agreement: `Comrade London, I believe you have set back the socialist movement at least fifty years.' Jack simply grinned at the moment. Long afterward, commenting upon that dire prediction, he said, `I cannot believe I have had any such tremendous influence in the socialist movement, but

can read this prediction as a violent overthrow not just of an economic system but of Veblenian "leisure" engendered by wealth. And just as capitalist economics needs to be replaced by bohemian economics, so too does capitalist leisure activities ("silk-lined, puffed up") need to be replaced by bohemian, healthy pursuits. The crack about "leisure" may be an allusion to his reading in Thorstein Veblen, though it certainly is an outgrowth of his understanding of how the free time of the wealthy is different from the free time of the bohemian. As noted in the previous chapter, he and Cloudesley Johns had read *Theory of the Leisure Class* out loud to each other. *Leisure,* as Veblen defined it, "does not connote indolence or quiescence. What it connotes is non-productive consumption of time. Time is consumed non-productively (1) from a sense of the unworthiness of productive work, and (2) as an evidence of pecuniary ability to afford a life of idleness." 43. This definition of *leisure* is very different from a bohemian definition of the same word. For a bohemian such as London, leisure is equivalent to loafing and is evidence of the impecuniously enforced lack of productive time. That is, since money is of no consequence neither is it necessary to use leisure time to show the public one can afford not to work. Nor is it necessary to obtain "some tangible, lasting results of the leisure so spent." (44) A leisured gentleman (or capitalist) does not value labor, especially "industrial employment" (45); therefore, he needs to exhibit the results of leisure time to display both his antipathy to labor and his ability to avoid it. These results take the form of "quasi-scholarly or quasi-artistic accomplishments" and range from the raising and racing of dogs to the learning of Latin and Greek. (45). London and other bohemians

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if I have had any influence at all, I believe I hac advanced the cause of socialism, the accomplishment of the revolution, by as much as five minutes.'" (123).

escape the life of labor without denigrating it, which is why London's emphasis on its bodily and soulful harm is so important. (If labor with one's hands weren't so dangerous then it would be entirely appropriate for all, even children.) And, needless to say, the tangible results of the bohemian life of leisure are true art and true scholarship.

Unlike "What Communities Lose by the Competitive System," "Revolution" dispenses with polite rhetoric. The goals are the same, only the tactics have changed. With fame comes frankness. He told his friend Frederick Bamford that his presentation of "Revolution" at University of California, Berkeley, "was not to modify [by which he must mean reform] but to make it a stinging blow, right between the eyes [like a boxer's punch to the face], and shake their mental processes up a bit, even if I incurred the risk of being called a long-haired anarchist."[29] London has stopped being polite, and this affected the publication history of "Revolution." He first submitted the essay to *Cosmopolitan,* presumably because they had published and awarded first prize to "What

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[29] London, letter to Frederick L. Bamford, 8 June 1905, *Letters,* 1:491. Hair length as well as clothing have been markers of countercultural freedom and agonistic politics from at least the turn of the last century to today. When Jeremy Corbyn was elected the leader of Britain's Labour Party in September 2015, he was consistently described as "invariably informally dressed without a tie" and "disheveled." (Laura Smith-Spark, "Jeremy Corbyn Elected Leader of UK Opposition Labour Party," CNN, www.cnn.com/2015/09/12/europe/uk-labour-party-leader-corbyn/; "Jeremy Corbyn Wins Labour Leadership: International Reaction," www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/Jeremy_Corbyn/11861461/Jeremy-Corbyn-wins-Labour-leadership-international-reaction.html)

Communities Lose by the Competitive System." But five years had passed, and John Brisben Walker, now assisted by his son, balked at the radicality of "Revolution." They offered London $100 and immediate publication, but when London turned their offer down, Walker, Sr. wrote back, remembering the good old days: "I much regretted that our telegraphic correspondence did not result in your article appearing in The Cosmopolitan. Owing to the cost of telegraphing to San Francisco I was unable to explain to you the difference which we make between an article like that which you were kind enough to submit, which we must publish at considerable risk to the Cosmopolitan, and which risk is taken con amore, and that character of article which carries popularity with it. However, it is probable that your essay will do more good in some other magazine less radical in its ordinary proclivities."[30] An earlier letter to London, from Walker *fils,* was even more friendly: "I return herewith your manuscript. I had it made ready for the press and set up part of it. Mr Walker [that is, his father] is writing you in regard to his reason for offering you the price which he did. The price which you named to me for fiction and essays would be satisfactory, and I hope you will permit me to see something of yours very soon. If the manuscript has been in any way hurt I hope you will have it copied and send me the bill. I am glad to hear that you are over your illness [London had had an operation for shingles]."[31] The Walkers practiced their kindnesses with London in part because they did value him as a constant author, but also because the magazine's finances "showed a sharp decline" and needed to keep a popular author like London in their stable. Unfortunately, as Frank Luther Mott describes it, Walker, Sr., "had become so involved

[30] John Brisban Walker, letter to London, 28 Apr. 1905, JL 19841.

[31] James Randolph Walker, letter to London, 5 Apr. 1905, JL 19840.

in automobile manufacturing and allied activities" that he decided to sell the magazine to William Randolph Hearst (whose middle name, interestingly enough, was shared by Walker's son) in 1905.[32] Bailey Millard, former literary editor at Hearst's *San Francisco Examiner* and a friend of London's, became the editor and quickly asked London for a contribution to the series "What Life Means to Me." London was becoming a Hearst author in more ways than one.[33]

After the rejection by *Cosmopolitan,* London tried *McClure* and then *Atlantic Monthly.* He changed the way he pitched the essay, downplaying his passion and his

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[32] Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines,* 5 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957), 4:491-92.

[33] London would deny this, however. In his cover letter for "Revolution" to *Collier's,* London lied to Collier about his experience with *Cosmopolitan,* saying that "Walker was going to publish it in *Cosmopolitan,* but that we disagreed about rates [true], and before we could settle said disagreement, the *Cosmopolitan* passed into the hands of Hearst. And you can depend upon it that the article was too strong meat for any of Hearst's publications." (London, letter to the editor, *Collier's Weekly,* 1 Aug. 1905, *Letters,* 1:506). Actually, as Walker had explained to London, he was willing to publish the essay even though it was too radical for his audience's taste, but they just couldn't pay London's price. That was in April. Hearst didn't buy *Cosmopolitan* and replace Walker until the end of summer. Again, London had published a very radical essay on the election of 1904, a precursor to "Revolution" in fact, in Hearst's newspaper, so Hearst could certainly have stomached "Revolution." London, however, did not want to be labeled as anyone's writer, let alone Hearst's.

conviction that the future would be revolutionary socialism. As he told Philo Buck in 1913 in a letter that contrasts the role and attitude of critics versus the role and attitude of essayists, "Please, please remember that the big things lie in passion, and in passionate expression. Truly there are passionate socialists, truly there are passionate lookers toward the future. And believe me I am one of these." Then he quoted the epigram for "Revolution" ("The present is enough for common souls. / Who never looking forward, are indeed mere clay / Wherein the footprints of their age / Are petrified forever.") and asserted "I have yet to find the critic who petrified any of the footprints of his age."[34] But now, in 1905, faced with the prospect of having his seminal essay on socialism rejected by every magazine, he played up the essay's empiricism: "it is an essay composed of facts. There is not one bit of prophecy in it. . . . The Revolutionists exist. . . . You will note that I do not say their doctrines are *right.* I merely state what their doctrines are, in the process of describing things that exist."[35] True, "the Revolutionists" did exist and in larger numbers than ever before. But to conclude the essay with "the revolution is a fact. . . . The revolution is here, now. Stop it who can" does not aspire to the same concreteness. That is, one might argue that, given the fact that Debs didn't win a single electoral vote, the revolution had not yet arrived. To announce its arrival is, though, does not have to be "prophecy." As we'll see in chapter 19, we might call it jeremiad.

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[34] London, letter to Philo M. Buck, Jr., 1 Mar. 1913, *Letters,* 3:1133. The epigraph is taken from James Russell Lowell's poem "A Glance behind the Curtain." See the discussion of the cover of *Before Adam* in chapter 17.

[35] London, letter to the editor, *Atlantic Monthly,* 6 May 1905.

McClure, too, balked at the prophetic mode in which it was seemingly written. McClure, who had rejected every piece of nonfiction London had sent him since October 1901, was kind, but only because he wanted fiction. "Yes," he began his rejection letter, using an affirmation of London's position and of his own agreement with the point of the essay, "`Revolution' does deal with a very live thing; and yet, though I can sympathize with your views, we cannot, editorially, agree that the facts you prophesy are so imminent. What is more, it has become a sort of unwritten law that McClure's shall, in general, deal with facts rather than with prophecies."[36] London answered him forcefully, though his letter is lost. McClure wrote back, "You take my breath away! Perhaps you are right; perhaps it is all in the point of view, and mine is not right yet?"[37] McClure might concede any point just to get another story out of London.

Like McClure, Bliss Perry at the *Atlantic* certainly was not snowed by London's attempt to appear objective, and he was perceptive enough to see how much of a Hearst writer London had become in terms of tone and audience appeal:

> This article does not seem to us adapted for use in the Atlantic. Our objection to it is based, not at all upon the ideas that are expressed, but upon the fact that it does not seem to us that you have chosen the right style of talk for an Atlantic audience. Forgive me for saying that many passages of the paper read precisely like editorials in one of the Hearst newspapers. These editorials are very ably and brilliantly adapted to the kind of people who read the Hearst papers, but it is not the style of address which we can profitably adopt in the Atlantic Monthly. I

[36] McClure, letter to London, 25 Apr. 1905, JL 14225.

[37] McClure, letter to London, 11 May 1905, JL 14226.

know you will forgive this unasked criticism, for I do not wish to take refuge behind the conventional editorial formula in your case.[38]

When London denied he was a Hearst writer, he did so to avoid the charge of sensationalism, even though his subject matter lent itself to that mode of representation. Debased theatricality becomes sensationalism, a mode of writing that London's facticity countered successfully.

London next tried *Everybody's,* and John O'Hara Cosgrave wrote a very friendly rejection: "Ten thousand apologies for having kept this so long, but it became a subject of controversy. A variety of people had to read it; the young and ardent spirits demanded it; some of the elders hesitated. The result was still older people had to be consulted. Age can generally be depended upon to err on the side of conservatism, and the consequence is that I return your manuscript with regret. It's a bully good piece of writing, and while I personally do not feel your case the case for revolution, it's capitally urged."[39] "Capitally urged," not cogently argued. Clearly, his immense fame as a fiction writer could not carry over into success with his political essays. Finally, in August 1905, he sent it to *Collier's Weekly* with practically the same just-the-facts-ma'am cover letter he used to *Atlantic.* Collier gave him $500 for the essay. Not only was the remuneration note-worthily high, but the mere fact that *Collier's* took it was shocking. "Just had a talk with your Randolph Walker," wrote Gaylord Wilshire to London a month later, "and he was astonished that Collier's should have taken such a hot article."[40] Even more shocking to London was

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[38] Bliss Perry, letter to London, 25 May 1905, JL 1972.

[39] John O'Hara Cosgrave, letter to London, 21 July 1905, JL 5173.

[40] H. Gaylord Wilshire, letter to JL, 5 Sept. 1905, JL 20526.

Collier's initial reluctance and then eventual reneging on their promise to publish the essay. At first Collier accepted essay with the same reservations Walker had; it would damage their subscription role: "I want to print your `firebrand' as a piece of literature, even though a few hundred thousand of our capitalist readers will stop their subscription. How much do you want for it? Don't penalize me too heavily for having the nerve to print it. Yours, for "Revolution"—not for revolution. Robert J. Collier."[41] Not only was *Collier's* audience unreceptive to radical socialism but so was the editor, as the final salutation indicates. London should have guessed what the outcome would be. They actually went so far as to set it in type and mail proofs to London, who corrected them and sent them back in October.[42] He received his $500 and never heard from them again until 1909 when he asked for the manuscript back.

Everybody in the New York publishing world found out that *Collier's* had gotten cold feet. A year after it was accepted, James Randolph Walker, now working for *The Times Magazine* in New York City, asked if "Revolution" were still available.[43] Also in 1906 Upton Sinclair asked London if he could get it back from *Collier's* since it had become apparent they were not going to do anything with it, and he wanted to publish it

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[41] Robert J. Collier, letter to London, 30 Aug. 1905, JL 5062.

[42] See London, letter to the editor, *Collier's Weekly,* 1 Aug. 1905, *Letters,* 1:506 n. 1.

[43] See James Randolph Walker, letter to London, 28 July 1906, JL 19845, and James Randolph Walker, telegram to London, 1906, JL 19849; there is no readable day and month on the telegram. Because this exchange occurs within the context of the publication of "The Wit of Porportuk," I will treat it at length in chapter 17.

in his new magazine.[44] London retained faith up till 1909, though he told Bamford as early as December 1905 that he feared they would renege. It had happened with *McClure's* and "The Question of the Maximum."[45] In 1908 it appeared overseas in *Contemporary Review*, thanks to James Pinker, London's agent overseas. London

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[44] Upton Sinclair, letter to London, 3 Oct. 1906, JL 18274.

[45] See London, letter to Bamford, 15 Dec. 1905, *Letters,* 1:539. McClure had used the excuse that the data of the essay had become dated, but that was only after it had languished in the editorial office. As with *Collier's* it was a case of an editor having the brain but not the heart to publish an essay that would offend readers. London said as much to James Randolph Walker in August 1906 when Walker wanted to publish "Revolution" in his new magazine: "I don't [know] what's the matter, but between you and me I imagine they have got cold feet. For God's sake don't tell them I said so. In which case, (the case of cold feet), you might make a dicker with them for it. You have my consent to do so. . . . Gee, I just have caught the significance of the name of the magazine that `Revolution' article of mine would certainly be appropriate. If you get around to using it, you have my full consent to disavow all responsibility for it, and belief in the content of it, just as long as you publish it." (London, letter to James R. Walker, 21 Aug. 1906, *Letters,* 2:602). In the next month, he asked Collier, "Why, oh why, don't you publish `Revolution'? You can disavow all responsibility for it, and attack it editorially in any way you please." He told Collier again at length that it was simply "a statement of fact," but Collier would neither respond nor budge (London, letter to Collier, 21 Sept. 1906, *Letters,* 2:610).

received twelve pounds.[46] And then in 1909, after paying London fifty dollars, Charles Kerr published it in *The International Socialist Review.* After years of donating material to the Cause—which he would not stop doing—he finally got paid for revolution.[47]

At the end of yet another dramatic reading of "Revolution," London gave his audience a hint of what his next work would be. "Jack London, the distinguished author, lectured in Shattuck Hall last evening on `Revolution,'" said the University of California, Berkeley, newspaper. "Owing, no doubt, to the speaker rather than the subject of the address, which was strictly Socialistic, the hall was well filled. The address was given under the auspices of the newly-formed Berkeley branch of Socialists. . . . [London said,] `I think that some day I shall prepare a lecture on "the Persistence of the Established," for it is the established that stands, and the socialistic, or revolutionary movement is

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[46] After Macmillan published *"Revolution" and Other Essays* and London had received his copies, he wanted to paste a photo of a three-year-old child at work in a shop into the front of the book, illustrating both his commitment to ending child labor and his emotional attachment to the plight of working children. See "Child Labor," unknown publication, 1912, JLE 1550, "Socialism," Jack London Subject File, box 555.

[47] See Mary E. Marcy, letter to Ninetta Wiley Eames Payne Springer, 28 July 1909, JL 14725. As Marcy explained a month later to London when she asked for a story for their upcoming Christmas number, "The Review circulation has jumped from a circulation of about 2,000 to nearly 20,000—within the past fourteen months. It is now beginning to pay for itself and we intend, as its circulation continues to grow, to make it ever better until it shall I time be the ideal magazine—of, by and FOR the PROLETARIAT" (Marcy, letter to London, 24 Aug. 1909, JL 14721).

established and will stand to the end.'"[48] At the very beginning of "Revolution," London wrote, "These are numbers [of socialists] which dwarf the grand armies of Napoleon and Xerxes. But they are numbers not of conquest and maintenance of the established order, but of conquest and revolution." That phrase "the established order" easily morphs into "the persistence of the established," and for London *established* has a triple connotation. Not only does it refer to the capitalists who perpetuate themselves through greed, corruption, and violent oppression of the working class, but it also signifies all conventions—political, social, and cultural—that London tirelessly attacked in nonfiction and fiction, in content and form; we'll see in the next volume how Martin Eden uses the phrase to describe editorial blindness to new styles. In its third meaning, as his comment suggests, *established* does not have to mean "totalitarian" or "oppressive." An established socialist order indicates an eternity of form, too. The tension between antagonistic established political orders would have been the principal preoccupation of the essay, a tension that becomes open warfare in *The Iron Heel.* Although London's notes and public comments seem to indicate that he foresaw a future of competing eternal forms of socioeconomic order, revolution—a real possibility in 1904, and a less convincing outcome for London just two years later—or its violent suppression would determine the supremacy of either capitalism or socialism.

"Persistence of the Established" is alternatively titled in his notes "Rule of the Dead" and "Stability of the Established." The title "Rule of the Dead" seems to have originated in a quotation from Anatole France that London considered using as an epigraph: "If the will of those who are no more is to be imposed on those who still are, it

[48] "London Talks on Socialism," *Berkeley Daily Gazette,* 13 Apr. 1905.

is the dead who live, and the live men who become the dead ones."[49] As poetic as *dead* is (and as resonant with his constant preoccupation with ghosts and the permeable boundary between the dead and the living) it doesn't allow for the multiple connotations of *established* and thus perhaps is why London chose the latter for his title.

It is important to reiterate the multiple significances of London's unpublished work. Besides being another example of how he conducted research for his nonfiction, his work on "Persistence of the Established" is simultaneous with the composition of several short stories and *White Fang.* His ability to work in three genres and in multiple fields of interest frustrates standard definitions of what sort of author London was.

To write his essay, London collected over sixty magazine and newspaper articles as well as four pamphlets, then wrote out by hand and typed up nearly twenty pages of notes. A central book-length text for London was Lincoln Steffens's *The Shame of the Cities,* which had been published in March 1904. "The most celebrated critic of American politics during the first decade of the twentieth century,"[50] Steffens, born and

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[49] London, "Persistence of the Established: [Notes for Book]," JL 1050.

[50] James J. Connolly, "The Public Good and the Problem of Pluralism in Lincoln Steffens's Civic Imagination,"*Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 4 (Apr. 2005): 125-47. My next sentence is indebted to Connolly's observation that Steffens's "writings called for a politics dedicated to pursuing the public interest but rarely contemplated the possibility that the public could be constituted in multiple ways." Thus, as Connolly, argues, we see the great irony of the Progressive Era: in advancing the ideal of the common good against the "the interests" or "the trusts," reformers failed to see how the public could be differently constituted. London was acutely aware of this

raised in San Francisco and a graduate of University of California, Berkeley, was no stranger to London; he had written several reports on manuscripts London had submitted to *McClure's,* so even though today he is known simply as a muckraker, Steffens was, to London, a sympathetic colleague and fellow Californian, though they were widely separated by class. Further, Steffens believed in and fought for an undifferentiated common good, a generalized public that was united in its opposition to political malpractice. London, on the other hand, was under no illusion about the fragmentation and competing interests of "the people." Still, not surprisingly, when London wanted evidence of how corrupt politicians maintained their status quo, he read and then copied out two long passages from *The Shame of the Cities.* That Steffens insisted in his introduction that "this is not a book. It is a collection of articles. . . . Done as journalism, they are journalism still. . . . They were written with a purpose, they were published serially with a purpose, and they are reprinted now together to further that same purpose, which was and is—to sound for the civic pride of an apparently shameless citizenship," would have struck London favorably. This was journalism at its most impassioned, written with sincerity and integrity. In search of empirical evidence of how capitalism required boodling and other forms of illegal practices to maintain itself, London hit a vein of gold in Steffens's nonfiction.

But urban corruption was just one facet of the larger intentions he wanted to realize in "Persistence of the Established." One of the essays he collected was by James Brisben Walker, who in 1905, now safely detached from a subscriber-driven publication,

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problem—and it is one of the consequences of his racism—but he put it on hold from time to time to present a united political front for the socialist cause.

began publishing a five-cent newsletter entitled *The Twentieth Century.* It was dedicated to "solve [the] problem of distribution in a scientific way." That is, now that "the production of wealth" has been solved, America must "take steps in the advancement of a scientific distribution—toward the destruction of the present competitive system which results in such `monstrous opulence—monstrous poverty.'"[51] London, of course, had been advocating a restructuring of the distribution of goods and service since he published his own essay on the topic in Walker's *Cosmopolitan.*

Now, having completed *The People of the Abyss,* "The Class Struggle," "Revolution," and other essays, he had formulated socioeconomic ideas beyond those that Walker was advocating. As London had discussed in earlier essays, the control of public opinion was essential to those who maintained the economic status quo. A number of clippings he filed away under the rubric "Persistence of the Established" discuss the new "science" of lobbying and corporate public relations. It was shocking to American progressives to learn, for example, that Elihu Root, former Secretary of War, had been hired by the tobacco trust. One of London's clippings listed ten ex-members of the cabinet who "are now running Wall Street" as bankers, lawyers, and New York City's chief of police. A long article in *The Pandex* detailed the ways that the coal, railroad, and

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[51] John Brisben Walker, editorial, *The Twentieth Century* (Feb. 1906): 1; see London, "Persistence of the Established: [Notes for Book]," JL 1049. There are ninety-one pages of notes for this manuscript, but it is unlikely London meant it for a book, as the Huntington cataloguer indicates. The number of pages is not a fair way to estimate the length of the intended manuscript given the small note paper London used and the sprawl of his handwriting.

insurance companies have created "press bureaus."[52] It all seems like old business to twenty-first-century citizens innured to back-room dealings and confident that federal conflict-of-interest laws prevent gross corruption. At the turn of the last century, however, such linkages were startlingly novel and prompted deep concern in the socialist world. As one clipping reasoned, "And the people expect relief from trust exploitation by electing democrats and republicans! As well expect liberty by supporting friends of the king. The trusts never select Socialists, because they recognize in them enemies, not friends."[53] Previous to David Graham Phillip's groundbreaking articles in *Cosmopolitan* (written with the aid of the magazine's new owner, William Randolph Hearst)[54] entitled "The Treason of the Senate," articles like the one London clipped from *The Literary*

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[52] See "Insurance Companies Employ Lobbying Counselors Openly Instead of Secretly—Coal Operators Establish Press Bureau," *The Pandex* (Apr. 1906): 343-46, in London, "Persistence of the Established: [notes for book]," JL 1050. The article quotes Ray Stannard Baker, "Railroads on Trial," *McClure's Magazine* 26 (Mar. 1906): 535-49.

[53] London, "Persistence of the Established: [notes for book]," JL 1049. Although undated, this clipping appears to come from *Appeal to Reason* from 1905; the back of the clipping has lines from Sinclair's *The Jungle,* which began serialization in *Appeal to Reason* 26 February 1905.

[54] See James Lander, *The Improbable First Century of "Cosmopolitan Magazine"* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2010), 133-34 for the most accurate assessment of Hearst's role in the matter.

Digest detailed Senator Chauncey M. Depew's illegal financial dealings with Equitable Life Assurance Society.[55]

London created a subcategory entitled "Moulding public opinion" and filed several articles concerned with the manipulation of the media by the ruling class. As always, London was supremely interested in the rhetoric of revolution. In an article in *Russian Review,* for example, London underlined these lines about the tsar's published proclamations in its state-controlled press: "The *Moskovskiya Viedomosti* . . . receives also financial support from the personal purse of the Tzar and the grand dukes," and then wrote next to it, "nor are subsidies unknown with our American Press." In an editorial from *The Independent,* London marked the following opening paragraph: "The newspapers that are retained by the `money power' are of two easily distinguishable classes, namely, the reputable and the disreputable. The reputable sheets devote any amount of space to the exposure of every kind of wrong-doing except that which is indulged in by their own patrons. . . . The disreputable sheets defend no only the financial misdemeanants, but also the political bosses and machines."[56] London's focus on the

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[55] "Senator DePew and `Equitable' Finance," *The Literary Digest,* 22 July 1905, in London, "Persistence of the Established: [notes for book]," JL 1050. DePew's malfeasance and Phillips's articles led to the passage of the Seventeenth Amendment to the Constitution, the direct election of senators by the people.

