Author under Sail

Jay Williams

Chapter 16: The Jack London Show Goes on the Road

ORIGINAL

Feeding the Socialist

While he mulled over the offer from Robert Collier, who was lobbying him strenuously, London was asked to engage in "platform work" sponsored by "the largest and oldest lecture bureau in the world," the Slayton Lyceum Bureau.[1] This request appealed to his evolving sense of authorship in a way that Collier's did not. He was quietly but determinedly intent on shedding the image of the hobo-author in favor of something new, something less contentious in the national press, something more strongly politically inflected, and the bureau's plan came at an opportune time. Collier's offer in December 1904 to pay for London's trip around America as a hobo-observer-writer became, in London's hands, a trip around America as a famous lecturer-author.

He was an experienced public speaker. Ever since he had completed his essay "The Question of the Maximum" in late 1899 and gave it as a lecture to the Ruskin Club and at other socialist events, he was courted by a wide array of organizations. In 1904, he

---

[1] Carolyn Johnston mistakenly asserts that "as the newly elected president [of the Intercollegiate Socialist Society (ISS)], Jack London planned an evangelistic crusade of college campuses in the fall of 1905" (Carolyn Johnston, *Jack London—An American Radical?* 112). As we will see, he made his arrangements with Slayton Lyceum Bureau almost a full year before his appointment as president of the ISS, an organization I will discuss below.

spoke constantly, using "The Class Struggle" and "The Scab" as his texts. Public speaking wasn't always a political act; he had also presented accounts of his adventures and had read aloud from his fiction. But socialist ideals demanded an audience, and he was always ready to proselytize. In fact, he learned to speak in public as a socialist soapboxer in the spring or summer of 1895; he was nineteen and wanted to engage an audience directly, theatrically. According to one of his contemporaries, his first speech "was too fiery for those conservative times and people were incensed and wanted action taken to prevent a repetition of similar agitation. Mayor Chapman [of Oakland] said it did not amount to anything as the property [the park around Chabot Observatory, now Lafayette Square] was given to the city for lecture purposes, and thus the matter was left for the time."[2] That summer, he followed the lead of men who first taught him the

---

In September or October 1903, London was approached by an unknown party to give a brief lecture tour: "I am considering a proposition to go East in [January] & deliver ten lectures. The trip, as outlined, will take about a month, and will be a vacation to me, also will be educational, and in a small way may have advertising value" (London, letter to George Brett, 8 Oct. 1903, *Letters,* 1:393). A month or so later he decided against it. See London, letter to Brett, 20 Nov. 1903, Macmillan Company records, New York Public Library. Oddly, no other document indicates that he had been made such an offer or that he was considering leaving for the East in January 1904; of course, he left for Asia in that month. See London, letter to George Brett, 8 Oct. 1903, *Letters,* 1:393.

[2] Georgia Loring Bamford, *The Mystery of Jack London* (Oakland, Calif.: Georgia Loring Bamford, 1931), 69. The exact date for his first public speaking has been under contention but can now be verified. Part of the problem is the faulty memory of some of

principles of socialism, men like Frank Strawn-Hamilton, Max Schwind, and Jim Whitaker.[3] Three months into his friendship with Cloudesley Johns, when London first discussed socialism with him—"so you, also, are a socialist? How we are growing!"—he linked it to the question of who were the best speakers in the Bay Area, not which books he relied on for knowledge about socialism.[4]

---

his contemporaries. Georgia Loring Bamford thought this first instance of public speaking occurred in 1893. She further reported that in 1895 London "got into trouble with the police for speaking in the streets of Oakland without a permit." She remembers that he was not sentenced because he "was under age" (70). However, there is no documentation for an arrest in 1895; there is, though, for an arrest in 1897. It is therefore likely that she simply was off by two years for both his first appearance in public and for the arrest.

[3] For an authoritative discussion of the public speech scene in Chabot Park and City Hall Park in Oakland, see Joan London, *Jack London and His Times* (New York: Doubleday, Doran, and Co., 1939), 125-26.

[4] London, letter to Cloudesley Johns, [30] Apr. 1899, *Letters,* 1:71. Ernest Untermann confirms that London was more prone to having friends digest difficult philosophical and political science issues for him rather than read the numerous authors on different sides of issues and then make up his mind. Joan London and Austin Lewis came to the same conclusion, though Joan called it "short cuts" to rely on "the stored-up knowledge in the minds of generous friends" (Joan London, *Jack London and His Times,* 189). Untermann, with more sympathy toward Jack, was happy to offer his overviews of philosophical problems "that the brightest minds of Marxism had left in such a parlous and confused

Socialism, public speaking, and food distribution were intertwined in the Bay Area at this time. This third element of a social triad should not come as a surprise. Even before Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* energized not only the general public but also the government to institute clean food legislation and a broader awareness of corporate malfeasance, the idea of proper health combined with small farming and distribution techniques bonded with turn-of-the-century collectivist sympathies. No other country was like America in its embrace of the utopian possibilities of socialism, and the formation of numerous cooperative communities—usually established in rural areas—led to basic reconsiderations of land use, farming techniques, food distribution, and diet. The result was a burgeoning cooperative food movement that took expression in the formation of rural communes and urban grocery stores. Not all of them were utopian. Ever since the National Grange in the 1870s and the Farmers' Alliance in the next decade, "workers and

---

state" (Ernest Untermann, letter to Joan London, 22 Jan. 1938, frame 41, microfilm, correspondence, Ernest Untermann Papers, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wis.). So, Joan wanted her father to be conversant in Kant, Hegel, Engels, and Marx, whereas Untermann explained to her why it would have been a waste of time. As Untermann said, London had read John Dewey and William James and felt none the wiser. At the same time, and this is absolutely crucial for understanding London's self-education, most of the sociopolitical literature he read contained debates with and criticism of other authors. So, for example, when he read Laurence Gronlund's *The Co-Operative Commonwealth,* he had to absorb Gronlund's critique of Herbert Spencer. When he read biological monographs, he had to absorb, say, August Weismann's critique of Lamarck. London's reading was at all times active and dialectical.

their unions . . . were closely allied with organizations of farmers." What separated these organizations from the utopian colonies was the former's affiliation with political parties.[5] Despite this key difference, it is significant to place the formation of utopian colonies within the larger context of intentional cooperative communities.

Socialists, largely working outside of political parties, fought against food trusts and the incorporation of farming, especially in a largely rural state like California. "Farm labor was replacing farm family as the basic mode of agricultural production," and farm laborers attracted the socialist movement.[6] Several examples of this confluence of socialism and rural communal living show how closely London was associated with it. George Speed, one of London's earliest and closest friends in the Bay Area Socialist movement, got his start in the Kaweah Colony in Tulare, County, California; this colony was initiated by Burnette Haskell on the ideas contained in Laurence Gronlund's *Co-operative Commonwealth* and on his experiences as an organizer of the International Workingmen's Association in San Francisco.[7] As we shall see, Upton Sinclair followed a

---

[5] John Curl, *For All the People: Uncovering the Hidden History of Cooperation, Cooperative Movements, and Communalism* (Oakland, Calif.: PN Press, 2009), 4, 5.

[6] Ibid., 129

[7] See Joan London, *Jack London and His Times,* 183, and Robert V. Hine, *California's Utopian Colonies* (Huntington Library: San Marino, 1953), 78, 79. Two members, in their memoirs, cited the preponderance of vegetarians, raw food advocates, and other "cranks" (quoted in ibid., 84). See Robert V. Hine, *California's Utopian Colonies,* 114-31, and Paul Greenstein, Nigey Lennon, and Lionel Rolfe, *Bread and Hyacinths: The Rise and Fall of Utopian Los Angeles* (California Classics Books: Los Angeles, 1992),

similar path. Probably the most famous socialist who was also deeply involved in utopian community building was Job Harriman. Directly influenced by Edward Payne and the Altrurians, who we shall meet shortly, he founded Llano del Rio, located in the Antelope Valley outside of Los Angeles. This was in 1910, after losing the Los Angeles mayoral election because the McNamara brothers confessed to the Ink Alley bombing, a cause celebre in the socialist world,. If Los Angeles couldn't become a cooperative commonwealth, then Harriman hoped to accomplish similar goals on a smaller scale. And to a large degree he and his fellow colonists succeeded at Llano because of their agricultural endeavors.

In the summer of 1895, London met Whitaker, Strawn-Hamilton, Schwind, and others in City Hall Park or Chabot Park, or it could have been at Becker's Hall, a Socialist Labor Party (SLP) hangout located above Fred Becker's Grand Central Market, a grocery store at 908 Washington Street in Oakland;[8] London joined the SLP in 1896.

---

22. Austin Lewis, in his unpublished memoir of London, has no sympathy for the Kaweah Colony or cooperative commonwealths in general. Speed, "had gone East with Coxey's Army, . . . had belonged to the Kaweah Colony which was one of the belated attempts to realize that celestial Cooperative Commonwealth of which all the propagandist sects so loudly talked" (Austin Lewis, "Jack London 1898-1902: [biographical sketch]," MI 577, box 11, Manuscripts and Correspondence, Miller [Joan London] Collection, HEH). In Lewis's acerbic account, we hear the disdain of sixties Berkeley politicos for the Bay Area hippies.

[8] Some newspaper sources give the address as 918 Washington. Apparently, it was a long warehouse-type building, the top floor of which which Becker leased out to various

Whitaker worked at a different grocery story, a cooperative owned by Halvor Hauch located at 31 Telegraph Avenue. Hauch was Danish, born in 1860. He emigrated to California in 1889 and died in 1920. He was so popular that Oakland's flags flew at half mast on the day of his death. He became the president of the California State Retail Grocers Association and had three kids. He was a close friend of Frederick Bamford and J. Wilson Stitt, the socialist mayor of Berkeley. He was an active member of the Ruskin Club. But London knew him outside the Ruskin Club as well. His close friend, Jim Whitakerhad a job delivering laundry supplies to various laundries in the East Bay. One day in 1895, he fell into conversation with Rauch about socialism, and shortly after Rauch hired him to manage the store. Rauch took him to a meeting of the Socialist Labor Party, and then Whitaker met London. They probably met in City Hall Park, while Jack listened to the political arguments. Whitaker took him to the Socialist Labor Party meeting and that's when London probably met Hauch as well. At the very least London met Hauch whenever he, London, went to the grocery store to meet up with Whitaker. These friendships survived contentious discussion about socialist philosophy and tactics, and they all remained friends until London's death. For example, in 1906, when London gave a talk in front of the Ruskin Club about his recent lecture tour, Hauch introduced him, saying, "We value him as the true man, the loyal comrade, and we honor him for his fidelity to the great cause to which he has devoted his life," even though Hauch,

---

concerns. Other groups besides the SLP held meetings in Becker's Hall, including various unions, reform groups, and Christian Socialists.

Bamford, and the rest of the club disagreed with London's revolutionary politics.[9] In 1913, London wrote to a friend from his ranch in Glen Ellen: "Can't begin to tell you how sorry Charmian and I are at the fact that you are unable to visit us. J. Stitt Wilson, Professor Bamford, and Mr. Hauch, a bunch of real socialists, are here day after to-morrow for a several days' stay."[10]

There was a third grocery store in the Bay Area tied to reform politics. It was set up by Edward Payne, future husband of Charmian London's aunt, Ninetta Wiley. Payne had arrived in Berkeley in the early 1890s as the first Unitarian minister in town. Formally a Congregationalist, he had resigned from that sect and worked with Dwight Moody in Chicago's poor neighborhoods, and he generally ministered to down and outers wherever he was. In Berkeley he allied himself with the Christian Socialists, an antitheological movement that emphasized social welfare and social justice achieved without violence. It advocated gradual change brought about by cooperation and noncompetitive business practices, and so it was more in tune with the Ruskin Club members than with someone like London. In 1893, when London first began to write, Payne and others formed the Altrurian Society. Named after William Dean Howell's novel *A Traveller to Altruria*, the group—including Payne and a small number of married couples and single men—met in Oakland and formed a cooperative colony—a

---

[9] "Mr. and Mrs. Jack London Given a Large Reception by the Members of the Ruskin Club," *Oakland Enquirer,* 7 Apr. 1906, p. 7, JL scrapbooks, vol. 7.

[10] London, letter to Walter H. Nichols, 10 Jan. 1913, *Letters from Jack London,* 3:1111; the editors of *Letters* misidentify Hauch as Edward F. Hauch, but clearly the letter is a reference to Halvor Hauch, who was close friends with both Bamford and Stitt.

commune—and named it Altruria. (In the next chapter I discuss how London's *The Iron Heel* can be read as a response to Howell's novel). The communards bought 185 acres of land six miles outside of Santa Rosa, and moved there in October. Payne, because he had his congregation still in Berkeley stayed in the Bay Area, but helped form subordinate groups or councils that sought to practice their socialist principles in the ways that they could. One council was formed in San Francisco, and in February 1895 Job Harriman took over the running of their co-operative grocery store; he too was a Christian Socialist and a close friend of Payne's. Later he became Eugene Debs's vice presidential running mate. In 1897 London called him "the best popular socialist speaker on the Coast."[11] Just as London was beginning his speaking career, in June 1895, the Oakland Council of Altruria founded the Altruria Co-operative Union, a combination grocery store, bakery, and laundry located at 1110 Market Street. In about a year it was successful enough to take over the management of the San Francisco store. Jeremiah Roberts and his wife owned and operated it and negotiated with Henry Gibson to establish a bakery and with C. O. Frenzel to establish a laundry as part of their co-op.[12] The Altrurians disbanded after a year and a half.

---

[11] London, letter to Johns, [30] Apr. 1899.

[12] See Shaun O'Connor, "On the Road to Utopia: The Social History and Spirituality of Altruria, an Intentional Religious Community in Sonoma County California, 1894-1896" (PhD diss., Graduate Theological Seminary, Berkeley, 2000), 147; on page 150 O'Connor mistakenly calls Roberts "Robinson." Given that there were three grocery stores in the Bay Area tied to reform politics, it is not surprising that other researchers have been confused about which was which and who worked where. For example, Joan

We remember that London's 1899 story "Two Children of Israel" focuses on a socialist meeting in a room above a grocery store, a scene that he reworked for *Martin Eden.* London's beginnings as a public speaker, as a socialist, and as a fiction writer are intertwined and fed off of each other. Of course, he was first a writer, having published his first work of art in 1893, but he never gave up lecturing, and his later ranching and farming activities were rooted in these first experiences in Oakland's world of politics and food. Given London's familiarity with cooperative efforts in the food industry, it's not hard to imagine that his Beauty Ranch in Sonoma County, not that far from the site of the Altrurian commune, and especially his willingness to house and employ many workers were an attempt to replicate these earlier endeavors that mixed food and politics. Even as late as 1906, he and Charmian "rode to Altruria and put up at [Burke's]

London says in 1895 the Oakland Socialist Labor Party started "a co-operative grocery store," managed by London's friend Jim Whitaker. See Joan London, *Jack London and His Times: An Unconventional Biography* (Doubleday, Doran: New York, 1939), 126-27, and see also Frederick J. Monteagle, *Herman James Whitaker,* unpublished ms., Oakland History Room). See also Rose Wilder Lane, "Life and Jack London," *Sunset* (Feb. 1918): 32, who says Whitaker worked in a grocery story "started by the socialists at 31 Telegraph Ave." See Elsie Martinez Whitaker, "Jim Whitaker," Online Archive of California, www.oac.cdlib.org/view?query=Hauch&docId=hb6j49p1b8&chunk.id=div00005&toc.depth=1&toc.id=0&brand=oac4&x=18&y=12, for the information that her father was hired by Hauch.