[56] London, "Persistence of the Established: [notes for book]," JL 1049. Most likely, this article, entitled "Nicholas, Tzar of Ruffians," was from the summer of 1905. The tzar, of course, was an easy stand-in for American corporate "royalty." London even saved Mark Twain's "The Czar's Soliloquy" for possible use in his essay. See Mark Twain, "The

media is a natural outgrowth of his discussion of the new socialist media as a counterbalance to the capitalist press in "The Class Struggle" and "Revolution." As another clipping notes, Jay Gould, Cyrus Field, Pierpont Morgan, and other industrialists all held controlling interests in newspapers.[57] London read Henry George's *The Menace of Privilege* in 1905 and noted especially one George's larger points, which coincided with the intent of "Persistence":" "To protect and extend the favors that are its life, Privilege further endeavors . . . to influence public opinion through purchase or

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Czar's Soliloquy," *North American Review* 43 (Mar. 1905): 321-26. In one passage that London marked, Twain, in the voice of the czar, writes: "A curious invention, an unaccountable invention—the human race! The swarming Russian millions have for centuries meekly allowed our Family to rob them, insult them, trample them under foot, while they lived and suffered and died with no purpose and no function but to make that Family comfortable! These people are horses—just that—horese with clothes and religion." (323) Twain's emphasis on "clothes do not merely make the man, the clothes *are* the man" spoke volumes to London, who had been constantly criticized for his own haberdashery—as if his radical politics could be reduced to single white shirt. We'll see in the next chapter how comfort, bohemianism, radical politics, and shirts come together yet again.

[57] London, "Persistence of the Established: [notes for book]," JL 1049. The article is entitled "Capitalistic Journalism" and is undated and the title of the publication is missing.

intimidation of the press and through gifts to the university and the pulpit."[58] London did not agree with George's remedies, but he did find George eloquent on the corruption and degradation of the American republic since the eighteenth century.

London compiled a related series of clippings, not just on the oligarchs' ownership of the media, but on their attempts to influence editorial decisions through

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[58] Henry George, Jr., *The Menace of Privilege: A Study of the Dangers to the Republic from the Existence of a Favored Class* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1905), ix. This line from George finds its echo in *The Iron Heel* when Ernest Everhard tells Avis that the press will not print one word of Bishop Morehouse's Christian Socialist speech because the editors' "`policy is to print nothing that is a vital menace to the established'" (86). Given the symbiotic relationship between "Persistence" and *The Iron Heel,* it is understandable that David Mike Hamilton wrote that London "consulted" *The Menace of Privilege* while writing *The Iron Heel* and, more recklessly, that it "was probably used extensively in *The Iron Heel*" (Hamilton, *"The Tools of My Trade,"* 27, 134). All but one of London's notes in George's book were taken for the composition of "Persistence"; on the inside back cover, he listed three page numbers for quotations to be used for "Persistence," all of which occur in the two chapters on the press and the university. As Hamilton points out, George Brett had sent this to London, who replied while just beginning his lecture tour: "I have just glanced at the Preface of Henry George's book which you so kindly sent me, and I know that I shall enjoy reading it, agreeing with his destructive criticism while disagreeing with his constructive theorizing" (London, letter to George Brett, 2 Dec. 1905, *Letters,* 1:538; quoted in Hamilton, *"The Tools of My Trade,"* 135). For the quotation relevant to *the Iron Heel,* see chapter 19.

withholding advertisements. *Collier's* published an editorial in July 1905 that republished a "threat" in the trade magazine *The Canner and Dried Fruit Packer:* "`The business of canners, preservers, and manufacturers of food products is being greatly injured by various journals throughout the country, such as *Collier's,* the *Woman's Home Companion,* the *New York World,* the *Chicago Chronicle, Physical Culture Publication,* and others. . . . If every packer in the industry will take this matter to hear and cut out his advertisements, we think that some of these journals will wake up to the gact that they have taken a wrong stand in the matter.'" *Collier's* put it baldly: "In other words, if we tell the people that certain manufacturers feed them poison, the manufacturers at large are to coerce us with the money argument."[59] *Collier's* continued its attack on the food and health industries with a series on patent medicines by Samuel Hopkins Adams, noting at one point that one F. A. Cheney, who manufactured Hall's Catarrh Cure (and whose name would evoke in London a disturbing connection to his father's astrological work), devised advertising contracts with media outlets that automatically terminated if any legislation were passed that harmed his industry; the implication was that the media would work against such legislation to preserve its advertising revenue.[60] It is not coincidence that the publications named were major outlets for London's work. Also of

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[59] "Criminal Newspaper Alliance," *Collier's,* 8 July 1905, in London, "Persistence of the Established: [notes for book]," JL 1050.

[60] London, "Persistence of the Established: [notes for book]," JL 1050. Patent-medicine producers were allied with food and drug industries to prevent pure-food legislation and other reforms aimed at their occupations. See also the footnote in *The Iron Heel* about patent medicines and the corruption of which they are symptomatic.

interest and a topic to be addressed in depth in volume 3 is how easily progressive ideas about food as advocated by people like Bernarr McFadden in his physical culture publications were easily portrayed as radical politics when they ran counter to corporate food production values.

Industrialists, corrupt senators and other politicians, and self-serving publishers and editors weren't the only ones who comprised "the established." A number of articles detail the corruption and hypocrisy of religious leaders. As Eugene Debs once said, "Tread on the toes of capitalism and the church emits a squeal," a "proletarian pointer" published in *The Worker* that London clipped and labeled "Persistence." Walter Rauschenbusch pointed out that the class struggle of necessity manifested itself within congregations and made itself known every Saturday and Sunday: "When the Christian business man is presented as a model Christian, working people are coming to look with suspicion on these samples of our Christianity." Why should churches be surprised, then, to see their working-class members seek out alternatives to established religion when they "are now developing the principle and practice of solidarity, which promises to be one of the most potent ethical forces of the future, and which is essentially more Christian than the covetousness and selfishness which we regard as the indispensable basis of commerce."[61] Rauschenbusch, a leader in the Christian socialist movement, and London diverged on many points, but London's point in "Persistence" is to create a large enough tent of discontents to overwhelm the capitalists.

Colleges and universities that fired outspoken professors like Thorstein Veblen colluded with the plutes. One note in its entirety reads, "The mushy thought of the

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[61] London, "Persistence of the Established: [notes for book]," JL 1050.

Established-----and yet it endures. Contrast Prof. Veblen, etc., etc., who was fired out of Chicago University [often derided in the socialist press as the Standard Oil University of Chicago] because his thought is not `dead' thought; because he will not be ruled by the `dead,' because he is in revolt against the rule of the dead, because he is dynamic rather than static." Having read Veblen's *The Theory of Business Enterprise,* London copied out a passage on the media's role in "how the established persist. . . . The majority of `dead' individuals who enable the established to persist." According to Veblen in a quotation London contemplated using at the very beginning of the essay, "The first duty of an editor is to gauge the sentiments of his readers, and then tell them what they like to believe. By this means he maintains or increases the circulation," and nothing he does contravenes the desires and ideology of his advertisers.[62]

Even though London honored some professors for their outspokenness and not simply for their political ideology (after all, Veblen was no socialist), for the most part he castigated the academic profession for being in the service of the capitalists. In an article in *Wayland's Monthly,* George D. Herron wrote in a passage London marked, "The distinctive characteristic of a class civilization is its fear of free inquiry. The owners of the world dread nothing so much as a search into the sources of their ownership and its

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[62] London, "Persistence of the Established: [notes for book]," JL 1049. London's copy of Veblen's book (published in September 1904; London bought his copy at Smith Brothers in Oakland) looks read, but is unmarked; the passage London copied out appears on pages 385-86. See Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of Business Enterprise* (Scribner's: New York, 1904), HL 336149. By all accounts in Veblen's biographies, he was fired from the University of Chicago because of his hound dog ways, not for political reasons.

authority. . . . Hence it follows that the teaching class, whether it be religious or academic, literary or journalistic, depending as it does upon proprietary interests for economic sustenance, is inevitably a courtier or retainer class; it must teach those things pleasing to its masters."[63] Andrew Carnegie announced in 1905 that he would set aside $10 million worth of US Steel Corporation bonds "to pension aged college professors," a plan that socialists derided as an attempt to buy the academy's allegiance. Again, these essays and clippings will provide London background material for *The Iron Heel,* but London would employ many future fictional characters as professors, and their nature is tainted, explicitly or implicitly, in each story by these socialist attacks on the academy that London compiled from 1905.

To London's eye, it was an easy connection to make between university life and industrial life given the general rubric of "the established." He typed out the comments of a collar-starcher from Troy, New York, about her current strike against the factory owner; she noted how ministers and merchants secretly support the strike but "are afraid to offend the manufacturers, whose patronage is worth more than that of the workers."[64] London then wrote in pencil next to the quotation, "In connection with Carnegie and Rockefeller gifts. It is all well enough to disclaim in impassioned rhetoric that all this is untrue; but every sober one of us realizes that human nature is inclined to justify that by which it benefits." Contrary to such natural conservativism, London proposed his own

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[63] George D. Herron, "The Misinformation of the World," *Wayland's Monthly,* no. 64 (Aug. 1905): 3, in London, "Persistence of the Established: [notes for book]," JL 1050.

[64] This quotation comes from a Collar Starcher, "A Collar Starcher's Story," *Independent,* 10 Aug. 1905, 310, JLE 579, box 541, HEH.

equally “impassioned rhetoric” in order to convince the stick-in-muds that they would indeed benefit from change. Indeed, it was a battle of rhetorics. For this reason, London read Arthur Schopenhauer’s *The Art of Controversy* and took notes from it for the essay. “Every man feels how thoughtless it is to sanction a law unjust to himself,” Schopenhauer wrote and London copied. How to show the absurdity of conservativism was his aim.

So, to become a member of the established one did not have to be politician, religious or political leader, or industrialist. One could simply be resistant to change. London compiled a number of instances of such refusal in the face of technological improvement. In other words, to refuse to become modern was to become one of the undead who frustrated the betterment of the people. London wrote a long note about how advances in anesthesiology were held up by religious close-mindedness: “Many contended that pain was ordained by the Creator, and that to seek to annul pain was blasphemy for by such act one doubted the goodness and wisdom of God.” London even copied out a short passage from Jacob Riis’s autobiography, *The Making of an American* (p. 354) that told of his “pet scheme” to hire an optometrist for every public school “partly as a means of overcoming stupidity—half of what passes for that in the children is really the teacher’s; the little ones are near-sighted; they cannot see the blackboard.” Other instances of such short-sightedness included those who opposed the Suez canal, the trans-Atlantic cable, the Louisiana Purchase, Lewis and Clark’s expedition, and Alexander McKenzie’s explorations west of the Rockies. Discuss, London said to himself, “the way the stick-in-the-muds boggled at Columbus, at every inventor and

discoverer."[65] Seen in this light, London's own adventures and travels become a kind of ethical imperative to broaden one's mind, not in a trivial touristy sense, but in a deeper way that allows for new ideas, change, even revolution. To stay at home, to stop moving, is to become deader and deader. "Unable to shake off the rule of the dead," London jotted down, "to perceive the new thing, to be dynamic rather than static, etc." To crystallize is death, and one's worldview has to be challenged by the simple act of travel. Travel was a necessary adjunct to writing because it stimulated and changed thought.

The personal entered into the essay, not for its own sake, but to make the larger point about why the established are able to persist. "Reverence for the Constitution," he noted, "invoke Constitution, and any nefarious act on part of capitalists goes through. . . . Does one look with reverence and awe upon a city statute? No difference between it and the Constitution—similar instruments, however." Still smarting about being misquoted in the papers after he gave "Revolution," he told the story:

> Once a man in Colorado named Sherman Bell, a man employed by a capitalist Government to break a labor strike, said, `To hell with the constitution!" But the writer [meaning London himself], quoting this as being said in Colorado, was bitterly assailed in the capitalistic press as an anarchist, and even connected with the seduction case in University circles of the town in which he lived, and with the murder of an Italian in San Francisco, said Italian having been separated by a butcher's cleaver into grewsome lumps and chunks Several hundred people heard the lecture, several million people read the papers. Result: the speech and its doctrines were discredited along with the writer, while the established persisted

[65] London, "Persistence of the Established: [notes for book]," JL 1049.

strenuously as ever, and with a basis of reason in the minds of those who helped it persist.[66]

The point is that just as intellectual conservativism reinforces the established so too does patriotism. "Patriotism a powerful force for persistence," he wrote. "The workingmen who vote for the capitalist parties—enlarge." London connected this observation to something he had marked in Steffens's *The Shame of the Cities:* "The commercial spirit is the sprit of profit, not patriotism; of credit, not honor; of individual gain, not national prosperity; of trade and dickering, no principle."[67] Steffens, in his desire to imagine one public, one common good, could not see what London saw. Although London could feel patriotic—we remember his avowed love of America when he returned home from Europe in 1902 and Korea in 1904—he nonetheless exposed the way true patriotic feeling could be warped. He would even go so far as to say, as it was said in the fifties, that too many believed that what was good for Rockefeller, Carnegie, and others was good for America. For that reason, America had to be remade, and not merely reformed.

One final note should be made about London's intentions for this essay before we move out of the theatrical realm—and we have been in that realm since January 1904—and into the absorptive. That is, as much as London grounded this essay in the empiricism provided by Steffens and others, he wanted to infuse that objectivity with passion. So when he defined his fiction as "impassioned realism" or himself as an

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[66] London, "Persistence of the Established: [notes for book]," JL 1050.

[67] Steffens, *The Shame of the Cities* (McClure, Phillips, and Co.: New York, 1904), 6, HL 259464. The passages he typed out and filed away for "Persistence" are marked and indexed in the back of his copy.

"emotional materialist" we should not forget that he could easily have defined his nonfiction in the same way.[68] For the keynote for all the material he gathered is contained in four lines of poetry from William Watson's "For England": "Timorous, hesitant voice, how utterly vile I hold you! / Voice without wrath, without ruth—empty of hate as of love! / Different notes from these, O watchman, blow to the midnight! / Loud, in a deep-lulled land, trumpeter, sound an alarm!"[69] Wake up! Wake up! cried London the watchman to his slumbering, dead-to-the-world fellow citizens. The capitalists have come like a thief in the night and are stealing your country right from under you. The meek shall not inherit the earth, after all. My use of biblical references is not willful. When London typed out these lines, he titled it, "A Laodicean." We can trace a continuity not only from London's 1904-1905 essays to the work he did throughout 1905 and into 1906 on "Persistence of the Established" but also from his earliest work on Jesus, socialism, and the Christ novel he never wrote. London's theater of socialism never closed.

The Return of Whiteness

We do not know why London abandoned "Persistence of the Established"; perhaps he did so because in his attempt to be all-encompassing he had finally become too general, too vague. Perhaps the terms *persistence, established, the dead* carried too little specificity. Perhaps London wanted to collect even more data to make the essay even more encyclopedic, and then, as other matters like the writing of fiction and the building of the *Snark* took over, "Persistence" faded into the background until he tackled

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[68] See volume 1, pages 411-12. London also used the term "idealized realism."

[69] London, "Persistence of the Established: [Notes for Book]," JL 1050.

"the established" in *The Iron Heel* in August 1906*,* using a different genre of writing and so making the essay redundant. It certainly never lost relevancy, but London returned to straight fiction, and two months after he had completed "Revolution" he began a new short story. It had been six months since he had last written one—"A Nose for the King"—and a year and a half since he had written a short story based on his experiences in the Klondike. Saturated by his time spent in the realm of the theatrical, he was ready to turn inward.

He wouldn't stay long. The imperative of socialism was too strong at the present. But he did produce six incredibly strong works of fiction between April 1905 and October 1905: "The Sun-Dog Trail," "The White Man's Way," "The Unexpected," "All Gold Canon," "Planchette," and *White Fang.* It rivals his fictional output in three previous distinct periods—spring 1897, fall/winter 1898-99, and the winter of 1902-1903—and it signals his new financial strength in the story marketplace. He had received a larger than usual sum of $350 for "A Nose for the King" in 1904, a staggering sum for such a slight story, and this indicates the beginning of the influence of his fame on his pay rate. But for "The Sun-Dog Trail," his first short story of substance and consequence, he received, for him, a record-breaking amount, $500; we remember that he had received $600 for *The Game,* which was almost twice as long. From now on, London regularly—though not always—received no less than $500 per story; that's $13,000 in 2015 dollars.[70]

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[70] For such a savvy businessman, London's math was sometimes hilariously (intentionally? was he simply in a rush?) off. In May 1905 he told the editor of *Youth's Companion,* after they had offered $200 for a 2,000-word story any time he cared to write

The first words of fiction that London wrote in 1905 were "Sitka Charley," the opening words of "The Sun-Dog Trail." Sitka Charley was, as Blanche Bates had told London, the most fully realized character in his play, *The Scorn of Women,* and so he stands as a bridge between London's theatrical and the absorptive modes of writing. Start with someone familiar, thought London as he returned to fiction, and though he might have chosen Malemute Kid (a white man who became like a Native American), he chose instead Sitka Charley (a Native American who became like a white man). He had already appeared in London's first Klondike short story that got published, "The Men of Forty-Mile" (if only by name), and then in "The Wisdom of the Trail," "The Scorn of Women," "At Rainbow's End" (again, by name only), and "The Grit of Women." In the latter, Sitka Charley walks a sun-dog trail with Passuk, the woman who demonstrates the grit of women: "in the day the sun-dogs miched us till we saw many suns, and all the air flashed and sparkled, and the snow was diamond dust." (468). Sitka Charley, one of the great author figures from northern Londonland, brings us back not only to all the snowy scenes and frost-bitten characters of *A Son of the Wolf, The God of His Fathers,* and *Children of the Frost* but also to authors, readers, writing, and the ghostly imagination. The title itself tells us that this is going to be a ghost story; sun-dogs are a kind of ghost of the real sun, a mimicking of the sun that indicates, not a mythological theme, but

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it, that he had to refuse because all the big magazines were giving him 10 cents a word. Not only does he get the math wrong but he exaggerates the amount he is earning per story. See London, letter to the corresponding editor, *Youth's Companion,* 11 May 1905, *Letters,* 1:481. The previous November, we may remember from last chapter, he told Brett that the magazines were paying 8-10 cents a word.

rather an indication that this story will be about ghosts, the tricks of the eye, and the relationship between reality and artistic representation. London begins his return to writing fiction with a story about writing and understanding fiction. “The Sun-Dog Trail” is the title of the story London wrote, but it is also the title of the story (or is it a painting?) that Sitka Charley tells (or paints?). Remembering Sitka Charley the storyteller we are reminded of our own identities as readers. We are ready to sit down beside the fire and listen.

Malemute Kid would have served these same functions, but Sitka Charley has a capacity to reflect on life and death that the Kid does not. Both are author figures, but Sitka Charley has spent more time in deep absorptive time and space, and as a result, in both “Grit of Women” and “The Sun-Dog Trail” he wonders about the great questions of existence. In the former, he confronts his audience with an irony: “Death is kind. It is only Life, and the things of Life that hurt. Yet we love Life, and we hate Death. It is very strange.” (468). The story closes with Sitka Charley looking out of the tent upon a sky filled again with sun-dogs, and we the readers, like Charley’s audience, think the kind of thoughts about life, death, and the ghostly life of in-between that only a deep absorption can summon. In “The Sun-Dog Trail,” he once more picks up that thread of deep thought. While on the interminable trail, he says, “We are like sleep-walkers, and we walk in dreams until we fall down. . . . Sometimes, when I am walking in dreams this way, I have strange thoughts. Why does Sitka Charley live? I ask myself. Why does Sitka Charley work hard and go hungry, and have all this pain?” For money is the “foolish answer,” and after this trip he never again works for money, “but for a happiness that no man can give, or buy, or sell.” Malemute Kid may have been the master ethicist of the land where there

were no laws, but Sitka Charley allows London to delve more fully into questions that go beyond the Kid's capacity. Sitka Charley is the bohemian author extraordinaire. Though it is difficult to imagine Sitka Charley flying kites in the Klondike, his voice is the voice of London in "Getting into Print," London's great proclamation of the bohemian artistic life.

London also chooses Sitka Charley over someone like Malemute Kid to consider race, and racial consciousness forms the backbone to the story and works in tandem with considerations of authorial consciousness. Sitka Charley is born Native American, and he can never be anything but nonwhite—biology trumps culture as well as politics—but he can be accepted as white by whites, especially if he speaks the language of whites. "He had never learned to read or write, but his vocabulary was remarkable," and rhetoric, so important to London to understand politics, was fundamental to understanding race. Mastery of English and of "the white man's point of view, the white man's attitude toward things" was "remarkable." But this story is about how a Native American understands the white artistic process better than the white narrator, who is a painter, but could just as well be a writer. The story tells us that there is something about artistic creations that is more easily accessible to those with a "primitive" frame of mind than to those who are "civilized."

The very first sentence of "The Sun-Dog Trail" reads, "Sitka Charley smoked his pipe and gazed thoughtfully at the *Police Gazette* illustration on the wall." (969). London closes the gap of five years between "Grit of Women" and "The Sun-Dog Trail" with the single image of a man looking. Vision unites the two. But rather than looking out at nature so that his audience can look within, Sitka Charley, in the new story, beckons us to

look with him at his object of fascination. He is in a classic pose of absorption—quiet, smoking, at rest. In the next sentence we are confirmed in our role. The narrator tells us that he too has been both looking at Sitka Charley looking and at the illustration. He and we want to know what Sitka Charley is thinking, and here Sitka Charley's "whiteness" makes a difference in the story, beyond making him attractive to a white audience. Sitka Charley thinks all white men understand paintings or illustrations, and so he too wants this understanding. What we don't realize until the end is that he has his own way of understanding pictures and is merely measuring that native intelligence against a white understanding.

The picture is of one man shooting another man, and Sitka Charley begins the discussion by saying, "`I do not understand.'" (969). The narrator describes the action of the painting but knows he has failed to enlighten Sitka Charley; he was "aware of a distinct bepuzzlement of my own" both because he doesn't understand why Sitka Charley doesn't understand and because he has an initial inkling that he himself can't grasp the picture's meaning, and thus he says he was also "aware" "of failure to explain." (970). Sitka Charley counters with a "why" and the narrator is stumped. "`That picture is all end,'" says Sitka Charley, "`It has not beginning.'" Again the narrator feebly explains, "`it is life,'" to which Sitka Charley says, "`Life has beginning.'" (970) But the debate isn't simply about realism versus romanticism, about how artistic selection distances art from life. It is about the inherent mystery of life and art. Sitka Charley knows the mystery of life, but he learns that art copies from life but without being able to impart any meaning separate from what one sees in life. He thought that whites paint pictures to

explain life. At the end of the story, he knows that what whites paint (and write) only describes life.

He does learn something new about painting. At first he thinks that painting is not true to life because "`something happen in life. In picture nothing happen.'" (971). He tells narrator that a painting cannot be true to life no matter how artful the rendering of detail because it represents a moment frozen in time, which is not possible in reality. A painting cannot show "the beginning" or the "end" of the action portrayed; presumably, according to London, a movie audience of Native Americans would instantly understand what was going on, and this is not as trivial as it may seem. In fewer than ten years London would equate movies with dreaming. According to London, because Native Americans are by nature closer to the original race of mankind, and because dreaming is the access point to the primitive stages of man, Native Americans would intuitively know how to read movies. And, as we shall see, it is their proximity to primitive race consciousness that allows them to understand art in a way unavailable to the overcivilized whites.

But the narrator, because of his "Western-race egotism"—and now we see how London has been, from the first paragraph, developing an intellectual thread from the conclusion of "The Yellow Peril"[71]—thinks he is teaching Sitka Charley how to read a picture. So, after the narrator realizes that Sitka Charley can perform a close reading of a painting, he tells Sitka Charley that a painting is like a moment in time, composed and framed by a human instead of something natural, like a window that frames a moment of sight into a cabin. "You see a cabin. The window is lighted. You look through the

[71] London, "The Yellow Peril," 350.

window for one second, or for two seconds, you see something. . . . You saw something without beginning or end. Nothing happened. Yet it was a bit of life you saw. You remember it afterward. It is like a picture in your memory. The window is the frame of the picture." (971) Now Sitka Charley understands. He had not understood the function of memory in making art. He understands that whites think of art as life robbed of movement. The narrator emphasizes the one-to-one correspondence between life and art. "Pictures are bits of life." Because of this truism, the narrator understands art, and once Sitka Charley affirms the truism, "`Yet is it a true thing. I have seen it. It is life," the narrator thinks he has transferred to Charley" the pictorial wisdom of the white man. But when Sitka Charley agrees that the picture is life, he is not talking about the correspondence between signifier and signified.[72] He suddenly understands that the mystery of life can be contained within a painting, too.

Each time Charley draws on his pipe, his meditative state signals a new turn in the story. Now that he understands what white people mean by art, he is going to try to educate the narrator, though of course the narrator has no idea of Charley's intention. And now we get the story / painting that Sitka Charley calls "The Sun-Dog Trail." First, we remember that the narrator told us that Sitka Charley "had remarkable powers of visualization. . . . He saw life in picture, felt life in pictures, generalized life in pictures." (971) This facility also reminds us of that favorite phrase of newspapermen, "the word-

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[72] See Leonard Cassuto, "Chasing the Lost Signifier Down "The Sun-Dog Trail," *Jack London Journal* 2 (1995): 64-72 for a psychoanalytic deployment of the terms *signifier* and *signified* in this story. In support of this reading, I would add that the story starts as if the narrator were an psychoanalyst showing Sitka Charley Rorschach diagrams.

picture." Although Sitka Charley tells the narrator that he is going to relate a story that he wants the narrator to paint, that is not the real purpose of the story, for the question of how to paint the story never surfaces again. The purpose is to teach the narrator that painting may be like life, but it is like life only because it too is a mystery.

He tells a story—a ghost story, of course, because it takes place in the North—a story of how he, a woman, and a man travel the sun-dog trail for months. The hardship turns them into "wandering ghosts." (978). "We sleep like dead people, and in the morning get up like dead people out of their graves and go on along the trail." (981). Breaking trail, unlike in "The Devil's Dice-Box" and "The Odyssey of the North," does not end with gold, writing, and chance. It begins with the living who are then converted into the undead who then may or may not become human again. This lack of terminus, however deadly, is a decided turn in London's fiction. Even in "Grit of Women" there was a purpose, a goal, if only to tell someone of the dire straits in which the men of Forty-Mile had found themselves. They may or may not be rescued, but at least Sitka Charley carried the message. Here, though, in "The Sun-Dog Trail," on the same kind of trail there is no gold to be found, no message to be carried; to reinforce this point, London has Sitka Charley give up his job as a mail carrier and become simply a highly paid guide for the Joneses. But he is a guide to a random point in the snowy wasteland, a point determined only by where the object of the Jones' wrath happens to fall, unable to continue any further.

The story concludes with an image that parallels the image we began with: the shooting of a man. The narrator and Charley have exchanged subject-positions. At the beginning of the story it was Charley who asked why did one man kill another. Now, at

the end of both "The Sun-Dog Trail"s, it is the narrator left helpless in the front of artistic representation. "`But why did they kill the man?'" he asks. Charley lights his pipe, and we get the conclusion. Charley has knowingly told a story that will repeat the *Police Gazette* illustration in order to turn the tables. Knowing the utter cluelessness of the narrator, his story demonstrates that the two parallel trains of thinking will never meet. The painter doesn't realize it, but Charley knows not only the mystery of life but also that the white man thinks there is no mystery. Condescendingly, the narrator says, "`You have painted many pictures in the telling.'" And when the narrator says, "`It was a piece of life,'" as if that answered everything, Sitka Charley mimics the narrator, knowing it explains nothing and knowing that unlike himself, the narrator has learned nothing on this day in a cabin in the North.[73]

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[73] Sitka Charley's final words were not the final words London originally intended for the story. In a radical revision that I believe makes the story better, London cut the last four paragraphs in page proof from the manuscript version of the story. The cut material reads as follows:

> "But you understand pictures," I said.
>
> Again he nodded familiarly to the *Police Gazette* illustration, and he answered:
>
> "Yes, it is true. Sitka Charley has come to the understanding of pictures. Pictures are just the same as life, and to life there is no understanding at all. Yes, Sitka Charley understands pictures."

The cabin is a miniature art museum, its walls hung with paintings of all sorts. It has an analog in the discussion about art. When the narrator tries to explain painting to Sitka Charley, he tells him to imagine seeing a man writing a letter in a cabin. The arts of painting and writing are thus constantly blurred together in the story just as they were in the popular imagination of the time and the constant reference to word-pictures in the press. What was crucial for London was not only the ability of words to generate pictures in the mind or the ability of painting to generate words in the viewer's mouth but also the epistemology of representation. That is, what knowledge do we gain from artistic representation and how best to access that knowledge? The emphasis on race in "The Sun-Dog Trail" and the final resolution in which Sitka Charley ends up wiser than the white narrator tells us that, for London, civilization masks the mystery of life. By *civilization* London includes the technics of art. Art then is civilization's creation of a prosthetic for natural vision. Art may be beautiful, but it blocks the immediate and more truthful vision of the natural eye. The eye sees that there is mystery behind the veil. It sees that there is a spiritual side of life, and in this way Sitka Charley is like a devotee of [will plug in the name of Susan the art historian that Cynthia turned me on to]. As Sitka Charley learns, we may paint a picture or write a story, we may even create a moving

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> He knocked out his pipe, glanced from picture to picture until he had completed the circle of the cabin-walls, and wound his watch in advertisement that he was going to bed.

Once again we find textual evidence that contradicts London's (and later scholars') assertion that he never revised after initial composition.

picture with a story that is string of "many pictures in the telling," but no art object brings us closer to the ultimate meaning of life that we so often seek. "The Sun-Dog Trail" shows London at a new stage in writing. His author figures are still privileged characters, but now they realize that they must be in touch with the primitive, through dreaming, to access pictures. In a year, he will have his author figure in *Before Adam* begin his story with "Pictures! Pictures! Pictures!" In two years, Martin Eden will begin his novel with his own confrontation of a painting, which baffles him as much as the *Police Gazette* illustration baffles Sitka Charley.

The racial thematic continues, though along a different vector, in the next story he wrote, "The White Man's Way." Instead of art, the principal concern is legal justice. Just as Sitka Charley functions in part to show a white audience how its aesthetics are overcivilized and thus suspect, so old Ebbitt and his wife Zilla show a white audience that its sense of jurisprudence is culturally determined. Two Native Americans, one of whom is their youngest son, each commit what seems to be the same crime—the murder of a white man—but one is allowed to live and the other, their son, is hung. It's not that the white legal system is so complicated that outsiders like Ebbit and Zilla cannot understand it. It's that to an outsider there is no difference between killing in self-defense and killing without motive.[74] They see the white legal system as inconsistent and mysterious.

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[74] In the manuscript for the story, London concluded the story with a footnote that was not included in its published form. It reads, "Note—The murder of a white man, with precisely the same motive as in story [sic], actually occurred in Alaska not many years ago." (London, "The White Man's Way: [short story]," JL 1409). London probably did not excise it in page proof or in the typescript.

Whites, on the other hand, do not understand the Native American legal system, but—and here is yet another example from London of white-race egotism—they do not call it mysterious. They call it primitive and denigrate it for being so.

The narrator of "The White Man's Way," to his credit, is merely baffled by Ebbit and Zilla's sense of justice. He offers no comment after Ebbit tells him of the death of their second son, and asks for explanations for other legal cases that the couple tells them. Their first son was killed in a canoing accident in territory governed by whites. According to Indian law, those who govern a territory with "bad water" must pay a penalty to the family of the killed. But the whites do not understand this law and refuse to pay. According to Indian law, if a dog steals food from you, you may beat the dog; if a man steals from you, the man must die. "`But if you kill the man, why do you not kill the dog,'" asks the white narrator, and while Zilla sneers at his ignorance, Ebbits calls it "`the way of the white man.'" Ebbit explains that men need dogs to pull sleds, so they are not killed.

The uniqueness in London's thought is not that he is arguing for the superiority of either system of justice. The uniqueness resides in his two-mindedness. One system works for one culture, one system works for the other. To mix the two is fatal. In a page of notes for a possible story, London began, "How an Indian could not understand the innermost traits of the white man, and how he paid for it with his life." This nameless Native American had watched whites pay outrageous prices for goods and services "on the Chilcoot Trail," and so, when a band of whites decided to form "a relief expedition" and save a "starving tribe of Indians" miles away, he tried to charge them for driving the dogs; they wanted him to do it for free, as they were doing it for free. "But he is obdurate,

for he had learned from whitemen how to hold out for a bargain." He "had caught the commercial spirit, but not the altruistic nor the racial." So they hang him. That is, he became a capitalist without realizing that some white men are socialists. "He did not understand whites; nor did whites understand him" is London's final note.[75] The point is that Native Americans can neither assimilate nor survive on their own terms.

The Native American legal system cannot possibly govern the life of the Machine Age, but the white way—so ignorant and undesirous to understand—is equally incapable of producing a fair result within Native American culture. The most laughable instance is that of the story of Mobits, who steals flour from a white man. The penalty, according to white law, is to put him in jail for theft instead of killing him. But the tribe has no word for jail nor any comprehension of it. Jail, for them, is simply "a house" and "good grub." Mobits wants to stay in jail because his life is far worse outside of it. The narrator again has no comment. He sees this white absurdity, just as he sees the absurdity of a Native American killing a botanist in order to be taken by the whites to California. The narrator, who becomes a storyteller after being the audience for Ebbit's storytelling, is the perfect listener and thus instructs us in how to listen to the Other. The Native American Other, like the "Asiatic," is foreign and primitive compared to Machine Age whites, but within their otherness lies value, a value that can expose the injustices of the white race. Still, even in the face of its ignorance and the inability to understand, one cannot resist the white race. It is too powerful. Ultimately, the narrator can afford to be calm, kind, and

[75] London, "Klondike: How an Indian Could Not Understand the Innermost Traits of the White Man: [Notes for Short Story]," JL 849.

understanding. He need not respond to the stories of Mobit's theft or of Bidarshik's hanging because he knows he is witnessing the end of the power of a race of people.

"The White Man's Way" took five days to write; it weighed in at 5300 words, while his other stories of the spring of 1905 averaged around 8000 words. Still, he received $530 for the story from the *New York Tribune*, 10 cents a word. He had first sent it to *Century,* but the prudish Robert Johnson—whom we last heard from when *Century* serialized *The Sea-Wolf*—rejected it.[76] Always on the look-out for the offensive incident or scandalous description, Johnson sounds disappointed not to find anything salacious and had to retreat to aesthetics: "There is nothing about this sketch, "The White Man's Way," to object to except that it is not a story, but a transcript of experience. . . . Give us a piece of real fiction, with beginning, middle, and end, and some of your own rare and individual charm."[77] He wanted a conventional narrative, and London agreed with him that it wasn't conventional; he hadn't intended it to be. It wasn't objectionable—"I can remember that my reason for sending it to you was that it was not bluggy nor horrible,

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[76] There is so little criticism on most of London's short stories that it is worthwhile to note it when it does appear in print. Unfortunately, the editors of *Letters* completely misread the story in a footnote to Johnson's letter. They call it "a satiric dialogue between an unnamed first-person narrator and an old Indian, in which the uncomplicated mores of the Indian world are contrasted with the incomprehensible complexity of `the white man's way.'" (*Letters,* 1483 n. 1). What is informative about this misreading is that London has constructed the story as a kind of trap for uninformed, race-centric white readers who buy into the stereotype of the "primitive."

[77] Robert U. Johnson, letter to London, 12 May 1905, JL 8497.

and that you had stipulated that you did not want any bluggyness nor horribleness"—and it wasn't a conventional narrative—"`The White Man's Way' is certainly not a short story with beginning, middle and ending."[78] The unstated claim is that Johnson and Gilder are not recognizing a different sort of, though equally artistic form. It was like someone asking the Grateful Dead to write a Hank Williams tune.

A less secure author might have taken offense at this narrow-mindedness, but London let it go. In his reply, he simply stuck it to him for money. He pointed out that *Collier's* had offered him $1000 an article to partake in Robert Collier's scheme to journey across America, that *Outing* had just paid him 10 cents a word for *White Fang,* and that he and Richard Gilder had discussed payment and that they had tentatively agreed on 8 cents a word—but that was before the Collier and *Outing* offers. The magnanimous London pointed out that "in the meantime my rate has been going up, though I have not been selling anything. This, as you will readily understand, is due to conditions outside of me, and to which I not only gracefully but gratefully yield." So, because we all have to obey the invisible hand of the market and because *Century* wants exclusive serial publication rights—that is, forbidding even English serial publication—London tells Johnson that he should give him 10 cents a word and he would give *Century* exclusive rights.[79]

Johnson was irritated by this letter in two ways. He detected some sense of unfounded confidence in artistry in London's tone, and he felt it warranted a lecture from someone who was older and vastly more experienced. "In general, my dear Mr. London,"

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[78] London, letter to Johnson, 18 May 1905, *Letters,* 1:482.

[79] London, letter to Johnson, 18 May 1905, *Letters,* 1:482-83.

said Johnson from his lofty perch of the Eastern publishing establishment, "I hope I may be permitted to say to you that the present commercial situation of the short-story writers seems to me to be unfortunate for them in the fact that it makes an extraordinary temptation to them to put out episodical work or character sketches in place of well-knit, dramatic work conceived with proportion and a continuity and variety of action." Of course, "The White Man's Way" is neither an episodical story nor a character sketch, but Johnson couldn't see it for what it was. "American short stories," Johnson continued, "are generating into mere glimpses of life instead of artistic compositions, and I am afraid that the public is getting tired of the kind. You have published so little heretofore"—shocking! London had published four collections of short stories and six novels, all with major Eastern publishers—"that the way is clear for you to make every piece of your work tell in this respect, and as, ever since reading "The Call of the Wild" I have been an admirer of yours and deeply interested in your work, I hope you will pardon this bit of homily from one who has been thirty-two years at the business of editing and, moreover, has a pride in our American fiction."[80] It's not surprising that he did not mention the objectionable *The Sea-Wolf,* but the condescending tone is uncalled for. London, who did not need to be reminded of "a pride" in American literature, took the high road. Three weeks later, he sent them "a real short story," "All Gold Canon," which Johnson promptly accepted. After London sent back the page proofs in August, Johnson sent him a check for $500, less than 7 cents a word. Johnson closed the letter with the stipulation that in the future they will pay him 10 cents a word, "we think this ought not to apply to a story the rate for which was arranged in advance. Is this not right?" London only

[80] R. U. Johnson, letter to London, 3 June 1905, JL 8498

shrugged. If they wanted to short change him, he had many other editors who would pay his top rate. Johnson had once told him, "We do not attempt to compete with the tremendous special prices which one occasionally gets for spectacular work in other quarters. We hope that the reputation of The Century and its loyalty to its contributors in presenting their work to the public, will to a certain extent compensate to authors for the difference which occasionally is found between our prices and those of others." London, an expert poor-mouther himself, easily recognized it in others.

While Johnson was lecturing London on the aesthetics and economics of short story publishing, London took two weeks to complete "The Unexpected," another Klondike trail story, and sent it to his old friends at *McClure's*; McClure had been begging London for either a serial or a single story, McClure insisting that his magazine was the only place for London's work. He took it and paid 10 cents a word for the first 5000 words and then 5 cents a word beyond that; since London still owed them $476 from the advances he had received back in 1901, this story more than squared his account.[81]

"The Unexpected" begins with a line that might have been addressed directly to Johnson, a commentary on his literary expectations. "It is a simple matter to see the obvious, to do the expected." Leave it to London, though, to tie together formulaic fiction to human behavior and evolution. "When the unexpected does happen, however, and when it is of sufficiently grave import, the unfit perish. . . . When they come to the end of their own groove, they die." London, the always experimenting author, never content with a formula, describes himself as an author in the next paragraph: "On the other hand,

[81] See S. S. McClure, letter to London, 20 May 1905, JL 14227.

there are those that make toward survival, the fit individuals who escape from the rule of the obvious and expected and adjust their lives to no matter what strange grooves they may stray into, or into which they may be forced." (998). Like his report on the Britt-Nelson fight, he begins far afield with his reader, taking him or her in an unexpected intellectual direction that will explain the point of the story. The reader simply has to trust him.

It turns out that the reader has no reason to worry. The story works in a traditional, expected way, working against the point of the story. That is, if a short story writer stays in his or her groove, then, by the evolutionary law stated at the beginning, that writer shall die. To write this story is to work one's way toward suicide. Further, to write this kind of story, to meet the expectations of editors like Robert Underwood Johnson, is not prostitution but suicide. That would be the case if it weren't for the unexpected that crops up in the telling of the story. The plot demands a turn, and since the story is supposedly about the surprising yet utterly predictable duplicity and greed of humans, we are shocked, surprised, but then, in hindsight reassured both by Dennin's treachery and the conventionality of the story's turn. No, what is unexpected, shocking, and surprising and therefore most artful and alive in the story is how Edith Nelson decides to hang Dennin. "It came to her that the law was nothing more than the judgment and the will of any group of people." Her "original sociological researches" counter "the legacy of her race, the law that was of her blood and that had been trained into her." If hanging Dennin was counter to white man's law, then whose law, what race's law was it? We know from "The White Man's Way" that Native American law says that murder is punishable by death: no jail, no trial, just death. How like that system is the miners'

meeting system that Hans tells Edith about. “All the men of a locality came together and made the law and executed the law.” (1011) The two conceptions of law go together then: the idea that law is socially constructed and that Native American law, like miners’ law, are as valid as traditional white society’s law, which demands all the accouterments of a fair trial. That, then, is the real unexpected. And it is doubly unexpected, coming as it is clothed in the structure of a conventional short story.

Originally entitled “The Legacy of Law,” and then “The Heritage of Law,” and then “The Great Unexpected,” the story ends in manuscript, like its thematic predecessor “The White Man’s Way,” with a footnote attesting to its basis in fact, which was cut in the final version: “The above is a true story. Michael Dennin was hanged at Latuya Bay by Mrs. Nelson in 1900.”[82] A year later, in August 1906, he probably regretted the excision. The story appeared that month and drew a letter from Alaskans who disbelieved it and was published in the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer.* London of course immediately wrote a letter to the editor and took his usual tack: if a story appears in a newspaper, it is supposed to be true, so don’t blame me if it turns out to be false. “Turn loose and lambaste your fellow-newspaper-men who are responsible for this.”[83] It actually was true, and confirmed by the Seattle newspaper. Once again, London was frustrated by a pointless concern over the factual basis for his work.

One murder over gold leads to another—one treacherous act after another—and it makes no difference if we are in the ghostland of the north or a seeming edenic valley in California. He first titled “All Gold Canyon” “Sudden Death.” That would stress the

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[82] London, “The Unexpected: [Short Story],” JL 1346.

[83] London, letter to the editor, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer,* 2 Aug. 1906, *Letters,* 2:599.

murder in the pocket mine. Then he changed it to "The Pocket Hunter," the murderer himself. Then he changed it to "All Gold Canyon," the place that the pocket miner murders. There is no law in this story, only crime: crime of one man against another, crime of one man against nature, and crime of capitalism against humanity. For this is a parable of what happens to the natural world if capitalism is left unchecked.

The gorgeous setting rendered in beautiful prose at the beginning of the story previews the idyllic atmosphere in which White Fang finds himself at the end of his story, so we know that his civilized state is not guaranteed to be a happy one if we have read "All Gold Canyon." London constructs the green eden in the short story, not to promote California as a paradise, but for two other, related reasons. First, it is in sharp contrast to the white hell of the northern landscape. Second, the contrast is undermined by the viciousness that occurs in the little canyon. It turns out that if this canyon—this beautiful, untouched natural paradise—can be infiltrated and destroyed, then there is no place on earth safe from man's—specifically the Anglo-Saxon man's—rapaciousness. It isn't mere greed and carelessness of the pocket miner, however, that destroys the canyon. It's a particular kind of greed, that of the "commercial spirit," the lust for yellow metal that has caused so much pain, suffering, and death in the North. And now London shows how that capitalistic death-dealing desire for money destroys all it touches in the South. There is no escape, except through socialism, and there is no socialism in the deeply pessimistic "All Gold Canyon."[84]

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[84] After he had completed "Planchette," which I discuss below, he created a table of contents for a volume tentatively entitled *California Stories:* "Planchette," "All Gold Canyon," "The Shadow and the Flash," "Minions of Midas," "Local Color," "Amateur

Five days before he had begun "All Gold Canyon," London wrote a review of *The Walking Delegate,* and this break in writing short stories signals his turn to the Southland in his next three works: "All Gold Canyon," "Planchette," and *White Fang. The Walking Delegate,* by Leroy Scott, is a novel about a fight over leadership of the Ironworkers' Union in New York City, loosely based on recent events in New York City involving the walking delegate for the Ironworkers' Union, Sam Parks, and their 1903 strike and Parks's subsequent arrest on charges of extortion; he died in Sing Sing in 1904. As London says in his review, "it is a study of Sam Parks, the notorious labor leader whose corrupt dealings threw much of odium upon the trade union movement and at the same time gladdened the hearts of all capitalists with the exception of those capitalists who were compelled to share with Sam Parks their profits and to share with him likewise in his corruption." Scott—who was friends with William English Walling, from their days of living together in the University Settlement in New York City from 1902 to 1904, and, later, with Walling's wife and London's great friend Anna Strunsky—had joined an ironworker's union to gather information for the novel. He lived in the famous University

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Night," "Moon-Face," and "The Leopard Man's Story." (London, "Magazine Sales: No. 3, Feb. 1903-July 1907," JL 934). It totaled 49,597 words, roughly the amount that London aimed at when constructing a volume of short stories. In July 1905, he told Brett that he was "three-quarters of the book of short stories already written," when in fact he had just completed "Planchette" two days previous. Obviously he was still ready to write another story but abandoned the idea in 1906. He was too engrossed in researching and composing, first, *The Iron Heel,* then *The Road,* and then his futuristic socialist short stories. See chapters 19-20.

Settlement house in New York City (a private institution, like the Hull House, dedicated to helping immigrants transition into American life), and to a large extent this book came out of the hopes triggered by Bloody Sunday in St. Petersburg and the defeat of the tsar in the Japanese-Russian War. This was the year of such fever-pitched enthusiasm for the coming revolution that Walling, Strunsky, and her sister Rose all lived and worked for revolution in St. Petersburg; Walling and Strunsky married in Paris a month after their arrival. For his part, London stayed home and continued to promote the cause, and so this review is a piece with his own new-found enthusiasm that began with the 1904 election and continued in 1905 with his national lecture tour.[85]

The novel and its author may have been recommended to London by Strunsky by way of Walling or perhaps by Walling himself. As London called it, it is "a human document," a straightforward, unromantic view of union leaders, bosses, and the ways they become corrupted. He marked a passage that appealed to him particularly because it might be the characterization of someone he himself had created: "She was not conscious that she had in a measure that rare endowment—the clear vision which perceived the things of life in their true relation and at their true value, plus the instinct to act upon that vision."[86] "Clear vision," for Scott and London, means an ability to see through artifice—the false constructions of social reality—to the heart of a matter; in these moments, there

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[85] He did not, however, support settlement houses. In a note for an essay called "The American Abyss" (written sometime after 1904 but before 1907), he jotted down "Criticize Riis, college settlements, etc." (London, "The American Abyss: [notes for a Sociological Study of New York and Chicago]," JL 438).

[86] Leroy Scott, *The Walking Delegate* (Doubleday, Page, and Co.: New York, 1905), 99.

is no relativism, only the truth. The hero of the tale, Tom Keating, has a similar background to London's: "Though he had left school at thirteen to begin work, he had attended night school for a number of years, had belonged to a club whose chief aim was debating, had read a number of solid books and had done a great deal of thinking for himself. As a result of his reading, thinking and observation he had come into some large ideas concerning the future of the working class."[87] There the similarity ends. London consistently objected to the reform measures advocated by Lefties like Scott, but he sympathized with Tom Keating the trade unionist and his creator, and in the name of socialist solidarity London reviewed the book favorably.

Of course there were other, political elements that attracted London, most prominent being those he noted in the back of his copy of the novel and then rewrote and included in his review. The treachery of Foley, Baxter, and others informs most of London's notes. "Begin with graft and rottenness everywhere in business life. Then—production for profit instead of service—a sample. Then—the old sinning and the new the old primitive struggle for existence, and the new struggle for existence." Not only are these notes tinged with evolutionary thought—a conglomeration of ideas that we will return to while discussing *White Fang*—but also they are highlighting the continuity among the short stories he was writing at this point and this review. Betrayal and treachery, treachery and betrayal. When we read "The Unexpected" as a story of the cooperative commonwealth gone bad because of lack of internal protection and law, we see its similarities to London's review of *The Walking Delegate.* When the commercial spirit, not altruism, governs social groups, murder and corruption are natural results. They

[87] Scott, *The Walking Delegate,* 102.

are natural because, according to London, the fight between labor and capital over wages and profits is exactly the same as the fight between two primitive men fighting over meat: "Primitive man fought over the division of the meat of some slaughtered animal. Modern man fights over the division of an abstraction (dollars and cents), which, in turn, represents meat."

The theme continues into "All Gold Canyon." There is something primitive to Bill the miner. "Thinking was in him a visible process," says the narrator. He is almost savage in appearance, and like any savage, there is an element of the child in him: in his eyes there was "much of the naivete and wonder of the child" (1019). He lives outside, and there is a fine line between the jungle of urban NYC and the jungle of "All Gold Canyon," a blurry boundary that London makes central to his review: "As is true of any jungle, in this commercial jungle there is a conflict of interests."[88] His focus on the natural geography of the canyon at the beginning of the story repeats his focus on the

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[88] London, review of *the Walking Delegate,* JL 1117, 4. His notes in the back of *The Walking Delegate* reveal how London used this book as a notepad for his first draft: "It is a transcript from life, from 20th Century life, from 20th Century life in New York City where the steel fabrics (skyscrapers) are reared into the sky to constitute themselves upstanding peaks, outjutting spurs, in the Jungle of Commercial empire—Then, next, the deeds of the Jungle." (London, notes in Leroy Scott, *The Walking Delegate* [Doubleday, Page, and Co.: New York, 1905]. Hamilton's transcription of these notes includes a number of unfortunate errors: in the sentence quoted he includes words ("mountain ranges, as") that London crossed out; he has "horses" for "bosses"; and he has "efforts" for "hurts." See Hamilton, *"Tools of My Trade,"* 244-45.

man-made geography of New York City. London had been reading chapters of *The Jungle,* so the simile of the jungle was fresh in his mind, but it had been a part of his vocabulary since at least *The People of the Abyss.*[89] Bill, like the characters in *The Walking Delegate,* are denizens of the jungle.