Sanatarium."[13] In 1895, though, he was more focused on the coincidence between socialist ideas and public speaking. His socialist friends taught him how to speak from a soapbox or from the stairs of a public building to an impromptu crowd. What London wrote in "Getting into Print" applies equally well to public speaking: you have to have a philosophy of life, and socialism gave him the intellectual grounding for both his speaking and his writing careers.

But they didn't teach him how to promote himself; that, he learned on his own. With the help of his friend and fellow high school student A. Walter Tate he was able to get his name, personal story, and ideas into the newspapers. London wrote his first socialist essay, "What Socialism Is," in the fall or early winter of 1895, and then got Tate to write a profile of him. Together, the two newspaper articles appeared in the *San Francisco Chronicle.* Tate's profile, titled "Jack Loudon, Socialist: The Adventurous Career of an Oakland Boy Who Traversed the Continent on a Breakbeam and Shipped as a Stowaway" (for someone with such a simple name, reporters seemed to have difficulty getting it right) emphasized his public speaking appearances. Tate wrote, "I first met him in a debating society. . . . Since then I have often seen him surrounded by a group of men, giving his ideas on" socialism. London intuitively knew the value of publicity and self-promotion.[14] Two months after the appearance of these twin pieces, advertising both the

---

[13] Charmian London, 13 May 1906, diary, JL 219, box 13, HEH. This was at a time that they were trying to buy more land to expand the ranch.

[14] A. Walter Tate, "Jack Loudon, Socialist: The Adventurous Career of an Oakland Boy Who Traversed the Continent on a Breakbeam and Shipped as a Stowaway," *San Francisco Examiner,* 25 Dec. 1895. Tate graduated from Oakland High School in

person and the ideas of Jack London, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported that London was "holding forth nightly to the crowds that throng City Hall Park. There are other speakers there in plenty, but London always gets the biggest crowd and the most respectful attention."[15] Previous biographers have taken Tate's and London's 1895

December 1895 and was in the Henry Clay Debating Society—comprised of both high school and university students, which numbered twenty-six members in 1897—and thus was a fellow student, not a newspaperman; see "Have Not Room Enough: High School Graduates Object to the Exercise Plans," *Oakland Tribune,* 16 Dec. 1895, 1, and "Disciples of Clay," *Oakland Tribune,* 13 Jan. 1897, 6. In all likelihood, Tate and London saw an opportunity to get the latter into the papers by publishing "What Socialism Is" (perhaps first intended for the *Oakland High School Aegis*) accompanied by a sketch of the author. That Tate was not a journalist and not intent on becoming one is borne up by the fact that four years later he graduated from University of California, Berkeley, with "the degree of doctor of dental surgery" (University of California, *Register, 1899-1900* [Berkeley: University Press, 1900], pp. 378-79; in the same year, Milicent Shinn, the editor of the *Overland Monthly* received her PhD from the same institution, making her the first woman to do so. See Earle Labor, *Jack London: An American Life* (New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux, 2013), 86 for the misattribution of Tate as one of the "Bay journalists."

[15] "Jack London, the Boy Socialist: Once an Industrial Tramp, Now a High-School Student and Street Orator," *San Francisco Chronicle,* 16 Feb. 1896, 20. See Jonathan Auerbach, *Male Call: Becoming Jack London* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1996), 120-24, for an excellent discussion of this trio of early newspaper articles and how

newspaper items as evidence of the Bay Area's interest in and creation of a persona called "Jack London, Boy Socialist." We can now see that London himself was the origin of this persona.

Outdoors and improvisatory, soapboxing was prep work for lecturing. Lecturing in a hired hall in front of paying customers was the next evolutionary step. Also, writing essays like "The Question of the Maximum" and, later, "Revolution" fulfilled his mission

---

London "profoundly realized the special power of the popular media to make him—a process of reification that he understood in turn as a symptom of an emerging postindustrial capitalism" (124). In volume 1 I discussed how important London felt it was to connect personally with reporters in order, in part, to maintain a beneficial relationship with those who presented him to the public. Cecelia Tichi rightly corrects Auerbach's overemphasis on London's creation of a name for himself by focusing on London's "own campaign to swing public opinion to his side" and thus create, not so much a name, but a position for himself in the public sphere as an effective advocate for socialism. Thus, when she looks at this early stage of his career, she successfully blends Bamford's memoir with London's first published pronouncements on socialism, which were printed as letters to the editor in the *Oakland Times.* Tichi strongly implies, and I concur, that these letters give us a good idea of what London spoke about in Oakland in 1895; see Cecelia Tichi, *Jack London: A Writer's Fight for a Better America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 47-48. Carolyn Johnston also discusses the two 1895 *San Francisco Examiner* pieces—Tate's portrait and London's "What Socialism Is"—in her *Jack London—An American Radical?* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1984), 31-32.

of reaching both a listening and reading public. The theatrical nature of his essays easily translated into the theatrical public presentation of those same ideas, and we will see how he used speechifying as a way to test out drafts of his essays. Thus the idea of a national lecture tour grew organically out of his years' worth of experience in public speaking, out of his desire to test out ideas for essays, and out of a desire to become a nationally known spokesperson for the Left. Collier's offer simply could not fulfill all these desires, but Slayton could.

The Slayton Lyceum Lecture Bureau trafficked in both nostalgia and modernity. The word *lyceum* would have resonated with members of Jack London's public who recalled pre–Civil War organizations like the Star Lecture Course. Lyceums were both a place and a committee that sponsored the lectures. They were wildly popular from around 1830 to 1860. According to Edward Everett Hale, the public lecture became a secular form of the week-day sermon that English Puritan clergy sought to deliver outside of their home areas and that Bishop Laud and the English religious establishment suppressed. "High among the causes which sent Winthrop's colony to Massachusetts was the passion of such men as he to hear lectures on week-days."[16] The lyceum committee would choose a lecturer on behalf of the general public. A lecture was supposed to be "serious and moral . . . an oratorical form deliberately and carefully separated from all

[16] Edward Everett Hale, *James Russell Lowell and His Friends* (1899; New York: AMS Press, 1965), 102. Although Hale oversimplifies the origins of American democracy, his hypothesis is significant, for it illustrates the importance of education to the American mission.

partisan and sectarian discourse."[17] The committee organized public lecture series for both the spread of general knowledge and the chance for the general public to meet and hear prominent Americans like Lloyd Garrison, James Russell Lowell, James Bigelow, and Ralph Waldo Emerson; as Hale wrote, "[Graham] Phillips, [Theodore] Parker, Ward Beecher, and even Garrison, would have been little known outside a small circle around their respective homes but for this lecturing practice."[18] This was the golden age of the lyceum. As Emerson said, "`There is now a "lyceum," so called, in almost every town in New England.'" And Starr King was "the author of [a] lyceum chestnut. Some one asked him what his honorarium was for each lecture. `F. A. M. E.,' said he--`Fifty And My Expenses.'"[19] The lecture might be a one-off, it might be one in a series delivered by the same speaker, or it might be part of a course of lectures on a single topic. The speakers had typically gone to college and belonged to debating societies. The audience, in turn, expected something knowledgeable if not wise. Often the committee would be associated with a Young Men's Association or Young Men's Christian Association, and the committee and its audience "were aspiring and ambitious" who saw life as "a process of individual self-creation." Thus, "knowledge had to be organized and dispensed, less in rigid, prepackaged patterns than in ways that let people pick and choose what they

---

[17] Donald M. Scott, "The Popular Lecture and the Creation of a Public in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America," *Journal of American History* 66 (Mar. 1980): 793.

[18] Edward Everett Hale, *James Russell Lowell and His Friends* (1899; New York: AMS Press, 1965), 102, 104.

[19] Hale, *James Russell Lowell and His Friends,* 106, 107.

wanted, when they wanted it."[20] If Hale had exaggerated in his claim that the lyceum system was indicative of the Puritans' desire for freedom of expression, at the end of the golden age many concurred with Hale's foremost idea that there was something "peculiarly American" about the lyceum system. G. W. Curtis, a popular prewar lecturer wrote in 1887, "`The lyceum of the last generation is gone, but it is not surprising that those who recall . . . its golden prime should cherish a kindly and regretful feeling for an institution which was so peculiarly American, and which served so well the true American spirit and American life.'"[21]

There were many factors that led to the dissipation of the lyceum system. The Civil War played havoc with the concept of a unified American life, and even before 1861 abolitionists were transforming the lyceum lecture course into a platform for a particular (righteous) cause. Many elements of the old system survived into the twentieth century, especially the economy of fame, the delivery of knowledge, income, and the association with YMCAs. But partisanship had usurped the objective presentation of ideas, and, more generally, the change in the constitution of the American public sphere—given the turn-of-the-century increase in magazine readership and other forms of popular entertainment—necessitated a new emphasis on "the circulation of sensation and

---

[20] Scott, "The Popular Lecture and the Creation of a Public in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America," 802.

[21] Carl Bode, *The American Lyceum: Town Meeting of the Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), 252.

capital" instead of "the circulation and discussion of ideas."[22] And so by 1906 it was not out of the ordinary to have London deliver public polemics on socialism.

H. L. Slayton founded his lecture bureau in Chicago in 1874, while he practiced law in the city. In the next year he was successful enough to give up his law practice, and in seven years he had seven assistants in the office, managing over six hundred musical concerts and over two thousand lectures.[23] By 1888, it was capitalized at the tune of $10,000 (roughly a quarter of a million dollars in 2016). The process of booking speakers was straightforward. After the speaker was signed, the company would contact its freelancers across the country or the representative of the venue. Acting as representatives of the bureau, they would set up the lectures and supervise the actual event. Sometimes Slayton or Charles Wagner would handle the individual initial negotiations themselves with the venues, but they always managed the contracts, billing, and reimbursements for the speakers.

After London's return from Korea in 1904, he had become less interested in living and observing life on the road and more interested in the public advocacy of socialist principles, especially because he felt the nation was moving toward a socialist majority rule after the 1904 election. He wanted to speed that process as much as possible, and reprising his role as a hobo-author would not invest him with an effective status. A public lecture forum, he thought, would be more effective that publishing essays in *Collier's*.

---

[22] Michael Millner, "`The Feels': Jack London and the New Mass Cultural Public Sphere," *The Oxford Handbook of Jack London,* ed. Jay Williams (Oxford: New York, 2016), 112.

[23] "Slayton Lyceum Bureau," *Chicago Tribune,* 25 Sept. 1881, 18.

Thus, we are witnessing a maturation of his authorial persona; eventually, the construct of hobo-author, so fundamental to his authorial identity, would become the construct of sailor-author. Both incorporated the fundamental characteristic of vagabondage or mobility, but the former construct became too limiting for him. So, he turned Collier down, said yes to Slayton, and then a month later wrote the essay that he easily turned into his most famous lecture—"Revolution."[24] On 18 October 1905, two days after he

[24] In the file folder JL 20722, there is a printed version of a work attributed to London called "Things Alive." The publication is the *Yale Monthly Magazine* for March 1906. In what could very well be London's hand, at the top of the work, appears this note: "A new phase of literary effort. A Yale student projects himself into the work of Jack London and writes "Things Alive by Jack London." Below that note, appears, in a different hand, "Jack Rawlston, author." (JL 20722). For a reprint of this essay, see Wichlan, *The Unpublished and Uncollected Articles and Essays,* 120-23, and Labor, *Jack London,* 228, as well as *The Portable Jack London,* 483-85, edited by Labor, who either was unaware of or ignored the notes. Apparently Labor believes it was written by London because in the penultimate paragraph "Jack London" tells the story of hearing laughter from the audience at Harvard when he told the story of seeing poor people eating old apple cores in the East End of London. There is no record in London's sales notebook of him writing this essay or submitting it—at this point in his career, the notebook is painstakingly accurate and complete—and in a bibliography done of his work in 1919 (probably by Jack Byrne or Eliza Shepard or Charmian herself) there is no entry for this essay; see "Bibliography," JL 21306. Despite the first-person point of view, the prose is nothing like London's. In an email exchange, Wichlan agreed with my assessment that this essay was

completed *White Fang,* he left for the East on the lecture tour. He left his concerns about the imagination, ghosts, and the spirit sleeping on a California porch and took his theatrical work on the road with a new sense of his national role as an American author.