In his review, London writes, "in any human jungle there must be codes of ethics and violations of codes of ethics." The "particular and peculiar sin of the commercial jungle . . . is betrayal. Betrayal, or treachery, is the sin most commonly committed in business life of today." (8-9). London makes the connection between Foley's betrayal and that which happens in both "The Unexpected" and "All Gold Canyon" very explicit: "It is secret, hidden, a snake-in-the-grass sort of act directed against one's fellows to the hurt of one's fellow, and it does not even rise to the dignity of the old-time ambuscade." Now that the analogy between urban and country jungles was reinforced with the mention of the classic Western stab-in-the-back, London decided to base a short story on just that act. If there is anything attractive about the action in "All Gold Canyon," then it is that the sneak attack isn't as bad as the kind of illegal, immoral machinations conducted by Foley. But that ain't saying much.

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[89] See Upton Sinclair, letter to London, [undated fragment], Oakland Public Library. In this letter, Sinclair mentions reading *War of the Classes,* which was published in April 1905, as well as finishing up and sending chapters of *The Jungle* to London. It was typical for London to read a book and then pass it on to Charmian. Thus on 2 July 1905 she notes in her diary that she is reading *The Jungle.* See Charmian Kittredge London, diary, 1905, JL 218.

London had been reading Edward Ross's essay in the *Atlantic Monthly,* "New Varieties of Sin*,"* but he was less concerned about convincing the public of the immorality of the new secularization of sin and how to expose the moral decrepitude of capitalism than celebrating the lost art of public ruthlessness. When Ross says, "The shedder of blood, the oppressor of the widow and the fatherless, long ago became odious, but latter-day treacheries fly no skull-and-crossbones flag at the masthead," London thinks, not how to legislate laws to convict the new capitalist criminals, but of his favorite pirate: "Captain Kidd . . . was open and above board. He hoisted skull and cross-bones to the masthead, and took openly and without treachery." (10).[90] London quotes Ross, "The little finger of Chicane has come to be thicker than the loins of Violence." (11) He thinks not of how awful the modern-day pirates are but how Kidd's murdering was ethically superior to capitalism's treachery. "All this is because commercial society is based upon production for profit. If society were based upon production for service, betrayal and treachery would cease to be. But that is another story," a story that a reformer like Ross cannot tell. (12) The review ends on a pessimistic note: "`Graft' is the modern slang for what was once the most terrible of sins, namely, treachery and betrayal." (35). Not murder, not rape, but "treachery and betrayal" are the greatest sins, and the Machine Age—and now *machine* includes political machinery—is defined by this most horrible of sins.

In a long letter to the Central Labor Council of Alameda County, California, written in August 1905, London continued this train of thought: "All machinations of the men-of-graft-and-grab-and-the-dollar are futile. Strength lies in comradeship and

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[90] Edward Ross, "New Varieties of Sin," *Atlantic Monthly* (May 1905): 595.

brotherhood, not in a throat-cutting struggle where every man's hand is against every man." He was writing to praise the "the workmen of Alameda County" for "sending a share of their hard-earned wages three thousand miles across the continent to help the need of a lot of striking laundry girls in Troy," New York. These are the girls whose case was reported in a newspaper article that London clipped and included in his file on the "Persistence of the Established." We might recall that in 1899 London had disavowed the brotherhood of man. "Socialism is not an ideal system, devised by man for the happiness of all life," he wrote to Johns. "It is devised for the happiness of certain kindred races. It is devised so as to give more strength to these certain kindred favored races so that they may survive and inherit the earth to the extinction of the lesser, weaker races. The very men who advocate socialism, may tell you of the brotherhood of all men, and I know they are sincere; but that does not alter the law—they are simply instruments, working blindly for the betterment of these certain kindred races, and working detriment to the inferior races they would call brothers."[91] Earlier he had written, "Yes; the time for Utopias and dreamers is past. Co-operative colonies etc., are at the best impossible,"[92] giving the

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[91] London, letter to Johns, 23 June 1899, *Letters,* 1:89.

[92] London, letter to Johns, 7 June 1899, *Letters,* 1:81. Even though London's assertion of the importance of race and evolution in the political world sounds Spencerian, his rejection of utopian socialism is anti-Spencerian. To begin with, Spencer believed that all forms of charity (including the Poor Laws that stipulated taxes to help feed the poor) might help in the short term, but in the long term they prevented society from progressing biologically: "Blind to the fact that under the natural order of things, society is constantly excreting its unhealthy, imbecile, slow, vacillating, faithless members, these unthinking,

though well-meaning, men advocate an interference which not only stops the purifying process but even increases the vitiation—absolutely encourages the multiplication of the reckless and incompetent by offering them an unfailing provision, and *discourages* the multiplication of the competent and provident by heightening the prospective difficulty of maintaining a family." (Spencer, *Social Statics,* pp. 323-24; quoted in Richards, 263 n. 77) One can hear Spencer's Lamarckianism here in the idea that good economic habits learned in one generation are transmitted as if a gene to future generations. London, though he was an opponent of charity (as we saw in chapter 10) and believed that society, left alone, would indeed purge itself of its "weaker" members, nonetheless was neither a Lamarckian nor a utopian socialist, as Spencer also was. Spencer believed in governmental noninterference (we might call him a libertarian) so that society, left to its own devices, would inevitably (because biologically based) be comprised of perfect individuals. As Roberts describes Spencer's theory, "One could realistically hope for the advent of a state of constitutionally perfect individuals, who has so mentally and physically adapted to living in society that each could exercise the full freedom of his or her faculties without infringing on the free activity of others." Class would disappear as well as private property. "It was a socialist's utopia achieved through an evolutionary process." (Richards, 261). Richards even draws close parallels between Spencer and *The Communist Manifesto,* going so far as to highlight passages from *Social Statics* like "Workhouses are used to mitigate the more acute symptoms of social unhealthiness. Parish pay is hush money," and "The existence of a government which does not bend to the popular will—a despotic government—presupposes several circumstances which make any change but a violent one impossible." (quoted on 264). Spencer came close to

background for what he means by "ideal." That was back in 1899, and once again we can see how the election of 1904 changed either his thinking or the way he presented himself publicly. At the very least he now had concrete, empirical evidence of the selflessness of the working class and trade unions. This epistolary document also represents not only a continuation of his socialist thinking from the early winter of 1905 and a presentiment of his speaking tour and engagement with the American public in the winter of 1905-1906, but also an incorporation of the idea of spirit from his fiction early in the year, including, as we will see, *White Fang.* In his letter to the Alameda labor council, he wrote, "I am with you in the brotherhood of the spirit, as all you boys, in a similar brotherhood of the

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socialism, admitting that "his own principles did `not at all militate against joint-stock systems of production and living, which are in all probability what Socialism prophecies." (quoted on 265). But Spencer had no conception of class warfare, and, as Richards points out, heavily revised his political philosophy after the publication of *Social Statics.* "The notion that individuals could become perfectly adapted to life in the state vanished," as did his advocacy of community ownership of property. "With these alterations and the growth of Marxism during the alter part of the century, Spencer erased all hint of an earlier shared cause with socialism." (266). We do not know if London read *Social Statics;* all his original Spencer books are lost. It is tempting to think that the change I am tracking in his political thinking mirrors his reading of early to late Spencer. But I doubt it. First of all, I believe he read all the Spencer that he did read before 1899, except for *Autobiography.* Second, he probably read the revised edition of *Social Statics,* which came out in 1892 (the first, socialistic edition came out in 1851), at the same time as *First Principles* and *Principles of Psychology.*

spirit, are with our laundry girls in Troy, New York." Spirit, then, is anticapitalist. We remember that the women workers had said that their church had told them to end their strike and to obey their "masters." London scoffs at the religion of capitalism and promotes a different spiritual higher power. "And not only does brotherhood give organized labor more fighting strength, but it give it, as well, the strength of righteousness. The holiest reason that men can find for drawing together into any kind of an organization is *brotherhood.*"[93] It's as if Saint Paul had written an epistle to striking Greek or Roman workers.

The letter ends, of course, with his signature, but even it is a departure from previous practice. He signs the letter, not "yours for the revolution," as was typical for him, but rather "yours in the brotherhood of man," echoing the voice of the narrator of *The Iron Heel.* His thinking about the coming brotherhood, the "ideal," had changed. Instead of never happening, it would definitely and ultimately take place in the future. It may be the far-off future, but nonetheless it would happen. I think this new element—the spirit of altruism that defines the working class—signals a sincere reappraisal of his earlier take on the brotherhood of man. Spirit represents a higher law than politics, a worthy competitor to biology.

What remained constant, however, is London's loathing of capitalism and capitalists. To return to "All Gold Canyon," Bill's murder of his attacker may be justified as self defense, but his defacement of the landscape and the treachery of his attacker are not. When we watch Bill the miner and his nameless attacker struggle in the pit, we can

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[93] London, letter to the Central Labor Council, Alameda County, 25 Aug. 1905, *Letters,* 1:515.

see Bill and his attacker as capitalists who pollute the cooperative commonwealth. The canyon is, on the face of it, a place of great beauty, but it is more than that. It is "somnolent with the easement and content of prosperity, undisturbed by rumors of far wars." (1018). That word *prosperity*, seemingly so out of place—how can a natural landscape be prosperous?—is our clue to its connection to the urban jungle, but in contrast. The canyon can only be prosperous when its riches (the gold) are left undisturbed. The canyon embodies the successful cooperative commonwealth. If the jungle is a city, then the canyon can be that place where humans have achieved both economic and social balance, a place like the cabin in "The Unexpected" before the murder occurs. Edith and Hans are to Bill as Michael Dennin is to the nameless attacker. Thus, when Bill takes the gold, he robs the canyon of its prosperity, its peace. The gold gone, the jungle may overgrow the eternal scarring caused by Bill, hiding the ravaging he effected, but nothing can replace the gold.

A final note on "All Gold Canyon." The presence, departure, and return of "the spirit of the place" (1017) suggest an absorptive tale, and indeed Bill is an absorptive figure, so focused as he is on finding gold. Bill, however, is a false author figure. When he is absent, the spirit—a "wraith"—resides in the place. When he comes, the spirit disappears. The ghostly imagination won't have anything to do with him or his kind. Need it be said? London did not write for money alone. The most Bill can imagine in the way of art is a degraded hymn (perhaps of London's own composition) that insists the we look "untoe them sweet hills of grace" and "fling yo' sin-pack on d' groun'." (1019) The irony is clear. By dismissing (throwing his "sin-pack") the capitalist sin of raping the landscape, "the sweet hills of grace," he is able to get rich. The inverted V of his mining

symbolizes the upside-down nature of his creative effort. Only Bill could call such a beautiful place "All Gold Canyon," an appellation that misses its natural beauty and claims as its essence the hidden, human-valued treasure.

Bill, Edith, Hans, and even Tom Keating (who betrays "the right and the truth" in order to save the union, as London says in his review)[94] all are elastic enough to survive the unexpected event, the surprising turn that not only tests one's fitness to survive in the (urban) jungle but also marks the narrative's downhill movement to climax. In the next and final story before *White Fang,* "Planchette," we are still in the Southland and in a natural environment that, like the canyon, has the potential to be a self-sustaining cooperative commonwealth. Much of the beginning of the story—apart from the mystery of Chris's inability to marry Lute—depends on London's rendering of the beauty of Sonoma Valley. "`Have you ever heard of the secret pasture?'" asks Lute after another of London's sustained word-pictures exalts the countryside, and we think of the hidden canyon that Bill destroys. Just before Chris falls to his death, London again ceases the action to describe the natural beauty of the landscape: "It was an abyss of green beauty and shady depths, pierced by vagrant shafts of the sun and mottled here and there by the sun's broader blazes. The sound of rushing water ascended on the windless air, and there was a hum of mountain bees." (1069). It is gorgeous. But, like Alfred Hitchcock, London had discovered (first in "All Gold Canyon") how the terrible and tragic can come in the daylight. That word *abyss* should trigger our readerly anxiety, for nothing good happens in an abyss in London's work, even if it is green.

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[94] London, review of *The Walking Delegate,* 32-33.

Sonoma Valley is another All Gold Canyon, and the unexpected happens just at the moment the narrator tells us to look at the beauty on the surface and not the evil beneath it. But now the question isn't whether the characters can adapt to a change in circumstances, but rather what is the underlying cause of that change? London has moved out of the world of evolution into the world of psychology. Right away we are taken into the psychological realm. Chris Dunbar has a secret that he can't share with Lute Story, but it is so momentuous that it prevents him from marrying her. While we are contemplating what such a secret might be, Chris's horse mysteriously goes mad, trying to kill him in an act of betrayal (a thematic residue from London's previous three pieces of writing), and only after great effort do both he and Lute regain control of the horse. The next day, Chris's horse commits suicide, trying to take Chris with him. These events are left unexplained—as is Chris's secret—when the story takes another turn, this time to a scene of writing. Gathered about a planchette, guided by Mrs. Grantly (a spiritualist), the group watches Chris perform some automatic writing, which ties together the three seemingly disparate plot lines: Chris's secret, the horses' murderous behavior, and the writing of the planchette. The ghosts of Lute's father and mother seize control of the planchette, and their messages reveal an ethereal marital spat: the father wants to kill Chris because of his secret and the mother wants Lute to love Chris no matter what. The father wins and takes control of yet another horse who manages to commit suicide and kill Chris in one grand jump into a rocky, green abyss. Lute is left alone on the trail at the end of the story, paralyzed by the death of her love.[95]

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[95] London didn't feel the need of footnoting this story, as he had done with "The Unexpected" and others, but he could have. After his death, Charmian wrote a note to

The story seems at first another *Black Cat* story, one of London's favorite genres. It is the most obvious genre to get him and us close to the ghostliness of his imagination without revealing that this is exactly what he is doing; he wants to protect the deeper, more personal questions about the nature of his imagination. But there is something more at work here. The rhetoric used by Lute and Chris in discussing the horses' betrayal—"obsession," "healthy-minded," "normal"—and the scene of automatic writing suggest that London was newly exploring psychological literature and the ways it may inform his creation of characters and, more importantly, how he may come to understand his own psychological workings as an author in a new way. As Chris tells Lute, "`We are playing with the subjective forces of our own being, with phenomena which science has not yet explained, that is all. Psychology is so young a science. *The subconscious has just been discovered,* one might say. It is all mystery as yet; the laws of it are yet to be formulated." (1065; my emphasis) This is in answer to Lute's assertion, after their second scene with the planchette, that her father's "`ghostly hands'" will kill him. Through (automatic) writing we learn of his murderous intent. We are used to the self-reflexivity of London's writing about writing (we recall the black lines on white paper that his Klondike characters make when they travel across snow), but now it occurs on a deeper level.

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herself, "`Planchette' was based on a personal observation of mine. Jack pounced on it!" Charmian London, "Planchette: [Note]," JL 350. She might have revealed what the observation had been—did it involve the horse? the planchette?—in her biography, but she plays coy: "`Planchette'—the material for this last was founded upon an incident that had once come under my observation, and I passed it on to him" (Charmian London, *The Book of Jack London,* 2:56).

At the suggestion that something possessed Dolly to try to kill Dunbar, "they laughed together at the idea, for both were twentieth-century products, healthy-minded and normal, with souls that delighted in the butterfly-chase of ideals but that halted before the brink where superstition begins" (1047). They laugh again and Chris says, elaborating on the word *obsession,* "`an evil spirit. . . . But what evil have I done that I should be so punished?'" (1047). This of course is the obvious question that the story asks. But if we read the story as another of London's attempts to grapple with his imagination, the question becomes something like, What have I done to deserve this continual torture meted out by my unconscious life? Why can't I not write? What invisible force directs me to this occupation? Am I possessed? Is writing an obsession? Every now and then London had to revisit the source and methods of his creative imagination. What agency is it that guides my pen and creates things out of thin air that I was not aware of until I wrote them? What is that spirit? London broadcasts the self-reflexivity of the story by naming three of his characters Story: Lute, Robert, and Mildred. The name Lute Story not only references writing but also music. "Planchette" is about the artist and his art.

What kills Chris Dunbar is an undisclosed, and therefore untreated guilty conscience. If the act were so awful then we would know what it was; its revelation would be the climax of the story. But London's narrative makes the actual act irrelevant.[96] By not naming the actual cause of guilt, our focus is on the guilt itself. It is

[96] Labor's "exposure" of the act is a narrow biographical explanation. According to the biographer, because Dunbar is London, and because London is conflicted about living in the country, he kills himself off to show Charmian (Lute) that he is committed to her. But

enough to know that Dunbar is guilty and has not expatiated his guilt. Or, if we read this in psychoanalytic terms, as the story suggests we do, the guilt Dunbar feels is a pathogenic secret, a secret that causes illness and even death. Henri Ellenberger in his *Discovery of the Unconscious* (a titled he could have taken from London), traces the practice of confession of a pathogenic secret from the Catholic Church to hypnosis. "There came a time when the knowledge of the pathogenic secret and its treatment fell into the hands of laymen," Ellenberger writes. "When this happened is not know, but it may have been among the early magnetists."[97] We are right back to the scene of writing in "Planchette." Mrs. Grantley is, says Dunbar, "a weird little thing. . . . I'll wager she doesn't weigh ninety pounds , and most of that's magnetism. (1051). It's such an odd comment, that almost off-the-cuff remark about magnetism; after all, how can a person be composed of magnetism? The modern-day reader will dismiss it as an anachronism, but, placed in its proper context, the remark makes sense as an attribution of someone implicated in the history of psychoanalysis. Mrs. Grantley's task, after all, is to bring out the secret and help Dunbar—and the Storys—work through his psychic difficulty. The

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the story leaves Lute alone, as if Dunbar (London) had chosen not to live in the country (or anywhere else); that is, the narrative, if read according to Labor's logic, can be equally seen as London's despair at giving up the city and being forced to live in the country. I, Jack London, would rather commit suicide, says the narrative according to Labor, than live with Lute/Charmian in Sonoma Valley.

[97] Henri F. Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious: The History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry* (New York: Basic Books, 1970), 44.

ultimate goal, of course, is to achieve a healthy, sexual relationship between Chris and Lute.

Not only is this story a mate to "All Gold Canyon" (and, more indirectly, with the review of *The Walking Delegate* and "The Unexpected" and "The Sun-Dog Trail") but it is also a precursor to two major works of fiction that London wrote in the next decade: *The Valley of the Moon* and *Little Lady of the Big House.* As we will see, the former ends with the two main characters, Billy and Saxon, communing with nature and the "spirit of the place" and facing the dilemma of either living poorly in the country but maintaining their place's natural beauty or mining the property and so become wealthy. *Little Lady of the Big House* ends, not with the male character dying but rather with the "little lady" committing suicide rather than living with a man who, like Billy Roberts, has chosen to live by the lights of the commercial spirit. With hindsight, we are tempted to be glad to watch with Lute Story as Dunbar plunges to his death—not because he deserved to die, as her father thinks, but because his death has saved her from a life in the prison of a Dick Forrest-like Big House.

The ghost story and the history of psychoanalysis may seem far apart, but London's fictional writings show how close they are. We often characterize London as a Darwinian or as a social Darwinist, as if Darwin's ideas formed the only influential intellectual environment at the turn of the century. But London can be placed just as easily within the development of international psychology—besides, can we forget how much a Darwinist Freud was?—and the evolution of his conception of the human psyche is informed by the evolution of psychologic thought in America.

London owned copies of Alfred Binet's *The Psychic Life of Micro-Organisms* and *On the Double Consciousness.*[98] Both were issued in translation as pamphlets in Paul Carus's Religion of Science Library series.[99] Although the former was published in 1903, indicating London's earliest interest in psychological research, the latter is of greater interest. Published in 1905, the same year he wrote "Planchette," it is very likely that this pamphlet inspired him to present Chris Dunbar's take on psychology—that there are two levels of the psyche, a conscious and a subconscious—and hence marks the beginning of London's investigations into the new science, which culminated in his reading of Freud's essays, Carl Jung's *Psychology of the Unconscious,* and other authors like Otto Rank.

On Double Consciousness proceeds by a series of, basically, three steps in orderly fashion in harmony with Pierre Janet's theory of disassociative psychology, which held

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[98] For a quick overview of Binet's life, especially his relationship with Janet, see Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious,* 355-56.

[99] Binet's work was originally published by Carus in 1889; London owned the 1905 reprint. See Alfred Binet, *The Psychic Life of Micro-Organisms,* trans. pub. (1888; Chicago: Open Court Publishing Co., 1903), JLE 1427 and *On Double Consciousness,* trans. pub. (1889; Chicago: Open Court Publishing Co., 1905), JLE 1426. London also owned Binet, *The Psychology of Reasoning Based on Experimental Researches in Hypnotism,* trans. Adam Gowans White (Chicago: Open Court Pub. Co., 1899), HL 336271. Carus had also published four works by Ribot—*The Psychology of Attention, The Diseases of Personality, The Diseases of the Will,* and the *Evolution of General Ideas*—as well as *Contributions to the Analysis of the Sensations.* It is not known if London owned these works.

that hysteria was "a permanent state of dual personality," a concept that was "not only the culmination of the first dynamic psychiatry, but . . . also the starting point of the new systems of dynamic psychiatry, notably those of Janet, Breuer, Freud, and Jung."[100] This duality grew out of "the study and practice of magnetism and hypnotism," which first developed the dipsychistic model of the mind. This doubling of the ego (understood in its pre-Freudian sense as simply the controlling element of the mind), for many psychologists, explained the existence of artistic inspiration and dreams as well as "mysticism and mediumnistic manifestions."[101] Janet, Jung, and Freud all began from dipsychism, though the latter two developed more complicated, polypsychistic systems of the mind. If London had encountered these ideas—they are not present in Binet, and, apart from their apparent apparition in "Planchette," there is no evidence that I have found that he did so—he could easily define his art as something akin psychologically to his mother's occupation, but historically more advanced; that is, writing fiction may be akin to a medium's storytelling, but it is more advanced along psychology's historical continuum.

Binet's first step is a brief history of "experimental psychology in France," which is, as Binet says, scattered at best given the lack of international communication. But in France the focus is on "psychology affected by disease." (9) The principal question was whether an unconscious phenomenon "was a purely physiological phenomenon" or whether it emanated from within. (3) The latter was the position taken by Theodule Ribot, who, according to Binet, rejected metaphysics but nevertheless "a certain

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[100] Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious,* 145.

[101] Ellenberger, 146.

metaphysical character attaches to [his] ideas." (3) Binet, for his part, stated that "we know *absolutely nothing* regarding the nature of unconscious phenomena," and this is the position Chris Dunbar take as well. Hoping for a scientific, empirical understanding of unseen forces at work in conjunction with or emanating from the mind, Dunbar (and Binet) can only hope for further experimental evidence.

The next step is to assert and demonstrate the existence of a double personality, or double ego, or double consciousness; the terms for describing the psyche were very fluid at this time. As Binet says, "In truth, is not the idea extraordinary, that in hysterical individuals there should exist two distinct personalities, two egos united in the same person." (10-11). He discusses two methodologies for demonstrating the existence of the divided self: experiments done with those who suffer from partial hysterical paralysis who can nonetheless perform physical acts with the afflicted bodily part that are suggested to him or her by a doctor. Thus, if one part of the mind is controlling the paralysis, there is another part overriding the paralysis. The other methodology is automatic writing with a planchette (also performed by hysterical patients), and now London really became attuned to Binet's pamphlet. Binet cites William James's experiments with "normal individuals" whose results, says Binet, "closely resemble those obtained by myself with hysterical individuals." Thus the boundary between "normal" and "abnormal" is broken down; as Binet later stress, "of course, the normal type has only an ideal existence". (20, 76) Thus people like Dunbar and the Storys can write messages transmitted to paper by a hidden or second consciousness. As Binet writes, experiments in America "consist in asking a person to place his hand upon a planchette that can serve for the purposes of writing and to remain immovable without thinking of

anything. When the subject is nervous it will sometimes happen that the planchette becomes agitated and begins to write thoughts entirely foreign to the subject; the latter remains motionless and has no consciousness of anything." (26) We remember that after each session with the planchette Dunbar is sleepy, his act almost an act of sleep writing, as if a dream were in control of his actions. We can see how London is creating analogies between spiritualism, dreamwork, and the creative imagination except that he is most interested in pinning down the identity and location of that imagination. Is it outside himself, like a ghost (dog), or is it inside himself, like a possession? Or can the ghost live inside himself? Is it some sort of combination of the two? Much of London's absorptive fiction from this point on is written to answer these questions.