Fame, like a black lagoon, creates its own creatures. H. H. Fuller worked for Blanchard and Venter, a West Coast lecture management firm, in 1904, and their address appears in London's copy of James Knapp Reeves's *500 Places to Sell a Manuscript,* a book London used as a kind of address book for business correspondence. Later Fuller would end up in Hemingway country in northwest Michigan as the superintendent of schools for the town of East Jordan and still later would become a sales rep for an

---

not written by London. But he wants to believe that it might be a transcript of his talk in Fayerweather Hall in Rallston's room, which took place soon after his speech in Woolsely Hall. This seems highly unlikely to me, given the note on the copy sent to London and given Irvine's memory of it being a question-and-answer session in the dorm room. Rallston may have incorporated some things he heard from London, whether in the lecture hall or dorm room, such as the story of the laughing Harvard students. Clearly, London were pleased that Rallston had taken the trouble to imagine himself as London. Given the limited circulation of the *Yale Alumni Monthly* and given that Rallston made no money from this publication, London could afford to be supportive. Three newspaper reports mistakenly herald the essay as London's. See *Mercury* (New Bedford, Mass.), 19 Mar. 1906, JL scrapbooks, vol. 7, p. 132, "Jack London's Critique Arouses Harvard Ire," *Boston Post,* 19 Mar. 1906, JL scrapbooks, vol. 7, p. 133, and "London Hits College Men," *Star* (Terre Haute, Ind.), 20 Mar. 1906, vol. 7, p. 143. The reports sensationalize London's supposed attacks on undergraduates.

educational publishing firm. Like Edward Morrell in 1913 (a case we will cover in chapter 22), Fuller wanted to set up a lecture series for London in order to make money for himself. Unlike Morrell, however, Fuller knew he couldn't pull it off by himself. So, he approached Slayton with the idea; perhaps his own firm wasn't interested. At the same time, though, he cold-called London at his house, falsely representing himself as an employee of Slayton, and proposed a deal: if London agreed to pay him a commission on each lecture, then he would get Slayton to give him the best possible terms, meaning that he wanted to represent both London and Slayton. London agreed (and wrote Fuller's address into his address book), but said later that he just played along, amazed by Fuller's willingness to work against Slayton's best interests. Of course Fuller recounted the initial days of setting up the tour in late 1904 differently: "Slayton would probably not have taken you on had you not had the game of talk from me," he wrote to London. "I was closeted with Wagner of that bureau for some time. Slayton [himself] was called in. They wanted to know especially if you could talk. I told them I had heard you and knew. Wagner was interested all the time but the old gentleman, Mr. Slayton, was leary. He was a friend of mine and took my word for something."[25] He did, and Charles Wagner wrote to London after the meeting, telling him that Fuller had lobbied on his behalf and that he, Wagner, was prepared to make an offer. London wrote back, wondering what Fuller's role in the negotiations was, and Wagner told him that "Mr. Fuller was not making you a

[25] H. H. Fuller, letter to Jack London, 30 Jan. 1908, JL 6386.

proposition for this Bureau, for he has no authority whatever to do that."[26] Once London sorted out the relationships—and regretted that he had ever been nice to Fuller—and signed a highly remunerative contract with Slayton, Fuller disappeared, and London never heard from him again—until the spring of 1906 when Fuller insisted London owed him money. Now a school superintendent, but still hard up for money, he begged for $200 from London. When that plea didn't work, he convinced a lawyer to demand money from London and threaten a lawsuit based on the supposed oral agreement they had made. London refused to bite. He was used to what fame brought.[27]

Besides generating the occasional dishonest entrepreneur, fame warped the public's perception of the author. For the Slayton Lyceum Bureau, London was simply entertainment; in today's vocabulary, in which production values outweigh content, he

---

[26] Slayton Lyceum Bureau, letter to London, 17 Nov. 1904, JL 18509. The Huntington Library catalogued all letters from the bureau in this way, but all but a few were written by Wagner, who was London's principal contact.

[27] See London, letter to E. N. Clink, 25 May 1906, *Letters,* 576-77. There was one other financial complication resulting from the tour. In 1910, Slayton Lyceum Bureau decided to sue London to recoup $212.50 lost when a mail train burned carrying a remittance in that amount in cash from London to the bureau. See London, letter to Slayton Lyceum Bureau, 4 Oct. 1910 and London, letter to Ferguson and Goodnow [his law firm], 15 Oct. 1910, *Letters,* 2:933-34, 2:935-36, as well as London, letter to Mather and Hutson [lawyers for the bureau], 4 Oct. 1910, JL 12750. According to a report in the *Chicago Tribune,* he lost. See "Jack London Must Pay $203; Mail Car and Money Burned," *Chicago Tribune,* 16 Mar. 1911, 3.

was merely the talent, the content provider. In 1905, the word most often used was not *entertainment* but rather *attraction.* In the bureau's flier entitled "Jack London: Author and Lecturer," used to promote his tour, the first line read, "The Slayton Lyceum Bureau takes great pleasure in presenting Jack London to the public as a platform attraction."[28] Wagner sought to convince London to do the tour because it would be good publicity—one can never be too famous, he told London twice in their correspondence—and publicity leads to higher royalties.[29] But for the bureau the key was entertainment value.

---

[28] Slayton Lyceum Bureau, "Jack London: Author and Lecturer," pamphlet, Jack London Scrapbooks, vol. 6, p. 126. The four-page pamphlet recounts his biography as he told it to Fannie K. Hamilton in 1903. There are also two paragraphs describing London's physical appearance, with an emphasis on his boyish charm, good looks, and "a square firm-set chin." No neurasthenic he. See also Slayton Lyceum Bureau, letter to London, 17 Nov. 1904, JL 18509: "We have two ways of dealing with attractions; one, we pay a stated sum and all expenses; the other way, we sell the man for all we can get and take 20% commission." London chose the former.

[29] "A tour such as we propose direct from the office here would bring you into the best literary centers and than can be nothing but helpful to your work; and, of course, no man is so well-known that he cannot stand a little more advertising" (Slayton Lyceum Bureau, letter to London, 17 Nov. 1904, JL 18509). Later, Wagner wrote, "the engagements will be both pleasant and profitable, and that they will be a great advantage to you as an advertisement, and, while you have been in the public eye very strong for the last two years, yet platform experience will help you even more" (Slayton Lyceum Bureau, letter to London, 17 Dec. 1904, JL 18511).

Not only was Wagner concerned about whether he could "talk," that is, be articulate and charming, but Wagner also needed talent that was attractive—enough to draw large audiences. In a profile of London as a public speaker, P. S. Williams defined what was possibly the clearest distinction between the pre- Civil War function of the lyceum circuit and the more modern form it had taken by 1905: "This is a day of advertising and the best lyceum attraction is first a man of famous achievement—secondly, he may be, but often is not, a lecturer." Writing in the *Overland Monthly* a year after the tour and after interviewing London about his experiences, Williams added, "The Slayton Lyceum Lecture Bureau of Chicago, ingeniously persuaded him that people who bought his books were entitled to see him. So London generally prefaced his talks with an explanation that he appeared before audiences rather for inspection as a wild animal than as an entertainer."[30] London repeated this observation about his role as a lecturer to a reporter in Iowa after a week of lecturing: "I can make more money at home, and be at home with my swimming and boxing and fencing, and be where I can write, for writing is my work," he said. But his audience has "been good about buying my books. Possibly there is a debt there," and so lecturing was a way of being loyal to his readers; for the same reason, throughout his career he answered every letter he received. But the larger issue was the presentation of the author: "As I understand it my stunt is to get up there and let people see me. My talk is . . . to give me something to do while I am there. It is like a wild animal in a menagerie, or the man who killed three women in a church tower."[31]

---

[30] P. S. Williams, "Jack London, Lecturer," *Overland Monthly* (Oct. 1906): 345.

[31] H. R. B., "London in Private: Heart to Heart Talk with Author and Lecturer," *Herald* (Oskaloosa, Iowa), 3 Nov. 1905. He had lectured in Oskaloosa on 1 November.

Without delving into London's psychological makeup too deeply, it is worthwhile to point out that London, perhaps subconsciously, is identifying himself with a predominant character in his fiction; from Wolf Larsen to Darrell Standing, he created the wild animal murderer animated by a red, primitive rage that was inherited from prehistoric humankind, a rage embodied by the atavistic Red-Eye in the next novel he would write, *Before Adam*. This is a popular kind of fictional character and thus should be a popular persona to adopt on stage. By acknowledging the audience's disinterest in what he actually said, he could take advantage of the separation between exhibition and content. It gave him license not only to dress as he felt but to speak freely. One night he could attack capitalism. The next night he could, as he did in Des Moines, give "a sort of psychological and moralizing ramble from the time he was 4 years old down to the time of the new yacht he is building."[32] It didn't really matter as long as a typical audience member could say, after the speech, ""`Ain't he like his picture? . . . And what a beautiful face!'"[33]

Being on display as "a wild animal" or murderer meant he could be controversial, and he stirred up the public both by getting divorced and remarried in a matter of days

---

[32] "Jack London Says He Hates Clothes: Novelist Appears before Women's Club in Negligee Shirt Last Night," *Des Moines Daily News,* 3 Dec. 1905.

[33] Quoted in "Socialism in a New Dress: A Lecture by Jack London Clothes Old Ideas in New Phases," *Kansas City Star-Times,* 23 Oct. 1905, 2. Even when a newspaper reporter recounted London's ideas he or she couldn't unconsciously refrain from referring to London's clothes.

and by professing radical views.[34] One might think that such behavior would negatively impact his draw. After all, how much of a draw would a divorced, hard-core revolutionary be at the YMCA or athenaeum club in a small town, the typical audience for a Slayton Lyceum Bureau attraction? Wasn't he too controversial? Even the small matter of being photographed while smoking was questionable. When the bureau was putting together a brochure to advertise the lecture series, they asked for a photograph of the author without a cigarette: "The negligee pictures [a negligee was an informal shirt, the kind London wears in the photo on the cover of this volume] are excellent, and we would use them if it were not for the cigarette, but we believe that would detract from their value with some of our very "Y.M.C.A.'ky" college people."[35] It is unclear whether

---

[34] Being divorced, in some circles, was controversial enough, but to get married the day after his divorce was final, in the face of apparent bureaucratic obstacles, was a deliberate incitement. There was a question as to whether he could get remarried in the State of Illinois a day after the divorce decree, and so he made headlines by insisting that he "would get married in every state of the union," a claim he made in too many sources to quote. See London, scrapbook, vol. 7.

[35] Slayton Lyceum Bureau, letter to London, 4 Jan. 1905, JL 18512. Yet even his choice of shirts was cause for alarm among certain audience members. "He wore on the platform the customary soft shirt, with collar attached, which has become standard in his attire, and was only amused when this informality shocked a gathering of society ladies whom he addressed in one city." P. S. Williams, "Jack London, Lecturer," *Overland Monthly* (Oct. 1906): 345. This was in Des Moines: "Jack London lectured before the Des Moines Women's Club at the Central Christian church [Central Church of Christ] last night and

Slayton and Wagner knew exactly what London would speak on—and thus how controversial he might be—when they first approached him. In his first letter to London, Wagner wrote, in order to convince London to hire them to manage the tour, "We have managed Thompson-Seton, Hamlin Garland, Lorado Taft, W. D. Howells and other men in the literary world."[36] These were not political men with complicated personal lives. Apparently, Wagner just assumed that London would read from his fictional work or talk about his adventures as a Klondiker and war correspondent. They made financial arrangements without discussing the actual content of the lectures. Later in 1905, when the bureau printed its advertising brochure, it included a list of talk titles that might be offered: "Experiences," which might include "Tramp, Klondiker, Correspondent"; "The Class Struggle"; and "Readings from *the Call of the Wild,* and Short Stories." "The Class Struggle" might be revolutionary in nature, but it would have been hard to say

---

the club was plainly in a quandary. It was divided within itself whether to take umbrage at a negligee shirt and careless attire or whether to accept London's breach of the conventions as a license of genius." ("Jack London Says He Hates Clothes: Novelist Appears before Women's Club in Negligee Shirt Last Night," *Des Moines Daily News,* 3 Dec. 1905.)

[36] Slayton Lyceum Bureau, letter to London, 8 Nov. 1904, JL 18508. Initially, London thought the tour would begin quickly in January 1905, but Slayton put that idea to rest as he outlined how involved the process was. See London, letter to Charmian Kittredge, [? 5 Dec. 1904], *Letters,* 1:455.

definitively from the title. Even though he had finished "Revolution" in February, it was not listed as a possible talk.[37]

But controversy could work in both the bureau and the attraction's favor, and surely when people came to see the "wild animal" they wanted to be titillated or even mildly frightened, and thus entertained. Like the readers of Poe and some of London's stories, they may not have known to what degree they were attracted to the terrible and the tragic. However, when controversy erupted, the bureau stood by its man. Nobody at the bureau could have predicted that London would marry Charmian Kittredge early in his tour. It was a "sensational marriage," according to P. S. Williams, and "Mr. London was not approved in some of the more Puritanical communities."[38] Even if he hadn't gotten married for his second time, both his fiction and his politics excited protest. After receiving a letter of protest from a preacher, the secretary of the home office (and no relation to the creature from the black lagoon), Fuller, told him that "if the reverend gentleman had read London's books he should have discovered that there was a brutal streak in the author's nature and been prepared for it."[39]

But it was his attacks on the wealthy that generated the most controversy. He knew it would happen. After all, as I discussed in the previous chapter, he had delivered "Revolution" in Stockton in order to draw an adamantine line between himself and the bourgeois in his own neighborhood. In Oberlin, Ohio, he gave a lecture on socialism that

---

[37] Slayton Lyceum Bureau, "Jack London: Author and Lecturer," pamphlet, Jack London Scrapbooks, vol. 6, p. 128.

[38] P. S. Williams, "Jack London, Lecturer," *Overland Monthly* (Oct. 1906): 345.

[39] P. S. Williams, "Jack London, Lecturer," *Overland Monthly* (Oct. 1906): 345.

went over well, but the same talk later in front of a "`select audience in New York . . . an organization of substantial and able men" caused a near riot in the meeting room of the club. Said London, "`Well, before I got through they were all up in arms, and the chairman was the fiercest of all. They hotly challenged my statements, and fired questions at me that were hair raisers. . . . Now, I could have attacked the morals of that company . . . or taken issue with them on another subject other than their money-bags, and they would have given me nothing but smiling attention and courtesy. When you hit a rich man's dollars, then you offend.'"[40] The event might have been the inspiration for Ernest Everhard's verbal attacks on the members of the Philomath Club in *The Iron Heel.* The point is not so much that the audience was appalled and vocally oppositional. It's that London deliberately provoked them, deliberately generated controversy and thus more fame.[41]

---

[40] P. S. Williams, "Jack London, Lecturer," *Overland Monthly* (Oct. 1906): 346.

[41] Two off-the-cuff comments created especial controversy. He quoted Judge Advocate Major Thomas McClelland saying "to hell with the Constitution" to people who objected to the army's attempt to suppress socialists in the labor war in Colorado. Some members of the press attributed the saying to London himself, thus branding him as a dangerous anti-American. London, however, *had* given the country reason to suspect his intentions and wonder how he conceived of the relation between violence and politics. He had also remarked that bomb-throwing radicals in Russia were his comrades.

The editors of *Letters from Jack London* claim that because of the marriage "some of JL's lectures were cancelled" (*Letters from Jack London,* 1:536 n. 8). There is no

But the larger, more theoretical point to make is about the dramatic nature of London's endeavor. By focusing on that word *attraction,* we can easily see how lecturing is similar to the cinema, another medium of attraction. London's appearance on stage at the podium is a precursor to his cinematic representation in the next decade. His lecture tour occurred during the transitional period between what Tom Gunning famously called the early period of cinematic representation or "the cinema of attractions" and the next period when narrative and fictional genres dominated. London's tour shares all the features of the cinema of attractions without the obvious intervention of film technology. His tour and the films made before 1906-1907 can be characterized in the same way: "Theatrical display dominates over narrative absorption, emphasizing the direct stimulation of shock or surprise at the expense of unfolding a story or creating a diegetic universe. . . . The cinema of attractions moves outward towards an acknowledged spectator rather than inward towards the character-based situations essential to classical narrative."[42] Note how Gunning uses Michael Fried's terms *absorption* and *theatricality.*

---

evidence of this actually happening. Earle Labor apparently had second thoughts and makes no mention of cancellations in *Jack London.*

[42] Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator, and the Avant-Garde," in *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative,* ed. Thomas Elsaesser and Adam Barket (BFI Publishing: London, 1990), p. 59. Gunning borrowed the key terms of *absorption* and *theatricality* from Michael Fried. He repeats the terms when he explains the source of his term *attraction.* Coming from Sergei Eisenstein, "An attraction aggressively subjected the spectator to `sensual or psychological impact.' According to Eisenstein, theatre should consist of a montage of such attractions, creating a relation to

London's speaking tour indeed was a temporary abandonment of the mode of absorption for the mode of theatricality.

Wagner called him a "one season novelty,"[43] and whether he could have reprised his tour or not is less important than that word *novelty,* a word closely associated with *attraction.* London's lecture tour was not meant to be an educational night for those who bought tickets; he was no Ralph Waldo Emerson or James Russell Lowell. Unlike the Chautauqua movement, the Slayton Lyceum Bureau wanted its stars to entertain its

---

the spectator entirely different from his absorption in 'illusory depictions'" (ibid). As Gunning wrote to me, "The reference to Fried was deliberate and was essential for me thinking through the issue" (Tom Gunning, email to author, 24 Dec. 2015).

Again, the technology of the lecture tour could not create a montage, but the effects of both the tour and the cinema were the same. It's worth forecasting how films of London's works—produced after 1910—followed the general trend of cinematic expression laid out by Gunning—less theatrical, more absorptive—as London turned his attention away from the theatrical presentation of his ideas. After 1910, he wrote only a few essays.

[43] P. S. Williams, "Jack London, Lecturer," *Overland Monthly* (Oct. 1906): Wagner said this apparently after the tour was over or nearly over, thus after the nasty business of having checks lost in a train fire. Also, although controversy was good for business, it must have been ulcer-inducing to manage a flame-thrower rhetorician like London.

audience, and London proceeded to both entertain and to shock.[44] His direct challenge to his audiences was not appropriate to the older form of the educational lecture, but it was indeed a cousin to the cinema of attractions.[45]

---

[44] The bureau did manage those who wanted to appear on the Chautauqua circuit, and Wagner offered to do so with London; but it never came about. See Slayton Lyceum Bureau, letter to London, 8 Nov. 1904, JL 18508.

[45] I do not want to imply that the cinema simply replicated the staging and effects of the lecture circuit. An important caveat is offered by Richard de Cordova; he is discussing the demise of vaudeville and the rise of nickelodeans, but I think his analysis applies here as well: "Moving pictures were a replacement for certain vaudeville acts only in a broad, structural sense. . . . They did not replace live acts by transferring them to the screen" (Richard deCordova, *Picture Personalities: The Emergence of the Star System in America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 24-25. This period between 1904 and 1908 in cinema history is rich, varied, and transitional. The rise of the star system, in which London participated (not only, in a limited way, as an actor, but also as a writer), began once the transition between the theatrical and the absorptive was under way. In a later chapter, I will discuss the rise of the nickelodeans and narrative film and how London's own film work rose with this general change. For excellent studies on London and film, see Marsha Orgeron, "Rethinking Authorship in Jack London's Hollywood," *Hollywood Ambitions: Celebrity in the Movie Age* (Middletown, Conn.:Wesleyan University Press, 2008), 63-98, and O. Clayton, "'Literature of Attractions': Jack London and Early Cinema," *Literature and Photography in Transition, 1850–1915* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 130-61.

As a significant attraction, London could earn the bureau's top rate. London grossed approximately $3270 on his tour (something like $87,000 in 2015), but another, perhaps more significant, exchange took place in the nonmaterial real.[46] We recall that, in 1899, as a beginning author, in exchange for publicity managed by the *Overland Monthly,* London took a low rate per story. Now, as a famous public figure, he could insist on the highest rate and still get maximum publicity. London earned advertising and visibility as a public figure as well as the position of the foremost scold of the plutocrats in exchange for the attraction of his personality and presence. He sold the latter for the former, and it could not help but affect not only his career and sense of being an American author but also his writing.

London's contract with Slayton, dated 23 January 1905, stipulates that he perform twenty-five times in the first five weeks (starting from sometime between 15 October and 5 November) for which he would receive $75 a night plus hotel and traveling (mostly train fare) expenses for himself and his "servant" (as the contract had it), Che Manyoungi, who worked as London's body man from 1904 to 1907. If he lectured more than twenty-five times, he would receive $100 per lecture. He himself would collect the money, subtract his fee and expenses, and mail the remainder to Slayton.[47] Further, "It is mutually agreed by both parties that this contract is of equal interest to both parties, and

---

[46] See "Slayton Lyceum Bureau: Jack London's Lecture Engagements," JL 1548.

[47] As he said, he acted as his own "manager or business agent. . . . I collected each night I lectured, the sum of money paid by the organization for the lecture. Once a week or oftener, after deducting expenses and my own fees, I remitted the balance" to the bureau (London, letter to Ferguson and Goodnow, 15 Oct. 1910, *Letters,* 2:935-36).

that said Slayton Lyceum Bureau as well as said Jack London, will do all in their power, to protect the public engagements so as to make them profitable to both sides, and the said Jack London further agrees not to lecture in any church, hall or opera house, outside of said Bureau's management in any town where said Bureau has booked him until a time long enough after the Bureau engagement so as not to conflict with the Bureau's dates."[48] This indeed was a contract beneficial to both sides, except it got better for London. At some point he apparently renegotiated his fee. According to Slayton's itinerary sent to London, his fees were determined in advance and varied from locale to locale: his first lecture, in Matoon, Illinois, netted him $125; on 5 November, in Toledo, he earned $200.00; in Grand Forks, he earned $150.00 on 3 February 1906, the final stop.[49]

By March 1905, Slayton was advertising London in its newly conceived *The Slayton Courier,* a monthly newssheet about their attractions. There on the front page,

---

[48] Slayton Lyceum Bureau, "[Agreement with Jack London to Manage Lecture Tours]," JL 21230.

[49] See "Slayton Lyceum Bureau: Jack London's Lecture Engagements," JL 1548. The editors of *Letters from Jack London* assert that he received $600 a week from Slayton plus expenses for two. They give no evidence for the claim. See *Letters from Jack London,* 1:533 n. 2. London's diary for 1905 lists these figures: "Sent money to Slayton Nov. 4th $53.55 Nov. 7 $175.00 Nov. 13th 225.00 Nov. 20th 215.10 Nov. 28th 366.50," for a total of $1035.15 (London, diary, 1905, JL 596). The same source details his daily expenses down to the tips he gave porters (usually a quarter). London tracked his expenses in the same way he tracked everything, including his manuscript submissions—meticulously.

without a cigarette, stares the sensitive-looking young author.[50] The puff piece is simply a reprint of part of a 1903 interview by Fannie K. Hamilton, and no mention is made of socialism, only his recent fame with *The Call of the Wild*.[51] Individual venues also touted the author as part of their lecture series for the 1905-1906 season; for example, the College Y.M.C.A. of Northwestern University advertised five lectures: one each by London, Edwin Emerson (war correspondent), Bishop Galloway (churchman), Leonora Jackson (violinist), and Isabel Garghill Beecher (a public reader); the People's Institute of Elyria, Ohio, advertised five speakers: Jerome K. Jerome (English humorist), Charles Battell Loomis (American humorist), London ("Novelist and Socialist, Friend of the

---

[50] I have mentioned that London's shirt, on whatever occasion, drew the exaggerated attention of reporters. In the *Boston Post,* readers learned that "the author's dress bespoke his democratic ideas. . . . His shirt was bosomless, silken and topped with a limp, almost invisible collar, from which hung a white necktie" ("Jack London Sees Social Revolution: Socialist Writer Predicts Wage-Earners Will Resort to Force," *Boston Post,* 20 Dec. 1905). Did women or men swoon at this description? Is there the same implication in an untitled, undated article (though, most likely, from the fall of 1905 because it appears in the London scrapbooks surrounded by articles from that time period) from a Los Angeles paper in which the reporter recounts meeting Cloudesley Johns, his mother, and his grandmother. "Cloudesley is a bosom friend of Jack London's whose peculiar negligee dressing he affects" (Jack London Scrapbooks, vol. 7). The repetition of *bosom* is quite curious indeed.

[51] See "Jack London: `One More That Counts,'" *The Slayton Courier* 1 (Mar. 1905): 1, and Fannie K. Hamilton, *The Reader* (Aug. 1903): 223, 279-83, JL scrapbooks, vol. 6.

`Under Dog'"), Jacob Riis ("champion of the poor"), and William J. London ("Historian of Nature").[52]

As Cecelia Tichi says in her reconstruction of London as a public intellectual, the tour was "far from enjoyable," though it did, of course, have its great moments. Charmian wrote in her diary that at times these were the happiest days of her life (she hadn't yet sailed on the *Snark*). After all, they got married in Chicago on 19 November, honeymooned for weeks in Maine and Jamaica (where they met and dined with Ella Wheeler Wilcox), and received accolades and attention all over the country. At the same time, though Charmian enthused on her wedding day that "Jack [is] adorable—my perfect bridegroom and lover, at last," she added, "night made hideous by reporters!"[53] Near the end, in January 1906, she wrote, "Sweet nights on trains! These are happy days of understanding and love. `In the land of love,' Mate says."[54] Being in the spotlight night after night added to the stress of a grueling schedule. Tichi captures the scene perfectly: "As the leaves turned and the temperature plunged, [London with Manyoungi and sometimes with Charmian] zigzagged through the [Midwest] week after week, changed trains at ungodly hours, and coped with broken sleep."[55] Beginning on 22 October in Kansas City,[56] London traveled to Mattoon, Illinois, Mt. Vernon, Iowa, Chicago, Lincoln,

---

[52] See brochures pasted into the Jack London Scrapbook, vol. 7, HEH.

[53] Charmian Kittredge London, diary, 19 Nov. 1905, JL 217, box 13.

[54] Charmian Kittredge London, diary, 31 Jan. 1906, JL 219, box 13.

[55] Tichi, *Jack London,* 66.

[56] Five hundred people attended, paying ten cents each. Either the report is wrong or Slayton took a financial bath on his first night. He gave "Revolution."

Illinois, back to Iowa, down to Missouri, over to Indiana, and back up to Evanston, Illinois, and Madison, Wisconsin. Then he turned east and lectured twelve times in Ohio, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York over the course of two weeks. Seven hundred people heard him speak in Toledo, and his audience in the Music Hall in Orange, New Jersey, where Mark Twain and George Cable once performed in tandem, was the largest ever for that venue.[57] He went back to Chicago to get married on 19 November (Charmian had been staying in Iowa), and, then, after appearing seven more times in the Midwest from 20 November to 2 December, he took the train to Boston and then Maine and lectured at Bowdoin College on 7 December.[58]

Here he ceased lecturing temporarily for Slayton, and the intensity of his socialist message increased. His itinerary for Slayton specified engagements in October and November of 1905, the one date in December, and February 1906. His contract stipulated that he "agrees not to accept engagements from any other Bureau or Management during

---

[57] Alden Freeman, possibly one of the organizers of the East Orange event, sent London some advice as well as some clippings. The advice, coming from Freeman's mother, was to take care of his health because "you looked somewhat worn with the fatigue of it all and spirits such as yours are all too rare in their sweet simplicity and utter lack of self-consciousness, so please spare yourself by talking to the crowd for only an hour at a time, and let us keep our Friend on the planet where he is so much needed for as long a time as possible" (Alden Freeman, letter to London, 13 Nov. 1905, JL 6299).

[58] At Bowdoin College, his title was "Experiences as Tramp, Klondiker and Correspondent, with Reading." He received $200. The next day, 8 December, he spoke informally in the library.

the life of this contract, and to protect our mutual interests as far as public engagements are concerned."[59] So while he suspended his work for Slayton (having given at least twenty-five lectures, he was allowed contractually to do this), he was free to lecture during December and January on behalf of the newly formed Intercollegiate Socialist Society (ISS) and other political organizations.[60] The intensification of his public support of socialist principles was partly a natural byproduct of the new locales; instead of delivering "Revolution" at the People's Institute of Elyria, Ohio, or at YMCAs, he spoke in front of thousands at Harvard and Yale Universities, the Grand Palace and Carnegie Hall in New York City, and the University of Chicago. He appeared at Harvard University on behalf of the ISS where 1500 people heard him speak for two hours, giving his speech "Revolution." His new friend George Galvin, with whom he had corresponded

---

[59] Slayton Lyceum Bureau, [Agreement with Jack London to Manage Lecture Tours], 23 Jan. 1905, JL 21230.

[60] At the very beginning of his negotiations with Slayton, he had stipulated that he needed time off in the middle of the tour in order to write. See Slayton Lyceum Bureau, letter to London, 17 Nov. 1904, JL 18509. As I discuss at greater length in the next chapter, he planned to write a series of stories entitled *Created He Them,* but he quickly found (by the beginning of December) that he could not sustain his writing schedule. He wrote only two pieces in this time period, including a newspaper account of a visit to a physical culture event. See London, "Jack London Sees Physical Culture Boom in Holy Jumper Stunts," *Hearst's Boston American,* 19 Dec. 1905, p. 3; rpt. *Jack London Journal*, no. 5 (1998): 67-71, which I shall discuss later. He also wrote "What Life Means to Me" while on tour, but not during this stipulated window of opportunity.

and now met for the first time, organized three other lectures: at Tremont Hall (where he also gave "Revolution"), Unity Hall, and Faneuil Hall.[61] The London party then left the

[61] George Galvin, a doctor at and general manager of the Emergency and General Hospital in Boston, wrote to London in December 1906, asking if he would like to speak at several locations around the city, the proceeds going to London and the International Collegiate Socialists, and, "if any thing is left over our local to receive something" (George W. Galvin, letter to London, JL 6421). Galvin had written to London in June on a different matter, asking him for his opinion of his latest article in *Arena,* "Our Legal Machinery and Its Victims." See Galvin, letter to London, 7 June 1905, JL 6420. Galvin was an ardent supporter of London's; he once claimed that "his name was on my lips every day of my life. Yes, every hour of my life, for patients always received more socialism and industrial unionism from me than medicine, and I quoted Jack" (Galvin, letter to Charmian London, 25 Nov. 1916, JL 6418). He of course wrote this letter to console Charmian after Jack's death, but if he exaggerates he is excused. When London was in prison in 1894, he was "forcibly vaccinated by a young medical student, who wanted experience." Ten years later, London "read the article `Our Legal Machinery and Its Victims,' in the November, 1904, *Arena,* by Dr. Galvin. This so appealed to him after his humiliating experience in prison that he wrote the author. A regular correspondence followed, photographs were exchanged and they became best of friends" ("Jack London to Visit Dr. Galvin, Friend He Never Met," *Boston Journal,* 15 Dec. 1905). Galvin informed London that he was on excellent terms with all the newspapermen in Boston and that he would get a favorable reception. He also told London to supply "a skeleton" of his speech to the press because "that is the only way we get anything" (Geo Galvin,

US for a honeymoon in Jamaica on 27 December, but the lecture tour wasn't over. In fact, on 19 January 1906 around 4,000 people heard him speak at New York City's Grand Central Palace (sponsored by the ISS), and large crowds heard him at Carnegie Hall (a benefit for the *Socialist Call*), the Educational Alliance (for the Socialist Literary Society), and at Yale University (ISS).[62] The talk at Carnegie Hall was so successful that

---

letter to JL, undated, HEH). Galvin was a good friend of Upton Sinclair's as well and familiar with an editor at *Black Cat,* William Lincoln Balch. Balch claimed that it was he who accepted "A Thousand Deaths" for publication after changing the title and editing the story. See William Lincoln Balch, letter to Jack London, 27 Dec. 1906, JL 2098.