The third and final step for Binet is to test his theory of the double consciousness on nonhysterical patients. The tests are partially successful. He is able to determine that the mind can split its attention between two simultaneous motor skills, but he cannot conclude that each is "accompanied by [different] states of consciousness." (84) On the other hand, he has determined that "the rudiment of those states of double consciousness which we have studied first in the hysterical, may with a little attention be found in normal subjects." (83) In fact, he reveals that his experiments duplicate the successes of experimenting with automatic writing with "normal subjects. . . . Automatic writing is the best known of these facts of double consciousness." (83). That is, it provides the best evidence of a double consciousness, and this would be enough for London. The story's genre dictates that the second, hidden consciousness must be a ghost, but it is clear that London's ghost is both inside and outside Dunbar. He is inside helping him write warning messages to himself (you will die, or "die," if you don't divulge your secret) and

outside pushing him off the cliff. Lute "sees" her father push him, but she does not "see" him help Dunbar write.

And yet the ghosts in this story are real. They kill. The mistake, London tells us, is not not being superstitious but in not believing in the unseen. Lute and Chris are correct in saying that there are no such things as witches, evil spirits, and the like. But they underestimate the unseen. The ghosts that medievalists believed in are actually inside us, residing right beside the imagination, which acts in league with it. Unadmitted crimes, the guilty conscience, haunt us. Lute doesn't see the ghost of her father kill Dunbar. Her imagination sees it, prepared as it is by her memory of her father's life. She is the author figure whose imagination, because it is ghostlike, is able to work in tandem with ghosts. That is, the imagination is becoming for London something that resides in the psychological world. He isn't sure what to call it, but in his effort to locate and define it, he is sure it is something that psychology can help him understand. "Planchette" represents London's turn from Poe to Freud.

"Planchette" stands as a transitional object between the nineteenth-century terrible and tragic (we can't forget Poe's interest in mesmerism) and the twentieth-century beginnings of dynamic psychotherapy. [102] Twice we hear in the story the voice of

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[102] I'm not sure why critics like James McClintock and Earle Labor denigrate the connections London was building between psychoanalysis and fiction writing. Labor quotes McClintock favorably, who wrote that "Planchette" is "evidence of London's early, but undigested, interest in psychology." It's completely mystifying what he means by "undigested," as if London simply dumped quotations or concepts whole into his work. But of course Labor and McClintock are only interested in biographical readings of

either Lute or Chris explaining to each other and to us that they are citizens of the twentieth century. They don't believe in medievalism, in superstition, in ghosts. The fact that they have to deny medievalism and superstition shows how close they are to nineteenth-century conceptions of the unseen. At the same time, their employment of a new psychological vocabulary shows how much they reside in the twentieth century.[103]

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the story, reading the story as a roman a clef. Once we match Lute to Charmian, however, and Chris to Jack, Mrs. Grantly to Flora Wellman, Uncle Robert to Roscoe Eames, and Aunt Mildred to Ninetta we are at a dead end, no closer than we started to understanding the function of the psychological rhetoric in the story, let alone the connections among the gothic, the psychoanalytic, and the realistic components of the story. In fact, Labor and McClintock call it "one of his most puzzling, least satisfying works" because it "manifests the kind of artistic bad taste so often characteristic of insufficiently transformed fiction." When you read fiction biographically, a work that is apparently so transparent a work of biography—as these two worthies take "Planchette" to be—must fail as fiction. However, they are silent on the question of why London creates such a sympathetic person as Mrs. Grantly if she is indeed based on Wellman, whose séances deeply embarrassed London as a child. See my discussion of Wellman's séances and their influences on London in the first volume of the present work, 21-22. (Earle Labor, "Jack London's `Planchette': The Road Not Taken," *Pacific Historian* 21 [Summer 1977]: 138, 139). It would of course be anachronistic to speak of absorption and theatricality in reference to their work.

[103] Two essays make a similar point but without the kind of evidence that I am marshaling here, and they start from a different point. Both Charles Watson and the

For example, after the first incident with a horse, Lute and Chris agree that the horse's attack was "subjective," perhaps an "obsession," which, at this point in the history of psychology, could mean either "a compulsive interest" or "tormenting of a person from without by an evil spirit."[104] As Ellenberger writes, Catholics used *obsession* to mean a kind of possession called "lucid possession," as opposed to somnambulic

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coauthors Howard Kerr, John Crowley, and Charles Crow assume that London is a positivist whose fiction seems to undermine his strictly scientific outlook. But they make the leap to what I consider the correct position: "London provided a bridge . . . . between supernaturalism and psychoanalysis," say the latter authors. (7) But they trace this "bridge" to *The Star Rover* and take Darrell Standing's self-hypnosis as an affiliated practice with psychoanalysis. As my reading here indicates, London had encountered and made use of psychoanalytic literature ten years previous to *The Star Rover,* and it is debatable whether what Standing practices has anything to do with psychoanalysis. Watson reads "Planchette," but doesn't cite the story's evidence that London was reading Binet. In fact, Watson makes it seem as if London was unaware of the new psychoanalytic literature and that his stories are instances of "skepticism" about his "scientific rationalism." He equates this rationalism with Herbert Spencer, whose "adamantine line" between "the knowable and the unknowable" London rejected, as well as Spencer's antisocialism. See Howard Kerr, John W. Crowley, and Charles L. Crow, introduction, *The Haunted Dusk: American Supernatural Fiction, 1820-1920,* ed. Kerr, Crowley, and Crow (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1983), 7, and Charles N. Watson, Jr., "Jack London: Up from Spiritualism," 204.

[104] *OED,* s.v. "obsession."

possession where the subject is unaware of being possessed. An obsessed person, on the other hand, "remains constantly aware of his self, but feels `a spirit within his own spirit,' struggles against it, but cannot prevent it from speaking at times." The possessing spirit is a kind of parasite that lives "in the soul." *Obsession,* writes Ellenberger, is "a word that has been adopted by psychiatry, though with another meaning."[105]

The story's deployment of twentieth-century psychological vocabulary, its self-reflexivity, and the centrality of the scenes with the planchette invite comparisons with Freud's "Note on the Mystic Writing Pad," written twenty years later. Both the Mystic Writing Pad and the planchette are alternative technological means to write, and both are intimately connected to memory and the structure of the psyche. Both posit, to use Jacques Derrida's phrase "a scene of writing."[106] That is, writing for both Freud and London is not simply an aid to memory but a gateway to understanding the relationship among various components of the perception-consciousness system. When, for example, Uncle Robert's writing is completed, the group decides that the message came from either "`the subconscious mind'" or his memory of some New Thought group, theosophists, or Christian Scientists. Dunbar opts for a combination of the two from the assumption that the subconscious mind contains short-term memories. Mrs. Grantly tells us that "`a day or a year is all the same in the subconscious mind. . . . The subconscious mind never forgets.'" (1056) This is pure dipsychism. But what is most interesting about

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[105] Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious*.

[106] Derrida's essay turns away from the kinds of concerns I am raising here; but see Jacques Derrida, "Freud and the Scene of Writing," *Writing and Difference,* trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 196-231.

Grantly is that she does not favor one explanation over another. "`I am not saying that this is due to the subconscious mind. I refuse to state to what I think it is due.'" (1056). You might think that the spiritualist would advocate for the role of the undead in sending these messages, but, like a good empiricist, she simply gathers information and evidence and tests various theories.

She does employ the rhetoric of spiritualism, encapsulated by the word *influences*. There are other competing rhetorics to describe what we use the word *imagination* shorthand for, or, at the very least, what ever it is that moves the planchette. There is the rhetoric of New Thought (a constellation of ideas that I will explore in depth in volume three). There is the rhetoric of psychology, a "science" opposed in London's universe to the metaphysics of Christian Science and Theosophy. There is the rhetoric of spiritualism, represented by Mrs. Grantly. And there is the religious or pseudo-religious rhetoric, with an emphasis on the word *soul,* used by Lute. In the second paragraph, Lute, because for four years she has been wondering why Chris will not marry her, is characterized by a "determination that is reached through a long period of pleading. . . . In her case it had been pleading, not of speech, but of personality. Her lips had been ever mute, but her face and eyes, and the very attitude of her soul, had been for a long time eloquent with questioning." (1035). Chris's interactions with all people is marked by an "all-pervading caress. . . . It was largely unconscious on the man's part. He was only dimly aware of it. It was a part of him, the breath of his soul as it were, involuntary and unpremeditated." (1036) In fact, she describes herself at one point as "a prophet" who characterizes Mr. Barton as a man who worships "fetishes and idols." (1062). Dunbar makes fun of her in biblical terms, as if borrowing her own source of rhetoric will be a

more convincing way of showing her the fallacy of her beliefs. (see 1062). Finally, after Lute describes Chris's warm-hearted nature, and he laughs about it shyly, she says, "When you are laughing at all that I have said, you, the feel of you, your soul,--call it what you will, it is you,--is calling for all the love that is in me.'" (1053). Here she wavers between the religious rhetoric that comes naturally to her and the psychoanalytic rhetoric employed by Dunbar, that is, "the feel of you," or, rather, the emotional life that gives one a sense of identity. The hint here is that the sense of "feel"—the ability to sense the emotional content of a person, of a situation, even of a landscape (which has a spirit) is somehow akin to the imagination and may be located in the same region of the psyche, that is, somewhere in the subconscious.

Lute is, then, in the final analysis a twentieth-century woman. She senses that her religious rhetoric is not sufficient to describe not only the empiricism of the planchette but also the possession of the three horses and the "sight" of the ghost killing Dunbar. None of the rhetorics except for that of spiritualism holds sufficient explanatory power to explain these events. But we've seen how spiritualism and magnetism lead to psychoanalysis. As Ellenberger sums it up, "No branch of knowledge has undergone so many metamorphoses as dynamic psychiatry: from primitive healing to magnetism, magnetism to hypnotism, hypnotism to psychoanalysis and the newer dynamic schools." (v) London thus is telling us that the new science's explanatory power is borrowing from spiritualism to explain the human psyche but that psychology will eventually take its place. The subconscious, when it is explained, will account for automatic writing and "possession." "`I don't know all the mysteries of mind,'" says Dunbar, "but I believe such phenomena will all yield to scientific explanation in the not distant future." In the

meantime, twentieth-century denizens like Lute will project their fears upon the psychic landscape and call them ghosts. As the narrator tells us, when she "placed her hand on the board she was conscious of a vague and nameless fear at this toying with the supernatural . . . . She could not shake off the instinctive fear that arose in her—man's inheritance from the wild and howling ages when his hairy, apelike prototype was afraid of the dark and personified the elements into things of fear." (1060) If fear of the unknown—called "the supernatural"—could be replaced by anthropological science's history of man, then ghosts could be replaced by the workings of the unconscious. As much as Lute loved Chris, if he could not marry her then she wished him dead, even if her mother counseled her against it. In London's work, it is typical that the wrath of the father is more powerful than the love of the mother.

London finished the story on 2 July, having begun *White Fang* while he was writing "Planchette." In early June, London wrote to Cloudesley Johns, who had asked him if he had started *White Fang*. No, said London, "am writing some short stories in order to get hold of some immediate cash," clearly an exaggeration since after "All Gold Canyon" (which he had just completed) he didn't write another short story except "Planchette" until late February 1906.[107] Charmian finished typing it on 1 July, and he

[107] London, letter to Johns, 7 June 1905, *Letters,* 491. He finished "All Gold Canyon" just the next day. He must be referring to "The Sun-Dog Trail," "The White Man's Way," "The Unexpected," "All Gold Canyon," and "Planchette." On 7 June he received his $500 check for "The Sun-Dog Trail," and on 26 May he had received his $655 for "The Unexpected." If he really were desperate for money he would have continued cranking out stories, or he would have signed up for Collier's gravy train, but of course he wasn't,

mailed it to his first choice, *Collier's Weekly,* the next day. Collier rejected it, as did the next six outlets. One of those was McClure, who was so busy insisting that he needed a story from London that he was forgetting that he was rejecting nearly everything London sent him. He couldn't publish "Planchette" because the mystery of Chris's unwillingness to marry Lute is never explained. "In this mystical tragedy sort of thing, it seems to me you ought to give the reader some clue to get prepared for it, and that's why I feel that what you reach here is both unexpected and insufficient," said McClure, and he certainly has a point.[108] To a modern reader, who finds Chris's silence willful, McClure's opinion is reassuring. It was echoed by John Cosgrave and Gillman Hall at *Everybody's.* They were desperate for something from London, but "we are very much disappointed that this manuscript of yours is a supernatural story. We shy at that type generally and we would much rather have something more characteristic of Jack London," said Hall. By

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and he didn't; he was poor-mouthing again. Charmian London was complicit in this attitude. In her biography she writes, "Needing immediate cash, Jack delayed beginning *White Fang* and the young master of the short story went to work spilling upon tales like `Brown Wolf' the warmth and color of rural California that had got into his pounding blood. . . . `Planchette' . . . . `The Sun Dog Trail,' `A Day's Lodging,' `Love of Life,' and 'The Unexpected.'" (Charmian London, *The Book of Jack London,* 2:57.) Charmian needed an accurate chronology of London's writings; "Brown Wolf" and "A Day's Lodging" were written in early 1906, and "Love of Life" in 1903. As we have seen, London delayed writing *White Fang* not because he needed cash but because the novel was still forming in his mind.

[108] S. S. McClure, letter to London, 6 Oct. 1905, JL 14230.

"characteristic" he meant Klondike. But there were faults on the story's own terms, and Hall was principally concerned with how "Planchette" violated the norms of the genre. A ghost story should be mysterious, but "more elusive" than how London has presented events. "You have made your facts too specific," Hall wrote. Objecting to the Hitchcockian horror, Hall instructs London that the mystery should not have "the color of daylight." At the same time that "the accidents to Chris [are] too bare-faced and the last one almost without explanation," "the cause of the accidents . . . should have been a little more related to actual realism." The story, that is, was too real when it should not have been, too obscure when it should have been real. The second fault is that "the planchette game" takes the story out of "the supernatural realm into a line of some fakiness"; the general public at least thinks so and thus "impair[s] the serious purpose" of the story. The third fault is with Chris and Lute's relationship; why can't they marry? It's a question of plotting: "some parts of the story are not worked out,--. . . you start a train of thought which in all rights the reader should know the ending of."[109] George Sterling, on the other hand, found the mystery compelling: "I congratulate you on not telling why Chris couldn't marry her; but it will make the average reader sore."[110] Perhaps it was to

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[109] George Gilman Hall, letter to London, 1 Feb. 1906, JL 7063.

[110] Sterling, letter to London, 25 May 1906, JL 19047. Be ready for an absurd piece of scholarship. When Sterling praised London's "Planchette," calling it "out of your usual manner" (apparently he had never read London's early ghost stories), he wrote that "the Wind from Nowhere has blown on you, as on so many of your contemporaries, such as Bierce, Kipling, and Maeterlinck. I must admit that I consider the purely psychic story greater than one solely of action" (ibid). The phrase "wind from nowhere" is the title of

McClure's and *Everybody's* credit that they so ably foretold the average reader's likes and dislikes. London knew what they meant and what they wanted. His next story to McClure was "The Unexpected" and to Cosgrave, "Brown Wolf."

Despite his fame, he could not get this complicated, twentieth-century story published. Its length argued against itself, too. At 16,147 words, it is three thousand words longer than *The Game.* Finally, Bailey Millard, London's friend from his days at the *San Francisco Examiner* and now the editor who succeeded John Brisban Walker at *Cosmopolitan,* accepted it in early March 1906 as part of the financial package they put together for London's trip on the *Snark;* Millard was doing everything he could to make it appear London was sailing around the world as the correspondent for *Cosmopolitan,* and giving London ten cents a word for such a long story was part of the strategy.[111] They

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Oscar Micheaux's 1941 novel in which his main character, Martin Eden, wants to become a writer just like Jack London: "He kept in mind that Jack London wrote 10,000 words a day. So Martin Eden wrote 10,000 words the first day, too" (Oscar Micheaux, *The Wind from Nowhere* [New York: Book Supply Co., 1941], 328). As much as I want to simply enjoy the absurdity of a chain of signification that goes from a white Californian poet to a white Californian novelist to a black Chicago filmmaker/writer back to the same white Californian novelist—a chain that seems to have been created by Paul Auster—this fraternity tracks a significant literary influence from the point of view of both Sterling and Micheaux.

[111] See Bailley Millard, letter to London, 5 Mar. 1906, JL 15375. "Yes, I knew you had given up the Sunday Editorship," wrote London back in 1903, "and was glad. It seemed to me that I never saw a man more paradoxically situated than you were, with all your

published it in two parts, June and July 1906. Knowing beforehand that Brett would not bring it out as a heavily illustrated novella—after the hassles involved with *The Game,* London had learned his lesson—London did not bother to even bring the matter up with his book publisher except to tell him that he had devised a new collection of short stories to be called *"Moon-Face" and Other Stories*. He hoped it would meet with Brett's approval as his new fall season book; Brett agreed, and it appeared in September 1906 and included its spiritual companion "All Gold Canyon."[112] *White Fang* appeared the very next month.

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delight in good literature and fresh open life, jammed in a howling city at the editorial desk of the Sunday supplement" (London, letter to Millard, 21 Feb. 1903, *Letters,* 1:345).

[112] There was mild anxiety surrounding the serialization of "Planchette" and its impact on British serial rights; London had hoped to delay publication of the story until those had been worked out, but because Millard didn't receive London's request to delay until August, *Cosmopolitan* published it as quickly as possible, and so it appeared in the June and July numbers. London never did secure rights; after sending the story to his agent James Pinker in February, he sent a query in late July, indicating that, most likely, the story's publication in America had no effect on the British situation. See London, letter to Millard, 3 Apr. 1906, *Letters,* 2:562-63, Millard, letter to London, 22 May 1906, JL 15378, and London, Sales Notebook, JL 934. Its immediate publication in June helped London; once Brett saw the announcement that it would be published in *Cosmopolitan* in June, he authorized the publication date of 10 October for *"Moon-Face" and Other Stories;* see Brett, letter to London, 14 May 1906, JL 3064. Then he heard from *Outing* about their plans to publish *White Fang,* which allowed Brett to speed up the book

The Spirit of the Place

"Planchette" is a transitional object that shows the slow and imprecise movements in America from the Machine Age to the Psychoanalytic Age. It works, too, within London's career, as a transition from his pre-1905 stories to the stories of the future, beginning with *White Fang.* We can trace this transition linguistically. Neither accidentally nor incidentally, the phrase "the spirit of the place" first appears, explicitly, in "All Gold Canyon" and then implicitly in "Planchette." Lute's parents are the spirits of that place, Mrs. Grantly matches to the deer, and the two couples play the role of Bill the Miner. But because the two couples come, to use London's terms, in the spirit of service and not capital they do not scare off the spirit. Bill as we remember is a false author figure because the spirit cannot abide in the same place as he. We can see how London's focus shifts slightly between "All Gold Canyon" and "Planchette." The two capitalists of the former become a fat "capitalist" sitting at the table. His name is Mr. Barton, and he is involved in "`water-power-long-distance-electricity-transmitter, or something like that." (1052). Barton with his water plans sits on the sidelines as the two couples engage with the spirit of the place. Even when the principal action involves artistic activity capitalism is always in the background.

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publication of *White Fang* to 10 October 1906 and move *"Moon-Face" and Other Stories* to September, thus allowing the company to bring out the ideal pair of books from a single author. Brett would try to continue this publication plan of one novel and one collection of stories per year for the rest of their relationship. See Brett, letter to London, 22 May 1906, JL 3065, and London, letter to Brett, 28 May 1906, *Letters,* 2:577.

Further, there is an interesting confluence of fiction and nonfiction in this character. A couple of months previous, London had been asked, as the socialist candidate for mayor of Oakland, what his position on ownership of the water supply was. His response was unequivocal: "The position of the Socialist Party then is to let the capitalist class and capitalist parties settle this bond question to suit themselves. It is none of the business of the working class. Municipal ownership under capitalism is not a part of the socialist programme. . . . In the language of Marx and Engels, `We disdain to conceal our views and aims and boldly declare that our ends can be attained only by the complete overthrow of all existing economic conditions.'"[113] The quotation comes from London's favorite political text, the *Communist Manifesto.* Barton's time would come though, thought London, when the specter of socialism would throw him off a cliff.

Barton also reminds us of the stories that have come before and of the relationship between a capitalist such as himself (and Bill, and all the others) and the imagination. There is none. As Chris says, Mr. Barton "`doesn't look as though he could give an ox points on imagination.'" (1052). Thus, Bill, and Barton, and those who work for the commercial spirit are either antiauthors (Barton) or false authors (Bill). Either they have no imagination or operate according to the dictates of fancy. But the narrative vacuum that Barton leaves is filled by the spiritualist and the activity she leads that bridges the gap between the living and the dead (London "knows" there is such a gap because his imagination seems to flit back and forth between them) and serves as a representation of the act of writing. In other words, London is once again more focused on imaging his inner life. We anticipate the same sort of connection in *White Fang*

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[113] London, letter to unnamed correspondent, 9 Mar. 1905, *Letters,* 1:472.

between spirit and emotion, social critique and the imagination, and the primitive and the unconscious.

We are not disappointed. White Fang feels more than he thinks, and his connection to the unseen, both inside and out of his interior life, is strong. The unconscious is linked to the primitive stages of mankind because just as the unconscious determines the behavior of an individual so too does the primitive determine the behavior of the race, in London's terms. This isn't Haeckel's theory of recapitulation, but it is kin to it. The biologic stages of growth of an individual may not replicate the stages of human kind as a whole—Haeckel's recapitulation theory had been discredited, and London shows no evidence of believing in it—but London did seem to think that stages of the psychologic maturation of an individual matched to various races. The white race, of course, was the most adult of them all; African Americans, Native Americans, South Sea islanders, and others were like children. White Fang instinctively knows this. As London's narrator says, "To be sure, White Fang only felt these things. He was not conscious of them. Yet it is upon feeling, more often than thinking, that animals act; and every act White Fang now performed was based upon the feeling that the white men were the superior gods." What does he mean by "superior"?

> It was at Fort Yukon that White Fang saw his first white men. As compared with the Indians he had known, they were to him another race of beings, a race of superior gods. They impressed him as possessing superior power, and it is on power that god-head rests. White Fang did not reason it out, did not in his mind make the sharp generalization that the white gods were more powerful. It was a feeling, nothing more, and yet none the less potent. As, in his

> puppyhood, the looming bulks of the tepees, man-reared, had affected him as manifestations of power, so was he affected now by the houses and the huge fort all of massive logs. Here was power. Those white gods were strong. They possessed greater mastery over matter than the gods he had known, most powerful among which was Gray Beaver. And yet Gray Beaver was as a child-god among these white-skinned ones.

This passage doesn't signal a change in London's thinking about Native Americans. They could act in a superior moral way to whites and still be childlike and less "powerful" than whites. The white "race" was more "powerful" because they were creators of the Machine Age, which had no room for teepee-living, nomadic, hunter-gathers of the North. The power lay not in inherent superiority of white skin but in the tools and buildings "white gods" had created. In an ironic reversal that London was aware of, the interior life of Native Americans was as adult as the whites. Biology could not explain all things as he slowly educated himself in modern psychology. The primitive inhabited all races, and people like Sitka Charley and Gray Beaver had the complicated inner lives that separated them as much as possible from the primitive.

But the novel's principal focus is not so much on the unconscious as it is on facets of evolutionary theory and their connection to social critique. (He would shift the focus from evolution to psychology in his next novel, *Before Adam.*) In fact, the novel is London's first attempt to advocate for prison reform. That is the underlying motif that London insisted all his novels had. But let's backtrack and start at the beginning. In the famous first lines of *White Fang,* we learn that "the land itself was a desolation, lifeless,

without movement, so lone and cold that the spirit of it was not even that of sadness." First we note that unlike the landscapes of "All Gold Canyon" and "Planchette," this one, despite its spirit, is a "lifeless" wasteland. As if we needed it, here is another clue of the ghostliness of what London means by spirit. Spirit is not the life force, the elan vital, in the Klondike wintery wasteland. It is entropy. Compare it to how a contemporary, Stewart Edward White, conceives the silence. In *The Silent Places,* a novel London read as he prepared to write *White Fang,* the silence is indicative of "the old, inimical Presence" (17), "the unknown Presence watching these men." (37)[114] The spirit of the place in White's work, like London's, may do harm, it may not; it is entirely indifferent. It is not a religious god, but, unlike London's, it is a god nonetheless. In fact, at one point he describes it as "aloof, unheeding, buddhistic, brooding in nirvanic calm."[115] At first, the only ghosts in White's northern universe are the First Peoples who are such only because they move so quietly. However, at one point he does mention "the White Silence," and when winter comes he describes the main characters as ghosts traveling through the winterland and that now "it was the land of ghosts."[116] But this attribution is motivated only by the deaths of characters, not because of the deeper bond between

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[114] Stewart Edward White, *The Silent Places* (New York: McClure, Phillips and Co., 1904), 17, 37. Note that London is also writing against the publishing house of McClure and Phillips. Further, London, if he had lived long enough, would not have been surprised by the metaphysical turn White's work took: he composed novels about communicating with the dead.