The letter was occasioned by London's unannounced visit to the editorial office of *Black Cat,* where London talked to Balch's wife. Balch's narrative of that moment of acceptance confirms London's account in "Getting into Print" (which I analyzed at great length in volume 1 without knowledge of this letter); the magazine asked permission to cut the story in half, which London agreed to, though London doesn't mention the change in title. He also does not mention that Balch doubted London's identity: "I took [Jack London] for a pseudonym. I supposed you to be some young Englishman—a younger son in hard luck in this country—and had been nicknamed "London Jack." Here yet again is another editor who was convinced that Jack London did not exist and more proof that London was interested not so much in making a name for himself but in establishing his name as his own.

[62] Sinclair had trouble raising money for the cost of the hall because of the content of London's speech. He wrote to Morris Hillquit, "One of those who contributed to the fund to pay for the hall for the Jack London meeting is disposed kick, feeling that they

an audience member wrote the following day that "it made me rejoice to hear your good words and to see a man among American artists who alone dares to proclaim a high unselfish purpose. You are showing that here, as abroad, literature is not necessarily a name for impotence."[63] Finally, he headed back west and gave his last talks at the University of Chicago (originally scheduled to be held in Kent Hall, the event was moved to Mandel Hall because of the size of the crowd), the West Side Auditorium (a benefit for the Socialist Party), and the County Normal Training School. He received no payment for his talks in Boston, New York, New Haven, and Chicago.

Now leaving the urban centers of socialism, he resumed his itinerary for Slayton, if only for two occasions. After speaking in St. Paul, Minnesota, he gave his final talk at the University of North Dakota, Grand Forks on 3 February. Slayton got him to the Rockies, and then London paid for his own way home. (There would not have been many

---

contributed under a misunderstanding, and that the meeting was badly managed, etc. I don't remember just what I wrote at the time because so many things have happened since. I wish to say, however, that I am perfectly willing to bear the loss myself, and do not want anybody to feel under the least obligation to contribute, who does not feel that the meeting was a success and justified the cost. I know my share did" (Upton Sinclair, letter to Morris Hillquit, 30 Jan. 1905, folder T-5, box 1, correspondence, Morris Hillquit Papers, Wisconsin State Historical Society). It's unclear why Sinclair wrote to Hillquit, except perhaps to subtly ask him for a contribution. Hillquit, a New York City lawyer, often donated money to needy socialists.

[63] John R. McMahon, letter to London, 26 Jan. 1906, JL 14424. McMahon wrote a novel entitled *Toilers and Idlers* that London promoted successfully to Gaylord Wilshire, who published it in 1907, even though he had initially rejected it. London's enthusiasm for the work won him over. See McMahon, letter to London, 16 Mar. 1906, JL 14425.

venues to choose from between Grand Forks and Oakland, the same problem faced by modern-day rock bands on tour.) Slayton had tried to set up two lectures in southern California, but he couldn't get the two venues to coordinate the dates.[64] London, thus, had given forty-four talks in fourteen weeks, averaging one every other day for over three months. He had put his socialism on stage, a one-man show featuring the best in accusatory, inflammatory, anticapitalistic rhetoric. He took a month break and then, at Oakland's Dietz Opera House, in March, he delivered a new speech, "The Rising Tide of Revolution." Following his earlier practice, he converted part of it into the essay "Something Rotten in Idaho," about the wrongful imprisonment of Charles Moyer, Big Bill Haywood, and George Pettibone.[65]

---

[64] See Slayton, letter to London, 20 Jan. 1906, JL 18536. Any number of biographies cite illness as a reason London ended his tour when he did; see for example Labor, *Jack London,* 231, where he quotes a letter from London to Johns in which he says that he was sick. But Charmian London's diary paints a very different picture; she makes no mention of illness—and whenever he or she was sick she discussed it— and instead writes about how much fun they had on the train from North Dakota to Oakland, playing cards, reading Turgenev, and socializing with the others on board. It was just simpler to tell Johns that he was sick than it was to explain the various logistical problems of setting up the southern California lectures. See Charmian London, diary, 1906, JL 217.

[65] See "Author London Talks about Revolution: Tells of His Recent Trip in the East and How He Dined with the Rich," *Oakland Tribune,* 19 Mar. 1906, JL scrapbooks, vol. 7, p. 123.

A digression is called for here: The m.c. for that evening in Oakland was William McDevitt, who later would write a somewhat accurate first-hand account of his experience working with London. He says, in general,

> Jack was averse to any more `money-for-himself' lectures, and so he very gladly offered as a *part* of his contribution to the cause of socialism in California his readings or lectures—readings from his books and lectures on such subjects as were uppermost in interest in radical circles at the moment. Jack's arrangements were made thru the medium of the Oakland SOCIALIST WORLD, which I was editing at that time and also acting as Party organizer. Thus I became Jack's impresario, and I had the management and publicity work for all his platform appearances in Oakland or San Francisco in 1905-1909, that is from the time of his return to California from his speaking tour under Major Pond" until the *Snark.*[66]

I have been unable to verify his claim about managing his lectures before he left for his tour—it is possible, though no correspondence attests to the fact, nor have I seen confirmation in news clippings—but his substitution of Major Pond (whoever that may have been) for Slayton is wrong, and since London lectured only a dozen times in 1906-7 (and at least one of those was at the Ruskin Club, and others could have been arranged by London himself, given that they were lectures in front of other private clubs) and only twice in 1909, McDevitt is exaggerating his own importance. In fact, London's speech at

---

[66] William McDevitt, *Jack London as Poet and as Platform Man* (Recorder-Sunset Press: San Francisco, 1947), p. 17.

the Dietz Opera House in Oakland was sponsored by the Oakland Socialist Party, not the *Socialist World.*[67]

No matter. McDevitt was a committed, active socialist and was one of those arrested in the infamous April riot at Lotta's Fountain after the Moyer-Hayward protest meeting at Woodward's Pavilion.[68] He is entirely on point about London's lack of profit motive in giving his speeches, which is especially significant because in 1906-7 he was hard up for cash to pay for the *Snark.* Was his commitment to the cause that great or did he fear the negative publicity that would accompany any account of a speech for money? I believe a third explanation is called for: he simply thought it was ethically wrong to speak for money. It robbed him of his sincere standing as an exponent of something he believed in deeply. His ethic joins Left politics and bohemian economics. In any case, once he returned from the East, the earthquake of April 1906 put an end to his local lecturing until December.

The tour was both arduous and financially beneficial, but there was a third consequence. It gave London the opportunity to become a part of the national socialist movement by meeting both the nameless members and the well-known leaders of a number of factions, as well as prominent opponents to the newly burgeoning leftist movement. Considering how London was educated in socialist ideology—informally and by Westerners like himself—we shouldn't forget how much of an outsider London was to

---

[67] It was published in *Socialist Voice,* which ran the text of the entire speech in four installments, from 24 March to 14 April. All but the last is in volume 7 of the scrapbooks.

[68] See "Display of the Red Flag Starts Riot on Market Street," *San Francisco Call,* 9 Apr. 1906, 2.

the national Socialist Party. Men like Morris Hillquit, Victor Berger, A. M. Simons, and John Spargo, members of the National Executive Committee (NEC), ran the political apparatus, hoping to keep both the union leadership—especially those of the IWW—and the bourgeoisie out of their campaigns. To them, London, because of his proletariat credentials, his life in the West (which kept him from attending, for example, X Club meetings or the two Noroton conferences where he might solidify friendships with the Eastern SP establishment),[69] his rise to national prominence apart from the efforts of the SP leadership, and his longstanding involvement in both the movement and the party made him a special case, someone who needed to be handled. The best way to handle him, apparently, was to ignore his tour yet ask him for material for socialist publications. After hearing him speak in Chicago, Simons wrote,

---

[69] For an account of the first Noroton Conference, organized by Robert Hunter, see Hillquit, *Loose Leaves from a Busy Life,* 56-59. For the X Club, see ibid., 68-70. For the second Noroton Conference, see Jack Ross, *The Socialist Party of America: A Complete History* (Lincoln, Nebr.: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 84-87. W. J. Ghent recalled that having been involved in making the guest list, he "was at the house [of Stokes, Hunter's father-in-law] two or three days and nights as a kind of adviser." Ghent says as well that London probably read Berger's speech, which he gave at the conference and which appeared in print, and that "Berger . . . must have been fairly well known to him; Hillquit was assuredly so, and I should guess that there were few prominent Socialists that he did not meet at one time or another" (Ghent, letter to Joan London Miller, 27 Aug. 1937, MI 473). True, but Ghent's letter confirms that London was for the most part an outsider among the Eastern and Midwestern socialists.

> The Socialists of Chicago are all enthusiastic over the results of your work here and any time you want to come back they will get the Auditorium for you. I think that we would have no trouble in packing it from top to bottom. I don't suppose you have any left over manuscript that you could deign to bestow on the International Socialist Review. A few years ago it was still possible for us to get the best manuscripts because the magazines would not take them, but nowadays since Socialism has become popular we find ourselves in the presence of some powerful competitors. However I am still hoping that you will work up a reputation that will make it too dangerous for capitalists to use quite all your stuff so that we may get a little something.

The right kind of controversy was good, especially in the highly competitive field of socialist publishing, an irony that must have struck London forcefully, he being the author of "What Communities Lose by the Competitive System."[70] Some months later, London sent him his article on the Moyer-Haywood trial, though only after Arthur Brisbane at Hearst's *San Francisco Examiner* had silently refused it.[71] Earlier, in 1902, we may remember, John Spargo, another centrist and NEC member, asked London for a contribution for the series "How I Became a Socialist," a request with which London

---

[70] Algie Martin Simons, letter to Jack London, 8 Feb. 1906, JL 18235.

[71] See London, "Magazine Sales: No. 3, Feb. 1903 to July 1907," JL 934: "Presented, via A. M. Simons, to daily newspaper run by Chicago socialists in fall campaign of 1906. Published in `Chicago Daily Socialist,' November 4, 1906." We will hear more of Brisbane, son of Albert Brisbane, a Fourierist who was one of the founders of Brook Farm, in a later chapter.

complied. They wanted the man's writings, not the man himself, so London's departure in 1907 on his worldwide voyage must have come as a relief.

From London's point of view, nothing was to be gained from alienating men like Simons, Spargo, and Hillquit. When his friend Walling wrote to him in 1909 that Simons was trying to steer the SP toward an accommodation with the American Federation of Labor (AFL), he was vehement in his support of Walling's position: "If the socialist movement in the United States goes in for opportunism then it's Hurray for the Oligarchy and the Iron Heel."[72] But publicly he stayed above the political machinations of the NEC as well as the squabbling in party meetings. Joan London wrote, dismissively, that "it was all politics to him and he was not interested, and he was too busy, anyway. That politics and the socialist movement could not be disassociated seems never to have occurred to him."[73] But London's friend Ernest Untermann, who tried to convince Joan, when she wrote to him requesting his take on London's politics for her biography, that her assessment was erroneous, concluded, "he saw the socialist leaders who received the most publicity and backing from the membership were mediocre politicians with little or

---

[72] London, letter to William English Walling, 30 Nov. 1909, *Letters,* 2:844.

[73] Joan London, *Jack London and His Times,* 189. This is a major thesis in her biography, for it leads her to conclude, "Almost to the end of his life he kept his socialist dream untarnished by closing his eyes to every manifestation which he did not like. When at last he opened them he was bewildered by what he saw and wept at the difference between the dream and reality" (189). Joan mistakes willful ignorance for artistic temperament, a need to stay away from the time-consuming minutia of party politics in order to focus on his authorial career.

no respect for the scientific foundation of socialism."[74] Like William English Walling, London was more interested in "the movement and not . . . the party. The two are not identical."[75]

Walling described the problem of the SP leadership in dealing with the bourgeoisie exactly. In a letter to his father in 1910 to explain his formal membership in the SP, wrote, "You may have heard that I have joined the Socialist party. I did not do this in order to mark my adhesion to any particular doctrines, but only out of loyalty to certain friends, among them Stokes and Debs, and a desire to take up the challenge of some of the petty bosses of the party that they would not allow me to enter it, because I had exposed their corruption in public." The "corruption" he alludes to was Simons's plan, originally offered to Walling in secret and then betrayed by Walling by his making the letter public, to unify the SP with the AFL.[76] "Not being in New York and not

---

[74] Ernest Untermann, letter to Joan London, 11 Jan. 1938, frame 27, microfilm, Ernest Untermann Papers, Wisconsin State Historical Society. Joan had written to Untermann in the middle of writing her biography, so she had the opportunity to include his assessment. But she did not, partly, at least, because it conflicted with Austin Lewis's assessment and her own. Lewis knew London well early in his career, Untermann in his mid to late career.

[75] Quoted in Boyland, *Revolutionary Lives,* 169. The quotation is from a letter to Walling, probably written by his friend Stokes, who was advising him to stay out of party politics.

[76] See Boyland, *Revolutionary Lives,* 168. This "betrayal" generated considerable controversy within SP circles, and it cost Simons his seat on the NEC in the next election.

following these matters as closely as I do," Walling continued his lecture to his father, "you do not perhaps realize that Socialism had become a parlor fashion. Innumerable ministers, professors and others are declaring for it, so that a public endorsement of the idea really means absolutely nothing. All these people have views radically and fundamentally different from one another's. I should say that the organization already contains, along with some radicals and revolutionaries, some of the most conservative and reactionary people I have ever met—who have entered it for private or business purposes and to take advantage of the popularity of the idea."[77] Walling, an outsider like London, though for different reasons, captured one of the principal reasons London resigned from the SP six years later.

"The spectacle of an avowed socialist, one of the most conspicuous in the country, standing upon the platform of Woolsey Hall and boldly advocating his doctrines of Revolution was a sight for Gods and men." So ran the overheated rhetoric of Alexander Irvine, the chairman of the Connecticut Socialist Party. In attendance, besides "the majority in the hall" who "were from the city, and included many Germans, Russians, Italians and Jews"—that is, members of the largest immigrant groups at that time, newcomers to US citizenship—were "several hundred men from the University," including Arthur Twining Haley, the first lay president of Yale and antisocialist, and Professor William Graham Sumner, a well-known social Darwinist. Irvine, who had set

---

Further, Spargo and Robert Hunter both accused Walling of being mentally unbalanced, the former to Stokes, the latter to Simons. See Boyland, *Revolutionary Lives,* 168.

[77] William English Walling, letter to Willoughby Walling, 19 Jan. 1910, William English Walling Papers, Wisconsin State Historical Society, correspondence, box 1, folder 17.

up the Yale talk, was enraptured by London, even if the latter men were not.[78] Upton Sinclair, Mother Jones, J. G. Phelps Stokes, Oscar Lovell Triggs, Jane Addams, Jessica Binford, Percy Sercombe, A. M. Simons, Robert Hunter, and other prominent figures met London for the first time during the tour, and his message and charisma worked to cement relationships that continued for the rest of his life.

Just one example: Surely one of the great moments of the tour, equal to the chaotic, clamourous, and well-known reception he received at Yale University, occurred in New York City. After delivering "Revolution" at Grand Central Palace, Mother Jones dramatically walked from the back of the hall to the stage and emphatically embraced London before the multitudes.[79] They had corresponded in late 1905 about writing a review of *The Long Day,* which I will discuss later in this chapter. Earlier in Boston, at Faneuil Hall, she had given an introductory talk, and London's speech had supported and reinforced Jones's work on poverty and child labor. He was quoted in the paper as saying, "`Mother Jones has told me that she has worked alongside children 6 and 7 years old, that when the whistle blew for breakfast they drank black coffee and ate bread

---

[78] For a brilliant account of the Yale speech, as well as brief biographies of these two men and other conservatives who feared the masses and their embrace of socialism, see Tichi, *Jack London,* 1-3, 44-47.

[79] See Mother Jones, letter to London, 17 May 1906, JL 15622. Charmian had sent this letter to Anna Strunsky with a handwritten note: "Jack and I had returned from West Indies (honeymoon) full of dangue fever. He pulled himself together for the big greeting in N. Y. night of our arrival. I had to stay in bed at hotel. Mother Jones walked the length of the great hall, and embraced Jack. Isn't this letter lovely?"

dipped in bacon grease; she has seen their hands torn off by machinery, she has seen them killed, but the capitalists would rather listen to their agents, who report `all's well,' than hear of the story of suffering from Mother Jones.'"[80] In a later letter, she told him that as she toured the South, "I wish I was near you to get you to give the frightful tragedy of child life in the slave pens of Capitalism a good write up."[81] Not surprisingly, London wrote his most famous short story about child labor, "The Apostate," two months after he returned home, and *The Iron Heel* takes up the cause as well.

"Revolution"

He gave several talks on the road, the most significant being "Revolution." I've discussed this essay in the previous chapter, but not its evolution as a text and, more importantly, its relation to texts he wrote before and after it. "Revolution" most likely started out as a speech; in fact, in its first incarnation he tested out material that he then rejected after several public airings. On 20 January 1905, a week after he had given "The Class Struggle" in Normal Hall and nearly two months before he completed the essay, he delivered the speech for the first time at the University of California, and it was printed (apparently) in its entirety in *People's Paper,* a Santa Barbara socialist newspaper.[82] In

---

[80] "Tells of Child Labor: Jack London Speaks to Great Audience at Faneuil Hall," *Traveller (Boston),* 27 Dec. 1905.

[81] Mother Jones, letter to London, 17 May 1906, JL 15622.

[82] See London, "Jack London to University Students: The Socialist Revolution Is Here; There Has Been Nothing Like It in the World Before," *People's Paper* (Santa Barbara, Calif.)*,* 18 Feb. 1905, 1. Thanks to Dan Wichlan for calling my attention to this

publication. The first appearance of the transcript was probably "Jack London's Speech on the Social Revolution at the University of California," *The Socialist Voice* (Oakland), n.d., n.p., JL scrapbooks, vol. 6, pp. 18, 21; I think it's earlier than the *People's Paper* version because the newspaper clipping in London's scrapbook is surrounded by clippings dated in late January.

A very interesting item appeared in *The Socialist* (Toledo, Ohio), 18 Mar. 1905, p. 1, JL scrapbook, vol. 6, p. 55. Entitled "Jack London in Oakland, Sunday," it is prefaced by the following editorial note: "Special Dispatch to "The Socialist." Oakland, Calif., March 12.—Jack London, the famous novelist and Socialist candidate for mayor of this city, spoke in Dewey Theatre tonight to a packed house, everybody paying for his ticket. The proceeds go to pay expenses of the Socialist campaign. The subject of his address was `Revolution.' The substance was read as a lecture at Stockton a week ago and to say Stockton was astonished is to put it mildly. London's vote is problematical, but he has certainly waked up the old fogies in the city. He does not hesitate to say that the present day is witnessing the rapid development of the greatest revolution of all history. The following is a synopsis prepared for The Socialist by London himself and signed by him." Here then, published for the first time in over a 110 years, is London's "synopsis" of his completed essay "Revolution":

Oakland, Cal., Mar. 12 '05-The Revolution is a Revolution of the Working Class.

How can the Capitalist Class stem this tide of Revolution? Employers' associations, injunctions, civil suits for plundering the treasuries of labor unions, clamor and combination for the open shop, bitter and shameless opposition to eight-hour day, strong efforts to defeat all reform-child labor bills, graft in every municipal council,

strong lobbies and bribery in every legislature for purchase of capitalist legislation, bayonets, machine guns, policemen's clubs, professional strike breakers and armed Pinkertons. These are the things the Capitalist Class are dumping in front of the tide of Revolution, as though, forsooth, to hold it back.

The Capitalist Class is blind today to the menace of The Revolution. It cannot see how precarious is its position, cannot comprehend the power and the portent of The Revolution.

No overthrown ruling class in the past ever considered the revolution that overthrew it, and so with the Capitalist Class today. Instead of compromising, instead of lengthening the lease of life by conciliation and by removal of the harsher oppressions of the Working Class, it antagonizes the Working Class; drives the Working Class into revolution.

Every broken strike in recent years, every legally plundered trade union treasury, every closed shop made into an open shop, has driven the members of the Working Class who are directly hurt, over to Socialism by hundreds and thousands. Break a strike with an injunction or bankrupt a union with a civil suit, and working men, hurt thereby, listen to the siren song of the Socialist and are lost forever to the political Capitalist parties.

The Capitalist Class has failed in its management of society and its management is to be taken away from it. Seven million men of the Working Class of the world say that they are going to get the rest of the Working Class to join with them and take the management away. The Revolution is here. Stop it who can.

JACK LONDON.

this version of the speech, the beginning is nearly the same as the printed essay—"Yesterday morning I received a letter from a man in Arizona"—but there is no other overlap. He mentions George Sterling's reasons for joining the Socialist Party, speaking at the Ruskin Club on "Why Am I a Socialist" ("He said, `Socialism is the only clean, noble and lve thing in the world today worth fighting for.'"). He quotes "a statement from the celebrated English scholar Frederick W. Harrison," confirming London's major premise that "modern society [is] hardly an advance on slavery or serfdom." This work and his deployment of it repeats his methodology from *The People of the Abyss,* a point worth repeating from chapter 15; though he didn't use Harrison's work in *People,* it could have easily made its way there. Either London had read it for *People* and could not find a place for it, or he continued his research into the causes of English poverty after he returned. Either way, he fits it into "Revolution" right after he directly cites his experience in the East End: "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. One night, when going to bed, I stripped. My chum looked in wonder at my brawny body glowing with health, and then at his own scrawny body, white and lifeless. He said, holding out his arms and legs: `They are so because I hadn't enough to eat when I was a boy.'" London then turns to a quotation from Robert Hunter's new book *Poverty,* a sociological analysis of American poverty; this quotation and statistics about poverty in New York that he incorporated in the final draft of "Revolution" are his only published result of his desire to write an American *People of the Abyss.*

But a further link, and even more telling, exists among *The People of the Abyss* this first draft of "Revolution," and the next novel that London wrote, *Before Adam,* a

connection I alluded to in chapter 15. London closed *People* with a seemingly fanciful comparison between the Innuit and the East Enders: "In Alaska, on the banks of the Yukon River, near its mouth, live the Innuit folk. " Their primary characteristic for London is their near isolation from modern society, as if they lived in a prehistoric time: "They are a very primitive people, manifesting but mere glimmering adumbrations of that tremendous artifice, Civilization." The extant of their technological progress is bow, arrow, fire, half-underground shelter. In the first draft of "Revolution," he makes the analogy between the Innuit and prehistoric man explicit; he writes, "About three years ago I went into the Klondike. I saw there a body of Indians called the Innuits. There is an immense difference in time between them and us. They are still in the Bone Age." (Since this is a transcription of a speech, it's possible that London said "Stone Age," not "Bone Age"; the latter, however inaccurate, is still charmingly poetic, and I will continue to use it if only half in fun.) Using his first-hand experience in the Klondike in "Revolution" shows how wedded he still was to using his time in the East End to buttress his arguments for revolutionary change.

He next gave it as a speech in front of the Unitarian Club in San Jose on 25 January and the Ruskin Club in Oakland on 27 January. The news report for the former indicates it was very similar to the University of California speech.[83] London was still

---

[83] See "Two Distinguished Men Address Unitarian Club: Professor Dixon, Lately of Japan, Tells of that Nation's Rise [and] Jack London, California Author, Talks on `The Revolution,'" *San Jose Mercury,* 26 Jan. 1905, JL scrapbooks, vol. 6, p. 19. As far as I know, there is no transcription or newspaper account of the Ruskin speech, which is not surprising given that press were probably not in attendance.

referring to the Innuit, and he continued to quote from Hunter. But at some point in the month between his address to the University of California students and the completion of the essay he replaced the Innuit with "the cave man" as his example of how the so-called sophistication of capitalism has caused a previously unknown poverty to the human race. The first trace of this change that I've found is in the version he gave in Stockton, at the Critics Club on 26 February. Again the first paragraph is approximately the same as the text in *Revolution* and in *People's Paper,* but departs from the latter and overlaps to a significant degree the former, meaning he was delivering what he came to regard as the final draft.[84] In fact, on the day he was to give the speech, he wrote to Charmian that he was bringing the handwritten text to her for typing. Yet he must have felt, after the typing or perhaps after the rough reception that he had received in Stockton, that it still needed some work because he waited till 13 March to mail it.[85] The night before he had delivered it at the Dewey Theatre in Oakland as a kind of campaign speech for his unsuccessful run

---

[84] There is a fairly detailed account of this event in "Jack London's Sophism," *Stockton Daily Independent,* 28 Feb. 1905, JL scrapbook, vol. 6, p. 52.

[85] The reception—a verbally violent reaction by Stockton's upper class and bourgeoisie—is well documented in Zamen, *Standing Room Only: Jack London' Controversial Career as Public Speaker* (Peter Lang: New York, 1990), 104-5. Zamen unfortunately did not realize or thought it was important that London gave radically different versions of the speech.

for mayor of Oakland.[86] The point—besides the important one that this text of one his most famous essays and speeches went through a number of drafts and significant changes—is that London, by changing his example of the Innuit to that of the caveman, was probing even further back into human history for justification for revolutionary change. The example of the cave man, so much more abstract than the Innuit, becomes an example of how primitive capitalism can be. The Innuit stopped working as an example, I imagine, because they adapted to modern Western society and its economic system and thus lost some of their credentials as primitives. But the cavemen, who managed to live comfortably without the profit motive, are a perfect example not only of a human community that lived in cooperative fashion but also as a shaming device for London's contemporary plutocrats. Even cave men are better off than those exploited by the capitalists. London jettisoned his autobiographical narrative that partially structured his first draft of "Revolution" in favor of a more abstract set of data and examples that could appeal to a wider audience, not just those interested in the comings and goings of an individual American author. The fact that a few audience members objected to the example because cavemen, they felt, must have gone through periods of want or even starvation (missing London's point that cavemen were never habitually deprived of food

[86] The transcription of this speech is the first that I have found for the period after the Stockton speech; see "Lecture by Jack London: Delivered at the Dewey Theatre, Oakland, Cal., March 12, 1905," *Socialist Voice* (Oakland), 18 Mar. 1905, p. 1.

because of resource mismanagement) may have prompted London to do further study in the Bone Age and write a fictional narrative about denizens of that time.[87]

Several newspaper transcriptions of the speech before and during his lecture tour show that the text of "Revolution" continued to change.[88] Each version differs from the others, principally by showing how London extemporized, giving emphasis on one point one day, another point on another day, deleting passages and adding new material, making "Revolution" a fluid text, adaptable to changing audiences and circumstances. Though London regarded the printed text of the essay in the Macmillan collection

---

[87] See "Jack London on the Cave Men," *Waterbury American* (Conn.), 28 Dec. 1905, JL scrapbooks, vol. 7, p. 45. The article reported that Harvard University professor T. M. Carver pointed out that since cavemen never lived nearly as long as modern-day men, they were in fact worse off. Modernity prolongs the lives of the destitute. So the question for Carver was how to "further ameliorate [the] conditions" of the poor. "It is because some of us believe that Socialism would not ameliorate, but deepen [them], that we do not adopt [London's] program."

[88] They appeared in the *Boston Herald*, the *Boston American* (page A12 in scrapbook vol. 7), a pamphlet-sized reprinting of the *Herald* report (several pages in the same scrapbook later, titled "Choice Preprint," selected by Marie Julia Burkhardt with an endnote that says, "from the Boston Herald, important omissions added"), and in a pamphlet by Alexander Irvine, state secretary of the Socialist Party of Connecticut entitled *Jack London at Yale* (HEH, JL 20722), taken from the *Yale Alumni Weekly,* 31 Jan. 1906.