[115] White, *The Silent Places,* 109.

[116] White, *The Silent Places,* 195.

landscape and the imagination and the act of writing that London constructs. White also differs from London in that his plot affirms the strength and necessity of capitalism. The plot of *The Silent Places* is the pursuit of two white men to capture a Native American who has reneged on a debt; to capture and punish him is to solidify capital's dominance in the Northland. And, in comparing White's racial understanding with London's, we hear London scoff at White's uncomplicated celebration of the Anglo-Saxon and the reduction of the First Peoples (and other minorities) to simple "savages." The final line of the novel, spoken by a young Anglo-Saxon woman after a main character sings a song about "good darkies," is a biblical quotation: "`the greatness of my people,'" she says, and the novel becomes just another racist tract sanctioned by the misappropriation of Christianity.[117]

Suddenly we are faced with the possibility that London is writing against someone who was influenced by London's early Klondike stories. Or, more simply, we see London reading himself through the lens of White's novel, a rather odd moment of self-reflection in the history of American literature. Sometimes London used his sources as traction to go in an opposite direction, as if competing with his fellow authors—and White was a buttoned-up, bourgeois writer like Richard Harding Davis—to convey the truth of the North. His sources, by their failed attempt to grasp the totality of London's work, proved to himself that his work was genuine: effectively communicating the emotions of his stories, their originality, and their sincerity.

London's spirit of the place is also the Freudian death drive. As Laplanche and Pontillis have it, "Freud sees the mark of the `daemonic' in this phenomena—the mark, in

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[117] White, *The Silent Places,* 304.

other words, of an irrepressible force which is independent of the pleasure principle and apt to enter into opposition to it." "In fact what Freud was explicitly seeking to express by the term `death instinct' was the most fundamental aspect of instinctual life: the return to an earlier state and, in the last reckoning, the return to the absolute repose of the inorganic."[118] It is linked to aggression, both as it is directed externally and internally. So the death instinct may be self-destruction, though it doesn't have to be. While we read *White Fang,* we should be aware of how London was managing these various concepts. Following "Planchette," London's interest in the unconscious was increasing, and he was beginning to place things in it that he had formerly thought were exterior to the human psyche. In this way the spirit and the death drive were becoming linked in his mind.

The concept of the death instinct or death drive isn't something London was familiar with; Freud didn't discuss it until *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920). And, other than the unconscious, London wasn't working with or expressing psychoanalytic concepts. But the death drive may be the closest modern-day concept that we have to explicate by analogy what London was reaching for when he was calling the spirit of the place—of the Northland—the Wild or eternity. The death-dealing Buck knew it. He heard the call of the wild, and what he heard and what defines the affective nature of the landscape in *White Fang* is the same thing and acts as the bridge between the two works; it helps make *White Fang* less a "sequel" and more of a "companion," as London called it.[119] That London labels the three parts of the novel with some variation of *wild*—"The

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[118] Jean Laplanche and J. P. Pontalis, *The Language of Pyscho-Analysis,* s.v., "death instinct."

[119] London, letter to Brett, 5 Dec. 1904, *Letters,* 1:454.

Wild," "Born of the Wild," and "The Gods of the Wild"—testifies to the centrality of the word. The phrase *white fang* actually is another name for the spirit of the place. The phrase contains both the predominant descriptor of the landscape and a metonymic descriptor of the Wild: a ghostly fang, symbol of aggression and a death-dealing dog. Instead of a novel about a dog who doesn't read—he writes, or sings, the song of the call of the wild—*White Fang* is about wolves who lead us to the realm of the instincts, of the unconscious. In the end, White Fang falls asleep, dreaming. London's next novel—*Before Adam*—is about what happens when you enter the realm of the unconscious and what you find there.

In case one might think I am exaggerating the importance of the spiritual realm in the novel, consider London's 1914 letter to the editor of *The Bookman,* who had just published a negative review of *The Valley of the Moon,* citing London's promotion of the animal and the primitive nature of humankind. The reviewer has a very limited view of "what he calls the Jack London School—a school which is lacking in spirituality," London wrote. "Ask him if he has ever read *White Fang,* and if he finds a deplorable lack of spirituality in that book."[120] So, to return: There are two manifestations of spirit at the beginning of *White Fang.* The first is the spirit of the place, "a laughter cold as the frost and partaking of the grimness of infallibility. It was the masterful and incommunicable wisdom of eternity laughing at the futility of the life and the effort of life. It was the Wild, the savage, frozen-hearted Northland Wild." (3) But spirit also takes the shape of ghosts in the landscape. These ghosts are dogs; they are "rimed with frost" and so as white as ghosts. (3). There are also men, pulling a sled with a body in a casket. They too

[120] London, letter to Arthur B. Maurice, 26 Mar. 1914, *Letters,* 3:1313.

are covered in frost: “This gave them the seeming of ghostly masques, undertakers in a spectral world at the funeral of some ghost.” The spirit of Ghostland may laugh at their effort, but the ghost dogs are pulling a ghost sled guided by two ghost men who are caring for a third ghost. “But under it all they were men,” says the third-person narrator, and so we have the classic battle within London’s psyche between the imagination conceived as life-giving and the imagination conceived as death-dealing. Not just the story of White Fang and his mother but all stories come out of this Ghostland.

They hear “a faint far cry. . . . It might have been a lost soul wailing.” (6) It is of course the song of the wild, inspired by the call of the wild, sung by White Fang’s mother. We have picked up where *Call of the Wild* left off. Buck may have been male, and White Fang’s mother female, but the ratio of dog to wolf seems the same, and certainly their totemic relationship to the imagination is the same; later White Fang himself becomes Buck-like in his relation to the Wild and its call: “He could not immediately forego his wild heritage and his memories of the Wild. There were days when he crept to the edge of the forest and stood and listened to something calling him far and away.” (132) White Fang’s mother’s affiliation with the ghostly imagination / spirit manifests itself in her physical description. Bill thinks she looks “almost cinnamon” in color, but the narrator makes sure we understand why he thinks so. Note first, in general, the emphasis on color, something that was a prominent topic in the first volume of the present work with its discussion of red, white, and yellow: “The animal was certainly not cinnamon-colored. Its coat was the true wolf-coat. The dominant color was gray, and yet there was to it a faint reddish hue—a hue that was baffling, that appeared and disappeared, that was more like an illusion of the vision, now gray, distinctly gray,

and again giving hints and glints of a vague redness of color not classifiable in terms of ordinary experience." (26-27). We learn three things from the coloring of White Fang's mother. First is that Bill—is he supposed to be a younger version of Bill the miner in "All Gold Canyon"?—is both unreliable and confused, but naturally so. If White Fang were indeed cinnamon colored, then she wouldn't have been a wolf. So, the narrator makes sure we know that Bill is confused. But then we learn that it is an honest mistake. White Fang does look red, but it was a "baffling" color because it seemed an illusion; the red was there and then not there, like a ghost. And, like a ghost, the color is "not classifiable in terms of ordinary experience." If you had seen a ghost throw a horse and its rider off a cliff, then you would be able to classify the color. But normal human beings or, better, your typical scientific or empirically minded citizen would not be able to tell you what color the wolf was because you need knowledge gained from extraordinary experience to be able to tell. You need to move beyond empiricism into the realm of the unconscious where the imagination and ghosts and ghost dogs live. And now we see why she is named *white* fang. But the red that is there and then not there is the color of anger, of wrath, the Red Wrath so famously present in *The Star Rover* as that unconscious, primitive anger that motivates Darrell Standing to kill his colleague. Red is the color, then, of the primitive, which is also deep in the unconscious. We feel fear, like Bill and Henry, when we see the red-colored she-wolfrise out of the unconscious.

The story of the first three chapters is the story of two men gradually falling deeper and deeper into the unconscious; of course Henry goes all the way into death. But Bill stays alert for as long as he can until, robbed of sleep during the day he finally keeps dozing off with the wolf pack just outside his fire. Then, "He came out of a doze that was

half nightmare, to see the red-hued wolf before him." Is she real? Is he really awake? Or is this a dream image from the unconscious? Actually, it is a dream image from the unconscious that magically takes material form in his waking state, for in the Ghostland the boundary between life and death, consciousness and unconsciousness is permeable. In the final scene London make this permeability explicit: "He dreamed. It seemed to him that he was in Fort McGurry. . . . It seem to him that the fort was besieged by wolves. They were howling at the very gates. . . . This howling now bothered him. His dream was merging into something else—he knew not what; but through it all, following him, persisted the howling. And then he awoke to find the howling real." (41) Of course this is a masterful description of what happens to us when we get so tired that we fall asleep with the our last waking moment's reality infiltrating our dream state until our dream state becomes a representation of our waking reality until we actually do awake and find that our dream state was mirroring reality to such a degree that it was incorporating elements of conscious life around us. The point is the exchangeability of conscious and unconscious states. We dream and we think we are awake. We are awake and we think we are dreaming. To make this point, though, London emphasizes the primitive nature of this waking / dreaming state. We wouldn't notice the permeability unless we were under extreme duress and experiencing the fears that primitive man experienced: the fear of falling, the fear of being eaten alive by wild animals. That fear is the key to see how consciousness and unconsciousness can be the same. Or, rather, how the elements of the unconscious—the ghosts that reside there—can become as real as any fire that we might throw at starving wolves. That is the nature of the Wild, and thus the first section ends.

The second section is the love story of White Fang's mother and One Eye, the birthing of her brood, and the early life of White Fang. Now that we know White Fang's mother lives in both the conscious and the unconscious mind, what else might we learn about her and her son? Are they really both tame and wild, dog and wolf? Is there a permeability between these two states as well?

When London had written to Bamford in May 1905, he asked for information that would inform this section of the novel: "Can you find out for me the following: (1) when do wolves mate? (2) how long do they carry their young? (3) What time of the year do they bring forth their young?"[121] It seems Bamford sent him the entry for "wolf" from the *Encyclopaedia Americana,* which London typed up and then used to construct White Fang's biographical timeline:

> THE WOLF
>
> In spring and summer wolves are solitary or in pairs, in the autumn in families, and in winter in packs. The pairing season is in December and January, when the males fight savagely together; those who are fortunate enough to secure a mate remain with her till the young are well grown. The young are born in burrows usually excavated by the wolves themselves, and during her confinement the female is fed by the male. The period of gestation is 63 days, and from 3-9 (usually 4 to 6) cubs are found in a litter; these are blind for 21 days, and are suckled for 2 months, but at the end of one month are able to eat half-digested flesh disgorged by the mother. They quit the parents in November or December,

[121] London, letter to Bamford, 8 May 1905, *Letters,* 1:480.

but many remain together 6 or 8 months longer; they are full grown in 3 years, and live from 12 to 15 years.

This becomes a one-page note by London:

White-Fang is conceived Feb. 1.

White-Fang is born April 3.

White-Fang is blind for 21 days.

White-Fang finished suckling by June 5.

Had begun to eat meat (disgorged by mother) by May 3.

He quit his mother for good in December.

Was full-grown in three years

Lived 15 years

A further note, perhaps from a different source, discusses White Fang's physical attributes and especially his coloring:

Average length 4 ft.

Average tail 17 to 20 inches

Average height at shoulder 27 to 29 inches

Timber-wolf, buffalo-wolf, etc.-----are all different names for the gray wolf, as distinguished from the prairie wolf or coyote

The gray wolf commonly sports reddish and blackish individuals

> Maybe the mother of White-Fang had a moderately red tinge; his father was the regular gray wolf. White Fang himself was gray, but with reddish tints and glints in full coat.[122]

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[122] London, "White Fang: [Notes]," JL 1406. As Charles Watson points out, these notes are typed up from handwritten notes, now located at USU. See Watson, *The Novels of Jack London,* 80-81. Watson also traces London's possible use of Charles G. D. Roberts's *The Kindred of the Wild* and a serial in *Outing* in 1905 called *Red Fox,* also by Roberts, especially noting similarities in how both Fox and London treat the education of young wild animals. He concludes, rather unfairly I believe, "London seems to have escaped the perennial charge of plagiarism, but as in *The Call of the Wild,* he was taking his material wherever he found it, adapting it as always to his own purposes." I think Watson is correct to surmise that London made use of these two sources, especially Roberts's collection of animal short stories (each story features a different animal), but, like the encyclopedia article, they inform a small, limited, and not very significant part of the novel. In *The Kindred of the Wild*—Roberts uses the term *wild* in its most simple form and, unlike London, makes no effort to not anthropomorphize his characters—London found a few bits of information that lent verisimilitude to his novel: the construction of rabbit snares by Native Americans and how foxes robbed them; a description of a moose (which he decided not to use); a description of a lynx (which he decided against using); and a description of a wolf scenting a moose herd. As Watson notes, he underlined a sentence about a wolf mother in a cave, starving (though Watson doesn't say that the wolf has chewed her foot off to escape a steel trap). London marked passages for each of these topics (pp. 45, 48, 93, 94, 101-3210, 211); one passage he did not mark but may

So White Fang's coloring is simply London's signal to the reader that he is quite aware of the facts of the early life of wolves. Part two is a simple narrative of the primitive's need for reproduction, the sex urge that is as basic as the hunger urge—the subject of the first part—though there is no hint of wolfish intercourse; White Fang seems to be immaculately conceived. Yet the presence of the unconscious, of memory, of experience makes itself known. Even a wolf can be influenced by the unconscious. "Of her own experience she had no memory of the thing happening; but in her instinct, which was the experience of all the mothers of wolves, there lurked a memory of fathers that had eaten their new-born and helpless progeny." (68) Wolves have memory, experience, and inherited instincts. They perform conscious actions and instinctual actions that are similar to the actions humans perform from both instinct and the unconscious drives. There are

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have "used" is a description of a panther trying to eat a porcupine (pp. 247-48). Ironically, if London did indeed garner material from *Red Fox,* coupled with the business about foxes robbing snares, and simply substituted a wolf for a fox, then White Fang seems more foxish than wolfish, thus undercutting the desire to present factual information about wolves. So, how London used this material is complicated by his overarching intentions for the novel. Also, when London wrote to Bamford for information, he may have been motivated by reasons other than compiling factual information for *White Fang.* London may have asked Bamford for it simply to make his long-time friend feel a part of some process larger than himself; Bamford was in and out of a sanitarium at the time.

significant similarities between the instinctual life of a wolf and the instinctual life of humans, but it's not the similarities as such that interest London. It's the way that he can explain the worlds of the conscious and the unconscious of humans through the examination of the simplified life of a wolf. As London says about White Fang, "The gray cub was not given to thinking—at least, to the kind of thinking customary of men. His brain worked in dim ways. Yet his conclusions were as sharp and distinct as those achieved by men. He had a method of accepting things, without questioning the why and wherefore." (81) Further, when he is out of the cave for the first time, London writes, "The cub was learning. His misty little mind had already made an unconscious classification. There were live things and things not alive." (90) The important thing for us is not what White Fang classified but that he did this at all, and he did it using an unconscious process. But there is more to the wolf unconscious. Beyond the process of thinking, there is the way wolves and men come to know fear and, presumably, all emotions: "Never, in his brief cave-life, had he encountered anything of which to be afraid. Yet fear was in him." How was that possible, you may ask? "It had come down to him from a remote ancestry through a thousand thousand lives. It was a heritage he had received directly from One eye and the she-wolf; but to them, in turn, it had been passed down through all the gneerations of wolves that had gone before." (84) Just as Darwin, Weismann, and other evolutionists had used primitive life forms to explain the natural laws that applied to humans as well, so London was using fictional animal constructs to explain the interior life of humans. His next novel, *Before Adam,* will take these comparisons and explanations even further.

If section one gave us the view of animal life from the point of view of humans, part two gives us the view of animal life from the point of view of an animal himself and thus a deeper understanding of evolution. One of the first things we learn about White Fang is that he "had bred true to the straight wolf-stock—in fact, he had bred true, physically, to old One Eye humself, with but a single exception, and that was that he had two eyes to his father's one." (76) To our modern intellect, this "exception" seems comic. Why would London feel the need to point out that the most striking physical characteristic of the father was not passed down to the son when we all know that his one-eyed blindness occurred during his life and was not a genetic deformity? Because London is making the point that he is not a neo-Lamarckian. We will return to this topic a little later, but for now it is important to point out how London incorporated the vast amount of reading he did in evolutionary theory into his fiction, sometimes in a very subtle way.

The principal law of evolution that White Fang learns, though, is "The aim of life was meat. Life lived on life. . . . The law was: EAT OR BE EATEN." (107). White Fang, when he thinks, thinks by classification—this object fits this pattern of activity and so belongs in this group; a rock is different from a bird because it doesn't move or peck his nose—and "out of this classification arose the law" (107). Much of what London writes about White Fang's mental processes strives to make a distinction between how wolves (and other animals) think and how humans think. So after this grand pronouncement about meat, life, and death, London's narrator says, "Had the cub thought in man-fashion, he might have epitomized life as a voracious appetite, and the world as a place wherein ranged a multitude of appetites, pursuing and being pursued, hunting and being hunted,

eating and being eaten, all in blindness and confusion, with violence and disorder, a chaos of gluttony and slaughter, ruled over by chance, merciless, planless, endless." (108) This passage represents the best of London's writing, and not just in the rhythm and sound, in the choice of words and how they are used. It is a potential endorsement of evolutionary determinism and, at the same time, a potential disavowal. London has led us to believe that wolves think and do not think like humans. So, a wolf, if it could "look at things with wide vision" (and of course by now we are trained to see the connection between sight and thought, between sight and the imagination) it would see and understand the way a human does. But that doesn't mean that a human would come to same conclusions about life, chance, and death; it just means that a wolf could draw general conclusions from empirical fact. So a wolf would come to the conclusion that life is a matter of blind chance, of eating and being eaten. And men who are wolves, life Wolf Larsen, who goes blind ("all in blindness and confusion"), would come to that conclusion. But presumably we nonwolves (or are you a wolf?) would come to some other conclusion, perhaps a more altruistic, socialist conclusion, for who wants a world that is governed by blind instinct and chance?

White Fang is very much about not thinking like a wolf, and the second part concludes, not with the ambivalence of the narrator's pronouncement on determinism and chance but rather on the affirmation of "easements and satisfactions." In a blatant forecast of the ending of the novel, the narrator tells us, right after the passage on determinism, that there were other "laws" besides the law of meat. "To have a full stomach, to doze lazily in the sunshine"—and we will soon read, if we haven't already done so (some readers can't help but read the final lines of a story early on), the final line of the novel:

"he lay with half-shut, patient eyes, drowsing in the sun" (327)—is to live life to its fullest: "life is always happiest when it is expressing itself." (109). And life expresses itself when wolves sleep in the sun, when a wolf gets "remuneration in fill for his ardors and toils, while his ardors and toils were in themselves self-remuneration." (109). That is, when a wolf works hard, it gets paid. And payment comes also in the form of doing what it is made to do. There are two kinds of happiness, then, equally strong, equally good. And they lead to moments of relaxation, of laziness, of moments of bohemian life. The law of meat, if a wolf could "think in man-fashion," is superceded by the life of a bohemian. What's so fascinating about this discussion is that the narrator doesn't bring this up explicitly as he or she does when the matter is meat and chance and death. We might miss the fact that wolves aren't aware of this law in the way they are aware of the law of meat. This silence on the part of the narrator leads us to accept as fact that wolves are made for lazing about in the sun, like a bunch of bohemians. When White Fang partakes in the sun-drenched life, "he was very much alive, very happy, and very proud of himself." So life isn't only about meat. It's about enjoying your body when it is full of meat. And an author writes for money, but not for money's sake, but for the moments money can buy an author time in the sun, flying kites and picking daisies. So says the final lines of part two of *White Fang*.

Part three begins White Fang's discovery of his dogness, a fundamental part of his identity that had been obscure to him but that awakes in him when he first encounters humans. His encounter is defined by two things. First, "the cub had never seen man, yet the instinct concerning man was his." (114) Now we realize we have been prepared for this by London's discussion of instinct and memory when White Fang's mother bristled

at One-Eye's presence during the suckling period. "Not alone out of his own eyes, but out of the eyes of all his ancestors was the cub now looking upon man. . . . The spell of the cub's heritage was upon him, the fear and the respect born of the centuries of struggle and the accumulated experience of the generations." (114). (As an aside, this is language London uses in *The Star Rover* to describe Darrell Standing's past lives.) Like Buck, he attacks the Indians who first try to handle him (who thus give him the name White Fang), but when his mother reveals her dogness he too submits to the Indians. He may have bred true to his father, but in this first encounter with humans we know the answer to the question I asked above: yes, there is permeability between dog and wolf, and it is centered on the instinctual and biological level. Though his reaction to the power of humans may be likened to that of "the wonder and awe of man at sight of some celestial creature, on a mountain top, hurling thunderbolts from either hand at an astonished world" (121), he nonetheless has his mother's doggy instinct of submissiveness to humans, a willingness, in short, to be petted. In fact, this is the second other-wordly metaphor London employs to describe White Fang's reactions to the world, and both liken him to a person in strange circumstances. So, though London often makes explicit the point that wolves and dogs are not human, he links the two species through metaphor so that we may better understand not only canines but also homo sapiens.

One chief difference between the species is their understanding of god or of the power greater themselves. For humans, London's narrator says, the "gods are of the unseen and the overguessed, vapors and mists of fancy eluding the garmenture of reality, wandering wraiths of desired goodness and power, intangible outcroppings of self into the realm of spirit." (130). For dogs, their gods are flesh-and-blood, club-wielding, fire-

making humans, and this point is important to understand how White Fang becomes domesticated. Once he accepts the rule of gods, be they beastly like Beauty Smith or loving like Wedeen Scott or indifferent like the masses of gods in San Francisco, he has separated himself from the Wild. But the characterization of humans' gods are extradiegetic, a pointed commentary on the intellectual fallacy of believers. Believers mistake real power for ghosts that are placed into the "realm of the spirit" by those who project themselves into false tales created by "fancy." At least for humans, the ghostland on earth is mirrored by the ghostland where the gods live. All this is another facet of what London means by the word *spirit.*

Interestingly, though, White Fang, when he runs away from the Indian camp, has an absorptive moment very much like any London author figure. His feet newly cold, "he curved his bushy tail around to cover them, and at the same time he saw a vision. There was nothing strange about it. Upon his inward sight was impressed a succession of memory-pictures." (51) Nothing strange about it, eh Jack? How do we actually know that wolves and dogs and wolf-dogs have human-like memories? They do and they don't. When White Fang runs into his mother after he is a year-old, she does not remember him. "A wolf-mother was not made to remember her cubs of a year or so before." He of course remembers her, yet in the face of her biological forgetfulness "all the old memories and associations died down again and passed into the grave from which they had been resurrected." (176) Again, memories and instincts, which live in the realm of the unconscious, a spirit realm, are life ghosts, and the unconscious is like a grave. Here is yet another clear instance of the permeability among species that speaks to the

nonspecific nature of the unconscious. That is, all species have an unconscious, have memories, because all species have instincts.

Animals have instincts, people have drives. For London, they were the same. In this way London could link the unconscious of an animal to the unconscious of a human. These ideas form the (intentionally simplified) biopsychologic underpinning for the telos of *White Fang.* The telos of the novel is not, as London told Brett back in December 1904, the civilization of a dog. If that were the case, the novel would have ended on page 314, with the unspoken mating of Collie and White Fang; the chapter heading—"The Call of Kind"—even harkens back to *Call of the Wild,* suggesting that here is the moment of true companionship to the earlier novel. But the novel doesn't end there. The novel has been building, we now realize, to the climactic moment when White Fang kills Jim Hall. There must be some purpose behind showing the civilization of a dog. The point is to advocate for prison reform. Only at the end do we realize that

London had just gotten involved, for the very first time, in the case of a prisoner. His name was Joe King, a name that resonates in the name of the criminal in *White Fang,* Jim Hall. London contributed money for King's appeal of a conviction for murder. "I have promised $30.00 to pay printing of appeal to Supreme Court of Joe King," writes London to Johns in October 1905, six days before he completed the novel and so in the midst of writing the final chapters. King was "a poor devil in Co. jail with 50 yrs. sentence hanging over him and who is being railroaded." Jim Hall, in *White Fang,* we learn, "was innocent of the crime for which he was sentenced. It was a case, in the parlance of thieves and police, of `railroading.' Jim Hall was being `railroaded' to prison for a crime he had not committed. Because of the two prior convictions against him,

Judge Scott imposed upon him a sentence of fifty years." (318). King reappears in London's life in 1915, as do other prisoners, beginning in 1911, and we will come to their stories when I discuss the epitome of London's prison reform activities, the novel *The Star Rover.* For now, however, London had found the perfect fictional covering for his new social advocacy. If a dog could become civilized and a productive member of society, then so could a seemingly "incorrigible" criminal (316).[123]

All of *White Fang* moves to the incident with Jim Hall, that is, the moment when White Fang kills himself or rather the beast within as represented by Hall. His civilization isn't complete until he commits this murder in defense of his "love-master." To begin with, we recall how many times White Fang, up North, is likened to a prisoner. He is born inside a prison-like environment, a cave with four walls. "His world was gloomy. . . . It was dim-lighted." (77) We remember that when he escapes his prison he suffers from agoraphobia. He feels like a man on Mars, just as a prisoner would feel who, having spent years behind bars, would recoil from the overstimulation of the free world; Darrell Standing in *The Star Rover* describes this beautifully, and London himself may have experienced it when he was released from Erie County Penitentiary. Then we recall how Jim Hall is likened to White Fang. We recall how Hall killed a guard. He ripped his throat out with his teeth. Just as White Fang is like Jim Hall, so is Jim Hall like White Fang. At the beginning of the final chapter, we learn that Jim Hall "had been ill-made in

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[123] Long before London knew Ed Morrell, the prisoner who supposedly taught London everything he knew about life in San Quentin, we have this passage in *White Fang* (p. 316). Clearly, Morrell had nothing new to tell London. See chapter 23 for a full discussion of *The Star Rover.*

the making. He had not been born right, and he had not been helped any by the moulding he had received at the hands of society. . . . He was a beast—a human beast, it is true, but nevertheless so terrible a beast that he can best be characterized as carnivorous." (315) This could serve as an accurate description of White Fang up north, especially in the custody of Beauty Smith. But even before his capture by Smith we learn that "his heredity was a life-stuff that may be likened to clay. It possessed many possibilities, was capable of being moulded into many different forms. Environment served to model the clay," and so, if White Fang had never gone back to the campfires of men "the Wild would have moulded him into a true wolf." (177) And just as the environment had moulded the wolf, so the environment had moulded the man who had turned into a wolf.