"Revolution" and Other Essays as his final word on the matter, all these texts should be considered together as a single work.[89]

Shortly after he had mailed off the essay, one report of the speech given in April 1905 says that "the speaker gradually forsook his topic for a long time in order to quote various statistics and facts regarding the condition of labor and capital in this country to-day. He referred to the reports of the United States Government on these issues, and cited many incidents showing how child labor is being used by capitalists for their own gain, even though thousands of lives are sacrificed."[90] Neither the *Socialist Voice* nor *The People's Paper*'s versions contain references to US labor statistics, but the finished essay does. It seems he had a basic text for his speech but that he could dip into the completed essay manuscript and pull out material as he saw fit.

On tour, he constantly added material to incorporate either feedback he had received or news items he had just read. According to one account, he spoke extemporaneously before he delivered "Revolution." First he mentioned that as a poor kid "he had looked up to the society that was above his head, as to a class in which all men were well fed, well clothed and spoke a beautiful language," his point being that it was an illusion. This point led somehow to his comment about university students, that

---

[89] Two typescripts of the essay, both carbon copies of the original, that is, the text sent to Macmillan (which is lost), survive at Utah State University. See London, "Revolution," box 22, folder 31, Utah State University.;

[90] See "Revolution Is Theme of Novelist London: Socialists Hear Author Tell of the Oppression of Labor by Capital," *San Francisco Call,* 17 Apr. 1905, JL Scrapbook, vol. 6.

they were "clean and noble, but not alive. But life is alive, and we who are live creatures and alive should deal with it with passion." German and Russian students had passion, but not American students, and obviously he equated passion with a belief in socialism. "Another side step from the lecture," wrote the Boston reporter, "came when Mr. London explained how by the `siren song of Socialism' many laborers were being constantly won over to Socialism." As an example, he gave this story of Eugene Debs's conversion from labor rights activist to socialist leader: "We [meaning socialists] send men, whenever there is a strike, to organize the strike, talk to their meetings, but along with that we sing the song. When the strike fails they come over. An example of this is Debs. He organized the great Chicago strike. He looked the field all over, planned his campaign as he would a battle. He was right. If they had done as he expected he would have won, but they got an injunction against him, and he went to jail without trial. We sent a man to the jail and he did some thinking and came over." Another "side step" cited by the reporter is something London had included in the essay version of the speech: the case of Mary Mead who had strangled her children so that they would not starve.[91] Two recent events steered his attention away from the topic of revolution, the first applying more to the general topic of socialism: his meeting with Boston businessman Thomas Lawson; while Lawson affirmed "some" of "the principles of socialism," London countered with the challenge that Lawson was, in the last analysis and at best, a pseudo-socialist. "He believes he can achieve [Socialist ideals] through financial methods [not revolutionary ones]. . . . I believe that in his faith in money Mr. Lawson is showing the natural characteristics of his

[91] "London Talks at Harvard Union," *Boston Herald,* 22 Dec. 1905, Jack London Scrapbooks, vol. 7.

class." It was an informal, sociable meeting, but at least one Boston paper portrayed it as a meeting of childlike dreamers.[92]

This led to another recent interpolation that was, strictly speaking, off the topic of the coming socialist revolution, though he also made mention of it in the essay form of "Revolution." London claimed a number of times, both in interviews and in off-the-cuff remarks at his speeches, that "the newspapers do not give the Socialists a square deal; they will not give me a square deal in the morning.'"[93] In the essay version of "Revolution," he qualified the generalization, a qualification I quoted in the previous chapter but bears repeating: "Parasites themselves on the capitalist class, serving the capitalist class by moulding public opinion [doesn't he sound like every conservative politician and talk show host?] [the newspaper editors] cluster drunkenly about the honey vats. Of course, this is true only of the large majority of American editors."[94] He knew that his audience and readers would know which newspapers were conservative and guilty of antisocialism and which were not. When asked by a reporter about "the surprise his Socialistic arguments created, he fell back upon the inaccuracy of newspapers, the `hidden hand of malice in the kid glove of capital."[1] And when he was back home and

---

[92] "Lawson-London Talk Panaceas: Financier and Socialist Discuss Their Pet Problems for Four Hours at Young's Hotel Apartments," *Boston Herald,* 21 Dec. 1905.

[93] "Jack London Speaks to Harvard Students: Attacks Newspapers, Claiming They Are Not Fair to Him," *Boston Journal,* 22 Dec. 1905.

[94] London, "Revolution," *"Revolution" and Other Essays* [New York: Macmillan and Company, 1912], p. 36.

asked to reflect on the outrages he had caused, especially with his supposed support of the inflammatory statement "to hell with the Constitution," he said,

> Yes, another case of being the victim of reporters' readjustment of facts. Oh, no! I am not trying to demonstrate that reporters are natural born liars—and yet—Why, do you know while I was in Chicago I had two reporters struggle with my immortal soul for hours trying to get me to say that I am a believer in free love—which I am not a bit. They struggled nobly, bit I stood firm to the argument that the family circle is the very hub of things. But then I rather enjoy this misrepresentation. It is amusing—and then, you know, it is fine advertising. And I don't take myself seriously, so can take all that's said about me as a joke, as I always try to laugh at the inevitable.[95]

At the same time that he wanted to be truly represented he accepted the fictionalizing impulses of newspapermen. Later, he would pledge allegiance to his fellow inkmen, as

---

[95] "Author London Talks about Revolution: Tells of His Recent Trip in the East and How He Dined with the Rich," *Oakland Tribune,* 19 Mar. 1906, JL scrapbooks, vol. 7, p. 123. See Sinclair, *The Brass Check,* pp. 341-43 for his account of the press's mistreatment of London in 1905-6. Sinclair quotes from a letter to him from Charmian in which she says that Jack had learned at some point in his career that the editorial policy of almost every newspaper on the West Coast was "to give Jack London the worst of it whenever possible." The aim was to damage his royalties, but then, according to Charmian, the newspapers let up when they believed that London's high income would lead him to be less radical on his own (Sinclair, *The Brass Check: A Study in American Journalism* [New York: A. & C. Boni, 1936], 342).

we will see. At the end of the tour, he would affirm, as I discuss later, the positive contributions to the American cultural and political scene made by reporters and newspapers in general. He was not about to disown his authorial upbringing.

Experience versus Adventure

"Revolution"—sometimes called "The Coming Crisis"—of course, was not the only talk he gave; he gave three others, and he also drew material from "What Life Means to Me" to preface "Revolution." One was based on his 1903 essay "How I Became a Socialist," and it appears he only gave it in Boston, probably because he gave five lectures in and around that town and didn't want to repeat himself every night.[96] He had another, apolitical autobiographical talk called "Experiences," which he gave—among other places—in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin near the beginning of the tour, Orange, New Jersey, near the middle, and in St. Paul near the end of the tour. It began with the Klondike: "packing," he said, was "my first experience." It's an odd choice of words and an odd choice of events. *Experience* isn't quite the same word or concept as *adventure,* though they can be taken as synonyms. In his writings, he would abandon *experience* in favor of *adventure,* a more capacious term and one that he had used before, though incidentally, in "How I Became a Socialist," when he talks about being locked up in Erie

[96] See "London Tells of Prison Stripes: Young Author Addresses Gather of Socialists and Explains How and Why He Became One," *Boston Herald,* 21 Dec. 1905, JL scrapbooks, vol. 7, 12.

County Penitentiary for "adventuring in *blond-beastly* fashion."[97] *Experience* denotes personal events; *adventure* denotes a more abstract realm. *Experience* seems to denote real-life struggle as opposed to the romance one might find in or mistake for *adventure.* Experience says, "These things actually happened." *Adventure* says, "Something like these things happened, but this story tells a more complete truth." *Adventure* is *experience* infused with feeling, passion. It is impassioned realism. But London hasn't quite formulated this concept of adventure yet, which happens during the writing of *Martin Eden* and *Adventure.* So, in this lecture he continued to talk about his Klondike experiences. There was "sleeping out in cold weather, going after moose, the ice, cold effects, whiskey as paper-weight, playing cards in cabin, feet cold face sweaty." He turned away from struggle and survival and referenced the unbelievable mosquitoes who appear in "Stranger Than Fiction" and then used material from "Housekeeping in the Klondike." If he followed the order of his notes, his lecture turned from the Klondike to hoboing, hinting at the links between the miner-author and the hobo-author. The third element of experience was his conversion to socialism: "Experiences -----tell how I passed coal for the Oakland, San Leandro & Haywards Electric Railway -----preface this with: `People sometimes wonder why I am a Socialist. `Of my experiences I will relate on only-----couple of more whys, perhaps; Buffalo experience. Vivid picture of passing coal, half drunk on `GARONNE'-----be sure to group these different experiences."[98] His

---

[97] London, "How I Became a Socialist," *War of the Classes* (New York: Macmillan, 1905), 276-77.

[98] London, "Experience: [notes for autobiographical lecture]," JL 649. See also London, "Klondike . . . experience[s]: [notes for lecture]," JL 848, which is a collection of

fourth experience was that in war, and so he repeated his stories of being a war correspondent in Japan and Korea.[99] He wasn't going to let a night pass without lecturing on socialist principles or on his own formation as a socialist. "To group these different experiences" was to show his growth as a socialist. All his experiences served to form his Left ideology.

The fourth lecture is a bit of a mystery. His notes for the lecture are labeled "Notes of Fanueil Hall Lecture," and he may have given it only once, at Faneuil Hall in Boston on 26 December; I have not found any record of him giving this lecture before or after, though it seems to repeat some points he made in "Revolution," and he in fact called it "Revolution" in his diary. But his own notes for the lecture show it differed significantly from "Revolution," and perhaps he changed his mind about it at the last minute and composed the notes on the day of the lecture. It seems principally an immediate, ad hoc response to criticisms he had been receiving on tour. *Boston Globe* noted the difference between his previous talk at Tremont Hall, where "he lectured from a manuscript to a scant 200 people. . . [an] earnest, dogmatic, scheming talker." At Faneuil Hall, "he was the incarnate, burning spirit of protest against present conditions; the fanatic, if no better name be found, who sees in his remedy for social wrong an absolute panacea. . . . He was apt, strong and convincing; his audience sat spellbound for

---

handwritten notes of which JL 649 is the typed version, with minor variations, though JL 848 is missing the final page.

[99] For a brief recounting of the various topics covered in "Experience," see "Jack London's Lecture Last Night," *Newark Evening News,* 11 Nov. 1905, JL scrapbooks, vol. 6, p. 235.

two hours—and it isn't every socialist, nor every writer either, who can hold a Boston crowd for two hours, let alone keep them warm that length of time." It seems to have been one of his most successful talks. The reporter was especially struck by the audience. "The audience itself was most significant. It was not the mere mob of discontent, the people of the abyss, who came to hear their wrongs pitied and have their sores licked. There were 2000 of them. . . . there were artists from the Back Bay, students from Harvard and Technology, young politicians and lawyers, doctors, substantial business men of the city, and , of course, a large body of men and women who work for their living." There was "an astounding number of women." They were orderly, attentive, and responsive—and"for the most part they were well dressed." Even his audiences were judged by the clothes they wore.

In his notes London divided the lecture into several topics, usually beginning each section with a quotation from a letter he had recently received. His notes start with "Destructive criticism See letter. What the trouble is all about. Division of the joint-product. Quote Harrison 224 World market Hard times." This first letter came from a graduate student who had heard his talk at Harvard: "`In your indictment,'" he wrote to London, "`you made no attempt to offer a remedy for existing conditions. This will not go with thoughtful audiences.'" Thinking of his earlier essays against the single tax, in favor of public ownership of utilities, and so on, London replied to his audience in Faneuil Hall, "`We do have a remedy. My attitude here has been that of destructive criticism. We have constructive criticism, but I devoted myself to the other side because—it's the psychology of the thing. You know about magazine advertising; you must construct, if you wish to succeed, advertisements that will attract attention and

awaken interest. I have talked in the constructive way; easily, sweetly, passively—and aroused almost nobody. I prefer here to strike between the eyes, to make the indictment and to ask the capitalistic class to answer it. They never have and they never will." According to the reporter's paraphrase, London then "explained that the whole trouble in society today lies in the division of wealthy which is the joint production of capital and labor." The reference to Harrison is of course to Frederick Harrison, whom he quoted in the first draft of "Revolution."

The next section begins with another response to recent criticism: "Boston journal—on every man getting a job. The surplus labor army. State the indictment. (Factories in England.) Engineer (like sailors and Consul) and Mother Jones. Ruling class isolates itself." The *Boston Journal* had taken him to task for extemporaneously claiming at Tremont Temple that the lack of jobs in the area explained the continued existence of the poor: "It makes my blood boil," said London, "to hear some man who never knew what it was to go hungry or want work say: `Any man can get work if he wants it.' It is the most damnable lie ever uttered." A reporter went looking for work advertised in the want ads and found many positions; London failed to acknowledge that "many of the jobs as mechanics and along the water front were" full-time.[100] London countered in the speech that these were actually only part-time jobs: "A Boston paper sent out a staff artist and a reporter to get work—just before Christmas. I'd like to see them holding the fine jobs they found just now." And part-time labor wasn't a problem for the cities exclusively. "Under the old system of agriculture," said London, picking up on a theme

[100] "`Jack' London Is in Error Journal Want Ad. Proves. Work Plenty in Boston," *Boston Journal,* 21 Dec. 1905, 1, JL scrapbooks, vol. 7, p. 7.

he explored in *The People of the Abyss* and then would try to rectify on his own ranch in the next decade, "men stayed on the soil all the year round. But now, with improved machinery, we have driven a great portion of the people to the cities because the soil cannot support them. They tell of the Kansas cry for men, thousands of men, in harvest time. But harvest time does not last long, and those men who went to Kansas to get in the harvest couldn't stay there now for their bare board. When men were needed to build the New York subway, there was no trouble in finding 40,000 laborers; did all those men quit jobs to work on the subway?" Despite the accuracy of his "indictment," the ruling class refuses to acknowledge it because "it is part of the policy of the capitalist class not to know how much misery is being endured, to go away and not to live with the laboring class." Nothing has changed in the last 110 years, as wealth continues to maintain a physical distance as wide as the income disparity that defined both the Gilded Age and the new Gilded Age.

The reference to the "Engineer and Mother Jones" led up to a big laugh from the audience. London told them of a "fire protective engineer" who had written to him "that he has been all through the factories in the south, and that there is no such child misery as I mention." He then cited his conversation with "Mother" Jones that I quoted earlier.[101]

---

[101] The report from the *Globe* reporter differs slightly from that of the *Traveller,* principally in its greater detail. I think it may be more reliable: "`Mother' Jones says to me that she has worked alongside children 6 and 7 years old, that the whistle blew for them at 4:30 am; that they drank back coffee and at bread dipped in bacon grease for breakfast; that they went to work at 5:30 and worked till noon, and then worked from

The audience at this point must have been rapt, silent, horrified. “Yet who listens to `Mother’ Jones? They would rather listen to the engineer; he is the agent of the capitalist, and he makes a report that all’s well in the world and God’s still in heaven.” At this point the audience broke into laughter. London held them in the palm of his hand.