This is the argument for prison reform. Fix the environment and apparently bad people will become good. Few of London's novels make so clear his injunction that socialism lies at the foundation of the creation of art. We think the art of *White Fang* is the love story of a dog and his master when we should be looking instead at the instillation of love and altruism in a formerly savage being (wolf, prisoner, they are the same). This is London's deeper motif, as he would say. Socialism, in this context, is a form of government that attempts to honestly deal with the savage nature of mankind. It is the only system of government that offers, like Weedon Smith petting White Fang, love and altruism to combat our instinctual savage nature. "It was the beginning of the end for White Fang—the ending of the old life and the reign of hate. A new and incomprehensibly fairer life was dawning. It required much thinking and endless patience of the part of Weedon Scott to accomplish this. And on the part of White Fang it required nothing less than a revolution. He had to ignore the urges and promptings of instinct and

reason, defy experience, give the lie to life itself." (255) Note that the biologic transformation of White Fang is called "a revolution." It's a revolution because his reaction to love goes against his instincts. And it's a socialist revolution because White Fang learns the meaning of altruistic behavior. The contrast between Beauty Smith's using White Fang to earn money and Weeden Scott's disuse of White Fang could not be more political.

Earlier I said that we expected to find in *White Fang* the same connections London drew among the emotions (or "feels"), the imagination, social critique, and the spirit in the stories written previous to the novel. What we perhaps didn't expect is to see how that constellation of ideas is also connected to his understanding of evolution, the most obvious area of the history of ideas that *White Fang* is related to.

First, we will want to follow London's connections among evolutionary theory, criminality, and primitivism, and we can go back to the fall of 1905 and the Jimmy Britt-George Nelson fight. Boxing was a legitimate sport, of course, but it existed in a gray area between civilized life and criminality. When London wrote up his report on the Britt-Nelson fight, he infused it with thoughts about evolution that become more prominent in *White Fang.*[124] The emotion of anger is the key to accessing our most

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[124] Just as he blends his thoughts about evolutionary behavior into his report on Britt-Nelson, so London blends his thoughts about boxing into *White Fang.* What are the dog fights between White Fang, Cherokee, and others if not an animal equivalent of boxing? Incidentally, London's first choice for Cherokee's name was the more prosaic Ben. Why he changed it about half-way through the telling of the fight in the manuscript is unknown. Another name change came in the same section. Originally, he decided to call

primitive self. The primitive human's rage, says London in his boxing coverage, is like the horse "tied to too short a rope," like the bull incited by red, like the "strange cat, restrained in our hands," express not just the earliest of human emotions but the very character of life itself. Movement, anger: this is life. This thematic, so reminiscent of the Leopard Man and Wolf Larsen, ties together his 1905 writings. The impulse to commit crime is something that comes out of the mysterious unknown, or the unconscious. It's one of the instincts or drives. White Fang is a murderer, Jim Hall is a murderer. Hall doesn't get the chance that White Fang had, or that boxers have, so he stays a murderer till the very end. But White Fang ends up a mix of Jimmy Britt—the finely constructed bourgeois—and Battling Nelson—the brutish proletariat.

Clay—or heredity—is crucial, of course. Jim Hall was "badly made." But even though London weighted nature and nurture equally, *White Fang* is mostly about how environmental factors "mould" a living being. To understand London's thinking about the effects of nurture, we have to begin with the differences between Jean-Baptiste de Lamarck's theories of the inheritance of acquired characteristics and August Weismann's refutation of it. We'll then move quickly to eugenics (we will revisit Weismann and his determinant influence on London in chapter 17) and social reform, specifically prison reform and biological theories of criminality, and end up with the creation of Jim Hall. London's thought in this arena remained consistent throughout his career, as he taught

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Weedon Scott's "dog-musher" Henry, then wrote a note to Charmian at the top of chapter 4, "Change `Henry" to `Matt.'" She went through the manuscript and crossed out every Henry and wrote Matt in pencil above them. London, *"White Fang,"* JL 1406.

himself more from biology and sociology. We'll see that London wanted to continue writing about men like Jim Hall and ended up with *The Star Rover.*

By 1900, there were more neo-Lamarckians in the American scientific community than there were Darwinists.[125] They believed that evolution was caused primarily by a highly complex series of actions within and reactions to the environment. These actions included "habits and instincts, use and disuse of particular organs, the struggle for food, and other conditions of existence." The effort of organisms, characterized by use and disuse and influenced by environmental factors, concentrated "growth forces and produce[d] physical change," which were then inherited. Advanced traits were continually passed on until the "growth forces" dissipated.[126] Then the process of retardation began, and degraded characteristics were passed on until extinction. Thus a species recapitulates the life span of an individual, from youth to old age. This was Ernest Haeckel's theory of recapitulation.

London was initially exposed to Lamarckian biology through Haeckel and Herbert Spencer; yet London was not a neo-Lamarckian. Within months of reading Spencer's *First Principles,* he had turned to August Weismann's *Essays upon Heredity.*[127]

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[125] See Edward J. Pfeifer, "United States," in *The Comparative Reception of Darwinism,* ed. Thomas F. Glick (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 199

[126] Ibid.

[127] See London, letter to Johns, 22 July 1899, *Letters,* 1:96: "Have been reading Weisman's `Essay on Heredity.' No, I have not; I mean Weisman's `Essay on the Duration of Life.' It is a wonderful piece of work, and gives food for immeasurable

By August 1899, he had realized how severely Weismann contradicted Spencer's Lamarckian biology. To Johns, he asked, "Have you read anything of Weismann's. He has struck a heavy blow to the accepted idea of acquired characters being inherited, and as yet his opponents have not proved conclusively one case in which such a character has been inherited." He told Johns that he had just "finished some four hundred and odd pages of Weissmann's theory of the germ-plasm, was deep in the study of those who had taken up the controversy of Weissmann."[128] Johns responded negatively to London's suggestion that Weismann was correct in his biological "researches," and so began a flurry between the two correspondents about language and inheritance. London replied to Johns that "you have muddled `acquired characters' with `fixed characters,' it is these latter which are hereditary. Language is an acquired character; a Semitic nose a fixed character. The one is acquired in the lifetime of the individual, the other inherited from an ancestor. No; I wouldn't write that refutation of Weismann if I were you."[129] Johns persisted, championing the inheritance of language. London replied:

> So one's vocabulary is inherited. Well, well. Would you kindly amplify that statement a little, giving me the data you base it upon. If you can actually prove it you can turn the scientific world upside down. A certain monarch once

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thought. I expect much good to accrue from this man's labors for the welfare of humanity. If you ever get a chance, read it up. He is good throughout."

[128] London, letter to Johns, 24 Aug. 1899, *Letters,* 1:106. London's copies of this material, including all his books by Weismann, Spencer, Haeckel, and others are not known to exist.

[129] London, letter to Johns, 6 Sept. 1899, *Letters,* 1:108.

> isolated some babes upon a tower, where they were fed, etc., but allowed no vocal intercourse with the world. It was an experiment. When they had grown up it was found that they were simply idiots. Beyond a few inarticulate sounds by which they expressed the primary passions, they did not speak. Beyond the necessary actions correlated with mere existence they were idiots. Having received no vocabulary from their kind they were unable to think. No man ever received one word from an ancestor by means of heredity.[130]

London's example of the monarch's experiment was taken from Weismann's essay "Retrogressive Development in Nature." Weismann uses this and similar examples as conclusive disproof of the inheritance of acquired characteristics. In his next letter, London pressed his point home:

> Of a surety, if a cerebral structure of an ancestor which renders him an idiot or a Kleptomaniac is transmitted to you, you will resemble him in that, to a greater or less degree as excited or mollified by environment. So with color blindness, for instance, or a thousand and one other similar things. But a vocabulary does not come under this head at all, except that the cerebral formation inherited may be limited as regards memory or quantity of words. Yet this, however, will not affect what certain words go to make up that quantity. So many words may be acquired up to the limit, and then the acquirement of words will virtually cease.[131]

According to London, then, morphology, not environment, accounts for kleptomania, idiocy, and an innocuous variation like color blindness. These are fixed characters,

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[130] London, letter to Johns, 12 Sept. 1899, *Letters,* 1:110-11.

[131] London, letter to Johns, 20 Sept. 1899, *Letters,* 1:113-14.

capable of being passed on from generation to generation, modified only to a small degree by environmental factors. A "cerebral formation" is inherited, not through the process of acceleration or degeneration, but through the operation of Weismann's immortal germ cell. London does not say that if one or both of one's parents were idiots, then the progeny will automatically be idiots; he is merely making clear to Johns that one does not "acquire" idiocy, as one does acquire language, during one's lifetime. There is no cure for idiocy, just as there exists no cure for color blindness. In *White Fang,* then, White Fang's wolfishness and his dogness—especially his loyalty—are elemental biological traits passed on in a Weismannian sense. Jim Hall's tendency toward bad behavior is also Weismannian, though, as with White Fang's elemental characteristics, it can be influenced dramatically by environment.

Once one had dismissed neo-Lamarckian biology, as London had done, one was confronted with a world less shaped by human will than by biological factors that were difficult or perhaps even impossible, to control. Citing Amos Warner, who wrote a popular book about reform in 1980, Mark Haller in his book *Eugenics* explains the immediate consequences on social policy: "`If acquired characteristics be inherited [wrote Warner], then we have a chance permanently to improve the race independently of selection, by seeing to it that individuals acquire characteristics that it is desirable for them to transmit.'" But if Weismann be correct, "`our only hope for the permanent improvement of the human stock would then seem to be through exercising an influence upon the selective process.'" Haller sums up what that "influence" would mean: "The

disproof of the inheritance of acquired characters was, therefore, a major episode on the road to the acceptance of eugenics."[132]

It was the proof of the inheritance of fixed characteristics that led London to become a believer in eugenics. In early September 1900, London, Anna Strunsky and Bessie Maddern sailed together for a long afternoon. Anna, in a brief recounting of how they came to write *The Kempton-Wace Letters*, recalled that London "was speaking of eugenics. He was saying that love was a madness, a fever that passes, a trick. One should marry for qualities and not for love. . . . Jack proposed that we write a book together on eugenics and romantic love."[133] Herbert Wace asks the question that Darwin and Sir Francis Galton, the founder of eugenics, asked: "Since [Man] takes sexual selection into his own hands and scientifically breeds the fish and the fowl, the beast and the vegetable, why may he not scientifically breed his own kind?" He may do so, says Wace, and in doing so he will "control and direct the operation of the reproductive force so that life will not only be perpetuated but developed and made higher and finer."[134] London remained an advocate to some extent of eugenics because he never doubted the bed-rock importance of heredity even as he gave more credence to environmental factors. In a 1913 letter to Frederick H. Robinson, an editor for the *Medical Review of Reviews*,

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[132] Mark H. Haller, *Eugenics: Hereditarian Attitudes in American Thought* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1984), 60-61.

[133] Walling, Anna (Strunsky), [Notes re: *The Kempton-Wace Letters*], JL 1707, HEH. See volume 1, pp. 294-95 for a discussion of eugenics in *The Kempton-Wace Letters.*

[134] London, *The Kempton-Wace Letters* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1903), 66.

London declared his continuing belief in a biological utopianism to be brought about by the science of eugenics. Robinson had asked London for his opinion on the issue of sterilization of criminals and "defectives." London replied:

> I believe that it is much more judicial to alter an individual before puberty than it is to execute him by hanging or electrocution, or to execute by hanging or electrocution the seed of his loins, because said seed has inherited the criminal and social destructiveness of said loins. I believe that the future human world belongs to eugenics, and will be determined by the practice of eugenics. At the present moment I am operating a stock farm. If one of my registered Jersey heifers gets through a hole in the fence to an ornery scrub grade bull, I am shocked. I know that the result of said breeding will be bad and not good; will be worse rather than better. This stolid, practical-headed judgment of a stock breeder should apply with equal force to the breeding of humans. Humans breed in ways quite similar to those of animals; and if humans misbreed, the results are misbreds.[135]

Though it is easy to read into his comments the totalitarian desire to control population in an ultimate and horrifying manner, it is wiser to remember that London's way of thinking paralleled that of many socially conscious, self-declared left-wing thinkers. The historian Loren Graham has pointed out that in Germany, for example, Wilhelm Schallmayer, a eugenicist, had been persuaded by Weismann's germ-plasm theory, and he perceived dangers in traditional social reform movements; such programs might propagate the unfit. Although he seems to prefigure the extremes to which eugenic and racist doctrines

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[135] London, letter to Frederick H. Robinson, 5 Sept. 1913, *Letters,* 3:1226.

later deteriorated in Germany, Schallmayer actually considered himself a radical democrat and in subsequent years stubbornly opposed the National Socialist interpretation of race. He agreed that life selection (the elimination of the unfit) occurs in nature, but he considered it totally impermissible among humans. Rather, he hoped for a system of voluntary eugenics, in which individuals would, through education, make careful decisions about the desirability of having large numbers of children. He insisted upon humane methods, and he saw no correlation between a biological interpretation of society and right-wing politics. Indeed, he considered eugenics a progressive doctrine, as did several political groups in other countries during the first years of the movement. Thomas Mosby, an American eugenicist and supporter of vasectomies for some criminals, qualified his eugenic proposals in a way enlightened intellectuals, such as London, would have agreed with:

> In some cases asexualization, therefore, would appear to be the only efficient remedy, but I gravely doubt whether, under our constitution, asexualization would be lawful excepting as a punishment for crime. Certainly so serious and permanent a mutilation as castration should not be lightly or frivolously inflicted, if at all. A punishment which places the victim in a condition from which he can never be released should be visited upon the few, and that, too, only upon judicial determination and with greatest hesitancy. The world has had experience in a darker and less enlightened age with the theory of statutory determination of the fitness of human beings to enjoy the right to life. The committee of Ephors, which sat in ancient Sparta and pronounced judgment unhesitatingly upon infants who were weak or deformed, had ample scope for the

> exercise of its powers, but civilization had not been greatly the gainer thereby. True enough, they had not the advantages of the scientific knowledge which we enjoy today. But, on the other hand, the passing of the years may bring new knowledge in the future, so that our methods of today may to the future observer and historian appear as crude and unscientific as those methods which sent the Spartan babes to death.

London, in his letter to Robinson, argues not so much for laws, such as those enacted in Indiana in 1907 and 1909, that provided for the sterilization of criminals, as he is arguing against capital punishment. Given a choice between sterilization or execution, he would choose the former. This view is consistent with his Weismannian conception of heredity, and it concurs with the principle eugenicists of his time.[136]

Just as London spoke of human breeding as analogous to animal breeding, so did Charles Darwin. In *The Descent of Man,* he speaks of the possibility of applying the lessons of animal breeding to the problems of crime, insanity, and alcoholism.[137] London was also in accord with most American professionals who studied the problems of criminality and feeble-mindedness. London, as well as American eugenicists, hoped that some social plan could be devised to limit the numbers of the dependent and the delinquent in society. Mosby makes the connection between eugenics and criminology:

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[136] See Loren R. Graham, *Between Science and Values* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 221. London received Mosby's book from Mosby himself. See Thomas Speed Mosby, *Causes and Cures of Crimes* (St. Louis: C. V. Mosby Co., 1913), 129.

[137] See Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man,* in *Darwin,* ed. Philip Appleman (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1970), 207; quoted in Haller, *Eugenics,* 3.

"Every man and woman who feels an interest in civilization, who prefers racial improvement to racial deterioration and degeneracy, and who would foster the upward growth of society rather than witness its disintegration, must aspire to a degree of familiarity with the comparatively new science of criminology."[138] In general, as Haller has pointed out, eugenics appealed to liberals, anarchists, and socialists because it helped to explain the failures of reform. "Thus many reformers saw no inconsistencies in working one day on a committee that campaigned for tenement house reform and another day on a committee that worked for sexual sterilization. Both provided avenues toward the improvement of American society."[139]

London, as we have seen, was not inclined to participate in mainstream reform movements. He would, if he had the chance, vote against capital punishment, and at the beginning of 1915, he accepted an invitation from M. B. Kovenal to become a member of the advisory board of the Anti-Capital Punishment Society of America.[140] But he believed that the root of the problem of the maltreatment of prisoners lay deeper than mere reform:

> Prisons are merely a symptom. When you try to reform prisons you reform symptoms. Meanwhile the disease remains. What we ought to do is to tackle the disease. We ought all to get together and do our best to get down to the core of our troubles. A lot of philanthropic effort of the present time is mere waste. It distracts attention and it uses up the energy of the people who ought to be

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[138] Mosby, *Causes and Cures of Crimes,* iv.

[139] Haller, *Eugenics,* 77.

[140] See London, letter to M. B. Kovenal,

> working for the cause. Now never mind what name we give to that cause. I've tried not to give it a name. But it's the fundamental thing, and the fundamental thing is the only thing worth working for. For that reason I try to keep away from all movements that deal merely with the surface, that is, with the symptoms.[141]

London's preference for the revolutionary restructuring of society, based on what he understood as sound biological principles, led him to believe in a radical reorganization of the prison system. If the question were how to eliminate crime in the future, London promoted as one option the efficacy of sterilization. If the question were how prisoners should be treated in the present, London answered that drastic reform was necessary. In an interview in 1915, he states,

> I would turn prisons into hospitals. My basic belief is one of pure determinism. Each person moves along a line of least resistance. We do what is easier for us to do than not to do. We can't help doing what we do. If I'm short-sighted and bump into posts, I'm not to blame. It's because of my short sight. I ought to get glasses? Of course. That is just it! If I break our so-called laws, I can't help it. I do it because I'm sick. There is something wrong with me. I'm a sick man. And I need doctors. I need all the skilled science of the twentieth century to investigate and see, and try if anything can be done for me to keep from doing what is hurtful to

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[141] London, "Ways of the World," pt. 3, interview with John D. Barry, *San Francisco Bulletin,* 10 June 1914, JL 517, scrapbook vol. 13.

> the whole body of my fellow-creatures. The whole of scientific criminology is with me in this. It's only the fools who are not.[142]

He wasn't of course a strict "determinist," or else how could he imagine altruistic behavior. But when it came to understanding the makeup of a criminal, then he equated determinism with inherited characteristics. Criminality is a disease that, although incurable, must be treated for the protection of society. But, according to London, the current methods are inhumane. To kill or beat a criminal (or a dog) does not recognize the inevitability of a criminal's (or dog's) actions. New methods, based on a biological understanding of the causes of crime, must be instituted.

One important source of London's ideas on criminal reform was Enrico Ferri's *Criminal Sociology,* the only book on criminology in his library in which he took notes and a book he read (as we saw in the previous chapter) in preparation for writing about the case of Edgar Sonne. His choice of this work and his notes indicate how, once he had formulated a understanding of the biological foundation of a particular social problem, he then moved beyond biology to sociology.

Ferri, along with Cesare Lombroso and others, formed the Positive, as opposed to the Classical, school of criminal studies. They rejected a legal understanding of crime and turned instead to a study of the criminal himself. In general, they were determinists who sought to replace punishment with proposals to both treat the criminal and protect society. The historian Clarence Ray Jeffrey has noted

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[142] London, "Is Jack London a Capitalist? No! But Is Certainly `Magnifique, by Gosh!'" interview with Sophie Treadwell, *San Francisco Bulletin,* 28 Feb. 1914, ed. Jay Williams, *Jack London Journal,* no. 3 (1996): 200.

> that the Positive school has dominated American criminological thinking. . . . As a result of this orientation, criminology has been dominated by an interest in the individual offender: his personality, body build, intelligence, family background, the neighborhood from which he comes, or the groups to which he belongs. The basic assumption since Lombroso's time is that an explanation of human behavior is an explanation of crime.[143]

Ferri states that in order to understand the causes of crime, one must analyze both anthropological and psychological data. Relying on the work of Lombroso and others, he first affirms "the undeniable fact of the hereditary transmission of tendencies to crime, as well as of predisposition to insanity, to suicide, and to other forms of degeneration." Second, he affirms the inheritance of psychological abnormalities—"moral insensibility and want of foresight"—which are equated with "that ill-balanced impulsiveness which characterises children and savages" and which account for a criminal's "defective resistance to criminal tendencies and temptations." Although Ferri's understanding of heredity is Lamarckian, and not Weismannian, London could still accept his general conclusion. It is the operation of both physical and psychical forces that account for crime, states Ferri; neither heredity nor environment is alone sufficient to explain its occurrence.

The most important consequence of such a conclusion was that Ferri was able to both affirm and deny the existence of a criminal type. Ferri said that the criminal type, as defined by Lombroso, exists, but accounts for only 40 to 50 percent of the criminal

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[143] Clarence Ray Jeffrey, "The Historical Development of Criminology," in *Pioneers in Criminology,* ed. Hermann Mannheim (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1960), 366-67.

population. Ferri, in a passage London marked, then refined the classification of criminals into five categories: "criminal madmen, born criminals, criminals by contracted habits, occasional criminals, and criminals of passion."[144] As London read Ferri's elaboration of these categories, he marked the passages explaining "born criminals" and "criminals by contracted habits." When Ferri states that "no doubt the idea of a born criminal is a direct challenge to the traditional belief that the conduct of every man is the outcome of his free will, or at most of his lack of education rather than of his original physio-psychical constitution," London was prompted to write 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."[145] It is interesting that London questioned the idea of whether "he" (in this case, Edgar Sonne) might be a criminal at all. He then decides that criminals are such in relation to their effect on society.

On the next page, Ferri explains his third class of criminals "whom, after my prison experience, I have called criminals by contracted habit. These are they who, not presenting the anthropological characteristics of the born criminals, or presenting them but slightly, commit their first crime most commonly in youth, or even in childhood—

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[144] Enrico Ferri, *Criminal Sociology* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1898), pp. 9, 10-11, 24-25.

[145] London's notes are on the flyleaf of his copy of *Criminal Sociology,* HL 336698. It's impossible to say when London read Ferri or if Edgar and Jim Hall would have been featured in the same story.

almost invariably a crime against property, and far more through moral weakness, induced by circumstances and a corrupting environment, than through inborn and active tendencies."[146] London marked this passage, and then wrote: "apply this especially to the boy." Edgar Sonne would not be pictured as a "born criminal" but rather as a criminal created by his environment, countering the expectations of the blood-thirsty public, as London sensed the *Examiner*'s audience to be. Further along in Ferri, London noted, "attitude of the state. Responsibility—either keep Edgar in prison, let him go & indemnify individuals for the depredations he commits, or cure him.—Does society concern itself sufficiently with the curing of criminals." London next marked the passage in which Ferri editorializes, "The death penalty is an easy panacea, but it is far from being capable of solving a problem so complex as that of serious crime." And finally London marked where Ferri quotes Quetelet, saying, "`moral diseases are like physical diseases: they are contagious, or epidemic, or hereditary.'"[147]

Ferri guided London to the position that criminality can be both hereditary and environmental and reinforced London's position against capital punishment. He also gave London the justification to think of the curing of crime in the same way as the curing a disease.[148] Crime must be understood in biosociological terms in order for true and effective reform to take hold.

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[146] Ferri, *Criminal Sociology,* 30.

[147] Ferri, *Criminal Sociology,* 251.

[148] London read two works that discuss homologous relation between physical and social disease. See G. Frank Lydston, *The Diseases of Society* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1905), esp. page 13, and Paul and Karl Wilmanns Nitsche, "The History of the Prison

However much London believed in eugenical programs and Weismannian heredity, he was not a strict hereditarian. In a letter to Margaret More (the girlfriend of Donald Lowrie, an ex-con who figures prominently in the creation of *The Star Rover*), London declared flatly, "It happens that I do not believe in crime, nor in sin."[149] At an undetermined point in his career, he outlined a short story that would have as its motif, "Environment makes criminals." In that scenario, he planned for the wife of a "habitual criminal" to give birth to a child who will become a criminal as well because, one assumes, a criminal father will teach his children criminality, intentionally or not. Now it is time to return to *White Fang,* where he plotted his deliberate and characteristic course between two opposites, acknowledging the importance of both heredity and environment. We remember that White Fang "grew stronger, heavier, and more compact, while his character was developing along the lines laid down by his heredity and his environment. His heredity was a life-stuff that may be likened to clay. It possessed many possibilities, was capable of being moulded into many different forms. Environment served to model the clay, to give it a particular form." And we remember that what was true of the dog was true of Jim Hall:

Psychoses," trans. Francis Barnes, *Nervous and Mental Disease Monograph Series,* no. 13 (New York: The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease Publishing Co., 1912), esp. p. 82. London considered Lydston a friend and admired his work in sexology. See London, letter to Lydston, 26 Mar. 1914, *Letters,* 3:1312.

[149] London, letter to Margaret E. More, 2 Oct. 1913, *Letters,* 3:1244; the editors of *Letters* misspell her name as Moore.

> It was about this time that the newspapers were full of the daring escape of a convict from San Quentin prison. He was a ferocious man. He had been ill-made in the making. He had not been born right, and he had not been helped any by the moulding he had received at the hands of society. The hands of society are harsh, and this man was a striking example of its handiwork. . . . In San Quentin prison he had proved incorrigible. Punishment had failed to break his spirit. . . . The more fiercely he fought, the more harshly society handled him, and the only effect of harshness was to make him fiercer. Strait-jackets, starvation, and beatings and clubbings were the wrong treatment for Jim Hall; but it was the treatment he had received from the time he was a little pulpy boy in a San Francisco slum—soft clay in the hands of society and ready to be formed into something.

Edgar Sonne becomes Jim Hall. The latter is congenitally defective ("not been born right"), and his environment has only encouraged and stimulated his defectiveness, prodding him into criminal behavior.

Thus London believed that despite a person's inherited tendency to commit a crime, society had an obligation to create a humane environment that would discourage such tendencies. This was London's program for the present. For the future, if society were indeed serious in its efforts to better the human stock, then a eugenical program was the most efficacious. He maintained a double vision regarding the nature-nurture controversy, and specifically the problem of crime. He advocated an abolishment of capital punishment, the total reformation of the penal system, and the sterilization of criminals. He, on the one hand, believed that criminal tendencies were inherited. On the other hand, he believed in the efficacy of medical treatment for prisoners. Finally, we can

see how, in *The Star Rover*, he regarded with great respect the innate qualities of an habitual criminal such as Jacob Oppenheimer or a murderer such as Darrell Standing. Their biological inheritance and environmental conditions do not render them blameless, but, as London understood the problem, the causes of crime required society to own up to its part in the creation of "degenerates" and so treat criminals in a humane, not bestial manner.

London may have concluded his fictional rendition of prisoners in *The Star Rover,* but at some point he worked up notes for a novel in which Jim Hall would be the central character. London outlined how complex the formation of a criminal could be: "Develope the life of the convict in last chapter of `White Fang.' Begin with childhood, boyhood, give nature, its potencies, the potencies that were blotted out by environment, & the potencies that were realized by pestilential environment—work up the whole thing, in detail, from infancy to frightful wild-beast climax." Jim Hall would become White Fang.[150]

When White Fang realizes his full evolutionary potential, that is, when a favorable environment conspires with heredity in a beneficial way, it means he suppresses his natural instincts. It means he separates his consciousness from the unconscious. "He had learned control and poise, and he knew the law. He achieved a staidness, and calmness, and philosophic tolerance. He no longer lived in a hostile

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[150] London, "The Life of the Convict: [Notes for a Book]," JL 891. These notes took up two pages on a note pad London used for jotting down story ideas. The next idea was similar: "Book Trace life of a slum and jungle beast, such as Owen Kildare, and the power of love and changing and elevating—a new force in environment."

environment. Danger and hurt and death did not lurk everywhere about him. In time, the unknown, as a thing of terror and menace ever impending, faded away. Life was soft and easy. It flowed along smoothly, and neither fear nor foe lurked by the way." (307). He could, in fact, mate and produce children, and it isn't too much of a stretch to see how those puppies are metaphors for books birthed by an author. We recall the links between Buck and White Fang that we have analyzed. Both are conveyors of the call of the wild and thus intimate with author figures, if not actual author figures themselves. Buck did not read the newspapers, but he might have written for the newspapers. Not surprisingly we get a similar conceit in *White Fang.* When Jim Hall escapes San Quentin, "the newspapers were read at Sierra Vista [the Weedon ranch], not so much with interest as with anxiety. . . . Of all this White Fang knew nothing." (318-19). Again, we have a dog-wolf who doesn't read the newspapers, but perhaps writes for them, producing little puppy-like stories.

White Fang's affinities with ghosts and ghostliness don't end with his life in the Northland. When White Fang first duels with Collie, he knocks her over and begins to run. "And all the time White Fang slid smoothly away from her, silently, without effort, gliding like a ghost over the ground." (285) The ghost dog in the South may be civilized, evolved, and capable of producing art, but he is still a ghost, the medium for the imagination. Up North, White Fang's dog partners were terrified of his ghostliness, the Wild that lived in him: "Much of the Wild had been lost [in the dogs], so that to them the Wild was the unknown, the terrible, the ever menacing and ever warring. But to him, in appearance and action and impulse, still clung the Wild. He symbolized it, was its personification." (190) His dogness may have won out, but the Wild was still there. That

is, London was realizing that when he separated himself too far and for too long from his originary, savage life with its direct connection to the unconscious, he felt alienated from some necessary part of himself, the part that made him an author. Fortunately, he could see, as he developed these ideas about biopsychology, that the ghostly unconscious could still rise up, and that it should. Writing was becoming not so much a torment and a grappling with some mysterious unknown, unseen force within himself, but a way to become a whole person, a way to end the alienation of the unconscious. In some way, *White Fang* is about London's growing acceptance of the ghost within.

Casper the Friendly Editor

As I previously mentioned, London first had the idea for the novel in December 1904, told Brett and Charmian about it, sold the rights, let the book gestate seven months (almost three times the number of months it takes to birth a wolf), and began writing on 27 June 1905—at least that's the date he told Brett, and the date stamp he had begun to use to mark the page he had finished writing for the day says 27 June, as does Charmian's diary.[151] In his sales notebook he says he started on 1 July.[152] On the first page of the

[151] See Charmian Kittredge, diary, 1905, JL 218. See London, letter to Brett, 27 June 1905, *Letters,* 1:495: "To-day I have completed the first thousand words of my *White-Fang* story—the companion-story to *The Call of the Wild,* which I mentioned to you some time ago." Actually, page nine of the manuscript has four date stamps on it: one for 25 June, which must be a mistake (he probably had forgotten to reset it), and three times for 27 June. Each page is about one hundred pages, so one thousand words would equal approximately nine pages. You would thus expect a date stamp for 28 June to appear on

manuscript, he wrote, "Begun July 2/05."[153] The difference in dates is insignificant. What is significant is that once he began writing, he did not interrupt himself until he was nearly through, on 10 October. In September he wrote his article on the Britt-Nelson fight, and on 7 October he completed his review of the book *The Long Day*. He was completely engrossed by his novel, and the numerous word-jammed manuscript pages that are filled with uncorrected sentences shows how focused he was.

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page nineteen or twenty, and you would be slightly disappointed. A stamp for 28 June, accompanied by two stamps for 29 June appears on page twenty-five. Was he stamping when he finished and when he began? Unfortunately, the next stamp appears on page ninety-one, and it is for 13 July, without an accompanying 12 July or 14 July. One might be perverse and ask if Charmian was using the date stamp to mark where she ended and began each day's worth of typing. She mentions working on *White Fang* for the first time in her diary on 16 July, and her own stamp (the first time I have ever seen it used—it says "Charmian Kittredge"—appears on page 3 of chapter 1, part 2, sixteen manuscript pages after the previous date stamp. Her stamp never again appears, and the date stamp reappears erratically in this manuscript, and then he ceased using it all together.

[152] See London, sales notebook, JL 934.

[153] London, "*White Fang:* [Novel]," JL 1407. I have no explanation for the discrepancies. Maybe he simply lost track of the date. He mailed out "Planchette" on 2 July, the day after Charmian finished typing it on 1 July. Maybe he went back to the first page of the manuscript at some later date and wrote the wrong date and guessed at the correct date when he wrote his entry in his sales notebook.

Brett, when he first heard the idea, was not enthusiastic. "Since receiving your letter of the 5th about your companion volume to `The Call of the Wild' I have been thinking over the project carefully and have worked myself into a pretty enthusiastic point of view in regard to it." He then explained his initial dismay: "sequels or continuations of successful books so seldom reach anything like the audience of the originals, but as I think the matter over I come to be persuaded that the new book if equally well done and if done with that grasp that characterizes the other story has an even greater possibility of appeal to a wide public." What changed Brett's mind? He realized that, given London's emphasis on "faithfulness, love, morality, & all the amenities," the book would have a happy ending. Brett felt *The Call of the Wild* had not sold as well as it had might because, as he told London in the same letter, "many were deterred somewhat by the natural course of events in the earlier novel." So, he instructed London, "let me suggest in connection with this story that you do not mention it as a sequel or even as a companion to the earlier book but instead let people suppose that you are doing an entirely new thing."[154] London may have had the requisite knowledge of the marketplace to avoid promoting his book as a sequel and so emphasized how *White Fang* would be a "companion," but Brett was having none of the distinction, another illustration of how London wasn't actually considering the commercial potential of the book; that is, Brett was telling London that it wasn't enough to make the distinction between sequel and companion as far as sales went. A commercially minded author would have seen that. Instead, full of vigor after the socialist victory in November, London was concerned principally with using a dog to illustrate, not the dystopic,

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

anarchic world of Buck, escaping the brute workplace of the capitalistic mining world of the North, but the service-oriented morality of a socialist life in the South. If this meant that the book would end happily, so much the better, though that happy ending is qualified by White Fang's murder of Jim Hall and the revelation that Hall was wrongly accused and falsely imprisoned. A strictly happy ending wouldn't include an indictment of America's penal institution.

After Brett's discussion of the business end of writing the novel, London began to think of its sales potential. "Yes, your idea about companion story to *Call of Wild* is precisely my idea. There must be no hint of any relation between the two." As long as Brett was enthusiastic about the novel, London was happy to talk turkey. "Even in title I had decided there should be not the slightest resemblance. I have figured on naming book after dog—*White Fang,* for instance, or something like that. Now I believe that that very title, *White Fang* has splendid commercial value."[155] But he wasn't going to bend the *motif* to fit audience expectations.

The writing went well, intense days of high and uninterrupted production. By July 3, he had six thousand words completed, a little under one thousand words a day. In mid September he told his long-time friend Mabel Applegarth that "I don't know whether I'll be able to finish *White Fang* before I start East, which is in early October."[156] He did. He finished on 10 October and mailed the manuscript to Brett the next day. "Hope you will like it. You will find there is not much resemblance between it and *The Call of the Wild,*

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[155] London, letter to Brett, 22 Dec. 1904, *Letters,* 1:458. Brett concurred: "a very striking and effective title" (Brett, letter to London, 27 Dec. 1904, JL 3024.

[156] London, letter to Mabel Applegarth, *Letters,* 1:518.

and I don't think anybody will dare to assert that I have humanized the dog."[157] No one complained. But when Brett read it—so far I have been unable to track down readers' reports on the manuscript, if indeed there were any—he had a few suggestions after his initial sugar coating: "What a fine, strong, artistic story *What Fang* is, and how the reading of it impresses you with its truth!" His hope—expressed in July that "it should be the most successful novel of modern times"—was realized.[158] ""It seems to me, I may say, the strongest piece of work of its length that you have done, not only in part but as a whole"—an important comment because some have found it to be a loosely connected and rather unsuccessful joining of several short stories. But "there are a few pages just before the end where it might, I think, be strengthened, i. e., in the pages devoted to White Fang's earlier life in the Santa Clara Valley. These pages just here halt a little, in my opinion, and it may be that in finally revising the story before its appearance in book form that you will, if you agree with me now that I have called your attention to the matter, change it slightly."[159] He left the nature of the changes to London, who ignored the suggestion. He was on his lecture tour, and when he received Brett's letter he was in Iowa with Charmian, just days away from getting married. He merely expressed his gratitude that Brett liked the story and that though he thought it a "bigger book" than *The Call of the Wild* he didn't expect it to sell as well.[160] Brett respectively disagreed.

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[157] London, letter to Brett, 11 Oct. 1905, *Letters,* 1:533.

[158] Brett, letter to London, 5 July 1905, JL 3044. Small wonder that London stayed with Brett for so long.

[159] Brett, letter to London, 16 Nov. 1905, JL 3053.

[160] London, letter to Brett, 26 Nov. 1905, *Letters,* 1:536.

Although he took this opportunity to remind London of the risk that serialization could diminish book sales (he cited Owen Wister's newest book as an instance of this, estimating that magazine sales had cut his book sales by half), nonetheless he predicted that he could sell fifty thousand copies in the first print run and twice that within a year.[161] By August 1906 he could say that they were receiving a high number of advance orders,[162] and on 4 November he exulted that it had sold thirty-five thousand copies already.[163] Yet later that month a slight note of caution entered his commentary on its sale: "The sale of the book has not started up much since the first orders of which I told you, but it could hardly be expected to do so soon." He stressed how much advertising they were giving the book and how his sales people were emphasizing it.[164] By the next month, however, his disappointment was forthright; it had only sold forty thousand copies.[165] Still, at the end of the year he was celebratory. London had just written, telling him how happy he was with the reviews. "I courted fate in the first place when I dared to write a companion-piece to *the Call of the Wild.* But God was with me! For at any rate I

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[161] Brett, letter to London, 3 Apr. 1906, JL 3059. He also mentioned hard economic times for book publishers: "during the last year or so there has been a decided falling off in the sales of novels," resulting in losses between 25 and 50 percent of sales. He expected the situation to improve and that *White Fang* to be immune.

[162] See Brett, letter to London, 22 Aug. 1906, JL 3073.

[163] See Brett, letter to London, 4 Nov. 1906, *Letters,* 2:630 n. 1.

[164] Brett, letter to London, 22 Nov. 1906, JL 3083.

[165] Brett, letter to London, 7 Dec. 1906, JL 3084.

have escaped the fate I courted."[166] Brett agreed: "you did an extremely dangerous thing in writing `White Fang' [apparently he never did think a companion book, even if London did keep silent about it, which he did, would never do well] and I cannot be too thankful that the story turned out, as it did, so great a success and so great an advance, as I believe it to be, over the previous work."[167] Though sales did not reach the levels either had hoped, still, the book did well enough.

Perhaps Brett had been right after all. Perhaps serial publication adversely affected book sales. Casper Whitney, the editor of *Outing,* certainly felt that way, but his insistence on obtaining both serial and book rights wrecked any future relationship he might have had with London. London's experience with *Outing* was trying, even though, in the middle of the process, Brett had encouraged London by saying, in his typically elliptical, formal prose, "I should make no doubt you would find it very easy to arrange to your pleasure [the novel's serialization] there being so many magazine editors at present who are keen to obtain material from your pen."[168] They were, and Whitney was willing to pay top dollar, but unlike Brett, Whitney could not accede to an author's will.

After London sold the rights to *Outing,* he told Brett that "they had been trying like the devil to get the book."[169] The process actually had started with a bang back in the summer of 1903. Whitney wrote to London out of the blue, saying, "I have just finished reading the Call of the Wild; it's a corker, the best of its kind I have ever read. I wish we

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[166] London, letter to Brett, 15 Dec. 1906, *Letters,* 2:649.

[167] Brett, letter to London, 24 Dec. 1906, JL 3085.

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

[169] London, letter to Brett, 7 Mar. 1905, *Letters,* 1:470.

had had it in Outing. Each one of the chapters is practically a short story and we could have run it easily. I hope we will have something from you one of these days."[170] Whitney was an interesting character. He interrupted his participation in the negotiations for *White Fang* and took off for the Amazon jungle and a two-thousand-mile trip. Previously he had covered the war in Cuba and traveled twenty-eight hundred miles through the Barren Grounds.[171] He was offered the editorship of *Outing* in 1900, and cofounded the Explorers Club in 1904. And at the end of London's life, he was busy reporting from Europe on World War One while his wife was running a Belgian relief program in London.[172]

His Northland and Amazon trips were sponsored by his magazine, as he put it in an editorial, "not only because *[Outing]* stands for the adventurous American, the man in whom remains, undying, the old-time pioneer spirit, but because as well it believes it is doing a valuable public service in exploring new parts of what is getting to be an old country, in carefully mapping out districts that have been practically unknown, and in furnishing accurate knowledge of the people and the animals and the vegetation that live in them; in making the way easier, in a word., to coming generations of Americas. This is, we believe, part of the mission of an optimistic American magazine, a magazine that

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[170] Casper Whitney, letter to London, 4 Aug. 1903, JL 20295.

[171] See Whitney, *On Snow-Shoes to the Barren Grounds: Twenty-Eight Hundred Miles after Musk-Oxen and Wood Bison* (New York: Harper Bros., 1896).

[172] See Whitney, letter to London, 17 Feb. 1915, JL 20311.

believes in our national future."[173] He sounds like his good friend Theodore Roosevelt. Frank Luther Mott calls the ten years Whitney ran the magazine "the highest point of excellence in its history," both in terms of content and design, and its circulation reached 100,000 in 1905 and stayed there for five years.[174] Whitney and London were a great match; as the editor said while they ran London's novel, "*White Fang* is another great story, not only because Jack London has the gift of story-telling, but also because he has lived and suffered all that he so intimately describes."[175]

He certainly suffered while dealing with Whitney. The next time London heard from the globe-trotting, death-defying editor was January 1905, just before he left for the Amazon. Having heard about *The Game,* he sent a one-line telegram: "Want serial rights your Story The Game your figure writing."[176] He then followed it up aggressively with a letter. "You know I have always told you that your stories belong in OUTING. You are our kind of people, and our readers are your kind of people. I understand you are at work on another story, and I would like to get the serial rights for that also, In fact, OUTING wants to tie up with you, and wants to get hold of the serial and book rights of the next

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[173] "Exploring Unknown America: Caspar Whitney in the Jungle," *Outing* 48 (June 1906): 359-60.

[174] Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines,* 5 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957), 4:637, 638.

[175] "The Author of `White Fang,' *Outing* 48 (June 1906): 361. See Leonard Cassuto's essay in *The Oxford Handbook of Jack London* in which he argues successfully that suffering was a necessary constituent of London's conception of masculinity.

[176] Casper Whitney, telegram to London, 5 Jan. 1905, JL 20296.

story you have after the one that you are at present engaged on, and the book rights for which I suppose you have disposed of."[177] Of course London had already settled on *Metropolitan* as his serial outlet for *The Game*, but when he received Whitney's letter he was ready to give *White Fang* to them. In fact, a month later Whitney wrote again after hearing about London's proposed around-the-world expedition. "Is the three months' cruise to be for material gathering? If so, let me have it. In a word, what I want is to get your next serial and book." Acquiring both serial and book rights didn't strike Whitney as a problem. The larger goal was "making the Outing Publishing CO. the house of America for virile fiction and books of travel, adventure and of outdoor and kindred subjects."[178] London had to make it clear to Whitney that he had a contract with Macmillan. As he told Brett, "I am having difficulty in selling *White Fang* serially. The leading magazines are willing to give me 10 cts a word for serial rights, and Harpers offer that much for American serial rights alone;--but all of them append the proposition that they are to publish the book. So in each case, so far, it is all off."[179] Brett suggested he send it to *Everybody's,* with whom he had discussed the matter that week, and maybe that discussion forced Whitney's hand.[180] London didn't have time to write to Cosgrave before the irrepressible Whitney made his next offer.

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[177] Whitney, letter to London, 5 Jan. 1905, JL 20297. London's correspondence to Whitney is incomplete.

[178] Whitney, letter to London, 7 Feb. 1905, JL 20299.

[179] London, letter to Brett, 21 Feb. 1905, *Letters,* 1:468.

[180] See Brett, letter to London, 27 Feb. 1905, JL 3029.

Whitney pushed, but he was willing to compromise: "Are you so committed to the Macmillan's that there is no offer from us for the book rights that you will entertain? If we are out of it on the book rights entirely, we, of course, will be glad to have the serial rights alone, but why couldn't we make you more money if we had both, and why wouldn't that suit you better?"[181] Because London wasn't in it for the money, pure and simple.

Then Whitney left for the Amazon and turned things over to James Knapp Reeve, a familiar name to London. Reeve had been the editor of *The Editor* and author of *Five Hundred Places to Sell a Manuscript,* a book London touted as crucial to his initial success in the marketplace. Reeve confirmed their desire to have the serial rights alone, and he reiterated their payment of 10 cents a word. All he needed was the length of the story and the date he would get it.[182] London told him he hadn't started to write the story, so *Outing* would not be able to publish it in the early summer as they had hoped, and then he conveyed the happy news to Brett. Whitney returned, took over the correspondence from Reeve, and immediately set in on acquiring London's next book: "I am very happy to know that Mr. Reeve had closed with you for `White Fang' and I hope this is the beginning of several others. The next one you must let us publish in book form as well as serial."[183] London had no intention of abandoning Macmillan and simply did not respond to Whitney's entreaty. But Whitney did not let up. In May, after London told him that he was about to begin writing, Whitney said, "Let me take this opportunity in saying that I

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[181] Whitney, letter to London, 17 Feb. 1905, JL 20300.

[182] James Knapp Reeve, letter to London, 6 Mar. 1905, JL 16850.

[183] Whitney, letter to London, 18 Apr. 1905, JL 20301.

am mighty glad that we have this story from you and remember that we want your next one, book rights as well as serial." Why did Whitney think London would eventually give in. "We will show you a thing or two in advertising," enthused Whitney, "and giving you extensive sales."[184] He promised his book publishing company would spend $50,000 in advertising for a list of six books: "This is probably the largest advertising appropriation of any publishing house in America, and that used to push six books will be more satisfactory to authors than if it were used to push twenty-five or thirty."[185] Money, sales, and exclusivity would be London's if he said yes. Although London continued to say no to Whitney's unending, aggressive requests for both the book rights to *White Fang* and to what would be *The Cruise of the* Snark, Whitney finally revealed why he had been so insistent. London sent had him a new short story, "Finis," in November 1906. Whitney loved it, but he wanted to make it the first in a series called something like "The Tragedies of the North or Wilderness Travel, or whatever you may call it."[186]London thought it a great idea, and though he was finishing up *The Iron Heel,* he thought he could write the series as soon as he completed it, around the middle of December. Whitney demurred, returned the manuscript, and pronounced why he had been heavily pursuing book rights. "I am obliged to return you FINIS, because I am not going to buy any more good stuff unless I can get with it the book rights. . . . It is a surprising thing to me that most authors do not realize that it is only a question of time when serial and book rights must go together; otherwise, the plum is not good enough for the magazine no

[184] Whitney, letter to London, 12 May 1905, JL 20302.

[185] Whitney, letter to London, 24 Aug. 1905, JL 20303.

[186] Whitney, letter to London, 14 Nov. 1906, JL 20307.

matter how rare and juicy it may be."[187] London respectfully reiterated his loyalty to Brett—and the need for loyalty—and bemoaned the fact that he and Whitney could not agree about serialization sans book publishing rights.[188] Whitney responded, "You are quite right in being loyal to your publisher; I do not want you to break faith with him. It is simply a business proposition. . . . No series of stories at ten cents the word from any author is good enough if we do not get with it the book rights also."[189] And that was that. London never heard from the stridently masculine, Rooseveltian editor again. But Whitney may have planted the idea of a connected series of stories in London's mind, for, instead of *The Tragedies of the North* London wrote *The Road.* The trail, the road, the path of a ship on the ocean: they all blur together in London's mind, representing the same thing: both the object of his writing and the scene of his writing.

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[187] Whitney, letter to London, 30 Nov. 1906, JL 20308. London sent this letter to Brett and wanted to know Brett's opinion about Whitney's new venture into book publishing and his prediction that book and serial rights would soon be sold together. Brett didn't think much of Whitney's book publishing company and predicted (correctly) that it wouldn't last long. He also told London not to worry about Whitney's absence from the serial market because "such matter as you write must always be . . . in first rate demand." (Brett, letter to London, 24 Dec. 1906, JL 3085.) Interestingly, though, both Brett and Whitney wanted the same thing. They both wanted to control an author's entire output, Whitney by contracting all rights, and Brett by eliminating serial publication all together. On this matter, Brett was silent, and London did not pursue it.

[188] See London, letter to Whitney, 8 Dec. 1906, *Letters,* 1:646.

[189] Whitney, letter to London, 19 Dec. 1906, JL 20309.