“Many grant all that I say,” his notes read at this point, “but then bring Malthus against me.” The reporter was not impressed with London’s explanation of Malthusian law (“Mr. London stated the law of Malthus rather badly”), but London managed to get his point across. In his notes he broke it down with three bullet points: “(1) Law is not biologically true (2) Grant it, are not yet pressing against means of subsistence (3) Grant that we are—the inevitable `Malthus be damned.’ And finally, it can’t be worse. We’ll manage more rationally.” His elaboration of these points was nicely captured by the reporter: “In the first place,” the reporter paraphrased, “the law of Malthus does not apply, for the higher the organism develops, the less prolific it is. The codfish must lay 1,000,000 eggs to produce one codfish, but not so the human.” Then he let London speak for himself: “The very lives of the men who quote this gives them the lie. All the stork hears on 5th Avenue is `shoo! shoo!” The rich, who apparently are a “higher” organism than the poor, do not reproduce as much as the poor. Why? Because “life under difficult conditions tends to be more prolific. The man in the sweat shop craves happiness, though he cannot play golf or go to the theatre when his work is done. So he goes in for drink, and he goes in for children. The children, of course, he doesn’t want; they’re the

---

12:30 till 7 pm. She has seen them killed; she has seen their hands torn off by machinery.”

accidents." And the crowd laughed uproariously. Sex and socialism were an unbeatable combination.

Then he turned to his second point: "Again, even if the Malthusian doctrine is true, there is no need for the means of subsistence to be insufficient for a geometrically increasing population. Labor-saving devices will take care of that. Again, granted that we are actually in danger of pressing against the means of subsistence, remember what the New York laborers told Cunniffe, who explained to them the error of their ways. `Malthus be d—d,' they said. `We're not interested in future perfection of the human race, we want plenty, and we want it now.'" Cunniffe was a British labor leader who couldn't convince British workers to limit their birthrate voluntarily in the face of the implacable Malthusian law; London here is taking a piece from his essay "War of the Classes." He then continued: "Finally—I deny, by the way, that the law of Malthus applies to society to day [of course, because for London biology usually trumped politics; as he said in Chicago later that month: "Evolution brings revolution"[102]]—suppose the workingmen get all the joint product of labor and capital, will things be any worse? If we press on the means of subsistence, we can press more mercifully than is done now. If that day should come, can't you imagine a simpler, more merciful method of getting rid of surplus humans than running them through the mills and taking 10 or 12 years to destroy them?" Although he hadn't yet discovered eugenics, London's support of that controversial program was based on the premise that enforced sterilization and selective

[102] "Assassination Pet Joy of Mr. London: `Jack' Warms up for Today's Effort before University Students by Delivering Blood Curdling Diatribe to Socialists on West Side," *Inter-Ocean* (Chicago), 29 Jan. 1906, JL scrapbooks, vol. 7, 69.

human breeding would defeat the inevitable collapse of civilization if Malthus's law held true (and in the next few years he would change his mind about the inevitability of the Malthusian doctrine). A eugenics program managed by socialists was the most humane way to forestall the human tragedy of mass starvation, if it ever came to that.

He closed the speech on an optimistic note. His notes read, "Men must first become good. New birth. Come in out of the rain. . . . Incentive. Love to excel. Ambition. Patriotism. Ethics. Religion. Love." The reporter paraphrased the conclusion, perhaps exhausted from taking notes for two hours: "The speaker ended his long talk with a picture of the ideal condition, claiming that socialism is not an appeal to laziness, and that even then two hours' work a day is all that is necessary to live, everybody will still be busy from sleep to sleep, because the incentives of the love to excel, ambition pure and simple, religion and love—which he explained by a picture of the poor young man who saves and scrapes to get enough to marry on—will still exist." What an odd autobiographical allusion that was!

Although the reporter barely alluded to it, this conclusion was motivated by London's response to another letter he had received, this time from Frank Coburn, a Boston socialist, in response to remarks he had made in "Revolution" delivered at Tremont Hall. At the top of the letter, Coburn had clipped a newspaper paragraph: "In conclusion London declared that if the social status could be reconstructed on an equal basis, it would be necessary for every man to work but 3 hrs. each day in order to have all the people live in comfort and happiness." To this, Coburn told London, "Increased economic efficiency is what Socialism stands for, and as you raise the standard of personal efficiency, involving physical improvement of the human stock, you will so

greatly increase the sum total of legitimate human desires that the race will have to keep on working right up to its fatigue point to purchase the things it needs. . . . Three hours, indeed! What we want to pray for is for the strength . . . to work . . . eight hours, ten hours, twelve hours. Don't let's appeal with our Socialism to the lazy, the incompetent. Let's make it a gospel of the efficient." London marked the last few sentences and wrote in the margin of the letter, "We'll work all our waking moments, and most of our work will be play."[103] He closed the lecture by quoting the letter and presumably ended with

---

[103] London, "Fanueil Hall lecture," JL 653, and "Jack London Talks to Big Crowd," *Boston Globe,* 27 Dec. 1905, JL scrapbooks, vol. 7, p. 36. A reporter for a different paper (the clipping in London's scrapbook was pasted in without any bibliographic information) wrote a similar account of the speech, though it is worth quoting in full just to help capture what London may actually have said, given that no one account can be given authority over another. The reporter began: "Mr. London's address, which took nearly two hours, was mainly argumentative and expository." And then he quoted London's speech at length, his notes roughly matching those of the *Globe* reporter:

> The struggle between labor and capital is caused by the division of the joint product. Capital has never consumed its share, and though we have a famine or hard times come we cannot touch that surplus. Today we have driven a great portion of our agricultural population into the cities, because the country does not support them, though under rational management it might be made to. You hear of a subway to be built, and the contractors get the 40,000 men they advertise for. Do those men all leave jobs to go to work on the subway? Where do they get the men for the building of our great railroads? The conditions point to a surplus labor

his proclamation of bohemian economics: work should be play! As he had written in *The*

> army in the United States, and it exists in every civilized country in the world. The capitalist denies the existence of the misery alleged by the Socialist, but the capitalist class isolates itself from the class it has robbed; it is part of the policy of the capitalists not to see or know how muchmisery their workmen suffer. But there is a better day coming, and it is something that I should shake up the capitalist class, blin and greedy as it is, that never before was there so worldwide an organization of labor as there is today that never before were workingmen in different countries so organized into an international revolutionary movement as we know them to be today. In our day, with the increase of machinery, there is no need for the population to press against the means of subsistence. As to the argument about survival, we Socialists think that under present arrangements there is survival of the unfit rather than survival of the fit. The time has come for us to remove the power of the man of money and to develop a better type of the strong man, who in the coming Socialistic state will be powerful for good and not for hurt.

This last point, though not present in the *Globe* report, is present in London's notes as a new section following the three points he had laid out about the Malthusian law: "Survival of the Fittest. State the law, its misapplication and then its application. Many men say `We will always have the strong man.' I grant it—shearing the strong of his strength. The entering for the race—the money-getter wins." Then he launched into his vision of the new man, the good man who comes in out of the rain whose work is really play.

People of the Abyss, in the chapter entitled "Inefficiency," "It must be understood that efficiency is not determined by the workers themselves, but is determined by the demand for labor." Further, "inefficients are being constantly and wantonly created by the forces of industrial society." Those who advocated the "gospel of efficiency" were actually acting in concert with capitalism. London was willing to risk inefficiency for bohemian concerns like comfort, play, and art. The "voice of life" had to be shouted down by the voice of the imagination.

Constant attention from the press, attacks on his moral character and political beliefs, and the nightmares of the logistics of a lecture tour all combined to convince London "that this has been his first, last and only lecture tour," as Williams concluded his essay.[104] And yet he refused neither to refrain from speaking to reporters nor to seclude himself. Sometimes a mainstream newspaper would applaud his efforts, and he answered in kind. When London extemporaneously claimed in a talk in Chicago that women in that city worked in sweatshops for ninety cents a week, people were appalled, and several newspapers sought to refute his assertion. "The action of the Chicago American," he told a reporter in late January, after he had left the East Coast, "is in such sharp contrast with the manner of certain other papers that I am glad to acknowledge it. . . . I knew what I said was true, but I did not possess the names or addresses of the victims I championed. Now I know where they live, and I can get some information at first hand, for which I thank the American."[105] When he was interviewed in St. Paul, just after leaving Chicago,

---

[104] P. S. Williams, "Jack London, Lecturer," *Overland Monthly* (Oct. 1906): 346.

[105] "Jack London Reiterates His Arraignment of Slavery in Chicago: `Sweatshop Taskmasters Are Like Wild Beasts,'" *Chicago Evening American,* 30 Jan. 1906, 3, JL

he was even more effusive in his praise for reporters. “Proceeding to room 208 [in the Ryan Hotel] the reporter found Mr. London seated in a big chair smoking a cigarette, with Mrs. London curled up comfortably on the bed reading to him from a book. The door was opened by a Japanese valet.” In this cozy domestic scene, a routine set after so many days on the road, perhaps prefiguring their imagined circumstances on board the *Snark,* London talked of his experiences in Korea and tramping, of literature, of his future plans for sailing around the world, and of reporters, the latter topic following directly from the penultimate one: “My object in building this craft is to give me all the time I want abroad and make me free of steamboats and the beaten path of travel, which is the curse of the age—the route of the tourist. What I want to do is to study industrial conditions in every great city in the world. That is my object in setting out on this journey.” This point may surprise London scholars and enthusiasts, who have routinely

---

scrapbooks, vol. 7, 63. See also “Women *Do* Toil in Chicago for $1 a Week!: Jack London’s Charge Is Proved by Visits to the City’s Sweatshops,” *Chicago Evening American,* 29 Jan. 1906, n.p., JL scrapbooks, vol. 7, 65 (misdated “January 21” in unknown handwriting at top of clipping). London made the charge in his version of “Revolution” delivered at the West Side Auditorium on 28 January, coming just after his comparison of modern-day, starving workers and the cave men of the Bone Age: “A garment worker in Chicago, according to the figures compiled by Miss Nellie Mason Aton, a settlement worker, gets an average of 90 cents per week, ordinary sewing” (“Assassination Pet Joy of Mr. London: `Jack’ Warms up for Today’s Effort before University Students by Delivering Blood Curdling Diatribe to Socialists on West Side,” *Inter-Ocean* (Chicago), 29 Jan. 1906, JL scrapbooks, vol. 7, 69).

supposed that London traveled to the South Seas for the sake of experience, for the sake of egotism, for the sake of doing what he wanted (his infamous pronouncement "I Like"), for the simple act of escape. No, there is a direct connection—in more ways than one—between his lecture tour and his *Snark* trip, and I will elaborate on this further in chapter 19. His authorial role on that trip, as he made clear to the St. Paul reporter, was to be a newspaperman-sociologist: "The thing these days is to get at the facts. The men who are doing this are the newspaper men. They are the only men today who know things as they are. There is no dust in their eyes and they are holding up the truth to many people who do not wish to look it in the eyes."[106]

Still, he never drifted too far from his assessment of the majority of newspapers and their complicity with capitalists. Summing up the press coverage of his trip for a home town reporter, he addressed the controversy of his marriage ("`to me there has never been any question concerning the legality of our marriage. That report was all the imagination of Chicago reporters who were scooped on the wedding story"), the banning of his books in Connecticut ("Now, about that library movement ostracizing my books because of their anarchistic views, is another result of my being misrepresented"), his true political allegiances ("in the first place I'm not an anarchist. I'm a Socialist"), and the controversial statement "to hell with the Constitution" ("`There again I'm misrepresented. In using that phrase . . . I quoted Sherman Bell, leader of the troops in the Colorado labor war. When he was called down for going roughshod over the Constitution, he said "To hell with the Constitution."'"). Given the general treatment of

[106] "Chat with a Noted Author," *St. Paul Dispatch,* 1 Feb. 1904, n.p., JL scrapbooks, 7, 82.

his views by the press and their collusion with the enemies of socialism, London was naturally harsh about reporters at times: "Yes, I know I have been a newspaper man myself for years, thereby perhaps I know so well how impossible it is for reporters to avoid perverting facts. Oh, no! I am not trying to demonstrate that reporters are natural born liars—and yet—Why, do you know while I was in Chicago I had two reporters struggle with my immortal soul for hours trying to get me to say that I am a believer in free love—which I am not a it. . . . But then I rather enjoy this misrepresentation. It is amusing—and then, you know, its fine advertising. And I don't take myself seriously, so can take all that's said about me as a joke, as I always try to laugh at the inevitable."[107]

---

[107] "London Says He Is Misrepresented: Author Sure He Is Married and Proclaims He Is Victim of Too Keen Reporters," *Oakland Herald,* 10 Feb. 1906, n.p., JL scrapbooks, 7, 105. Actually, it wasn't Bell who said it, but rather Major Thomas McClelland, the judge advocate of the Colorado National Guard. Sherman Bell was the commander of the Colorado National Guard. In "Revolution," London puts the phrase in the mouth of a workingman who finds traditional American exempla of freedom such as the Constitution hollow when "his head is broken by a policeman's club, his union treasury bankrupted by a court decision, or his job taken away from him by a labor-saving device. . . . Nor are this particular workingman's hurt feelings soothed by reading in the newspapers that both the bull pen and the deportation [of Moyer, Haywood, and Pettibone] were preeminently just, legal, and constitutional. `To hell, then with the Constitution!' says he, and another revolutionist has been made—by the capitalist class" (London, "Revolution," 000). It's a brilliant piece of rhetoric partly because when accused of being the original author of the phrase he could point to the unconstitutionality of the federal government's actions.

When newspapermen forget their role as sociologists, then they succumb to fancy and lie to serve the dominant ideology. On the other hand, he and a handful of reporters could maintain scientific objectivity and then place the facts at the service of reform politics. In the privacy of his study back home he made notes for a lecture on his lecture trip, capturing the bifurcated view he had of the press. He wanted to be humorous as well as serious. The tour was succeeding until "the miserable associated press misreport" about his divorce and marriage: "work in the free-love-detail reporters of Chicago." He wanted to exaggerate his supposed economic losses "because of the editorials men wrote—quote from all of them the most outrageous ones." His final note recounts "my surprise at sensation because in Havana I met K.C. reporter, who told me his disappointment at the mildness of my lecture." He never did complete this lecture, but it led him to a logical next step: to incorporate the insight that "the ten-cent exposure magazines . . .are catering to the bourgeoisie against the plutocrats."[108] This note was for his projected essay "Persistence of the Established." We see how this insight informs the chapter "The Machine Breakers" in *The Iron Heel,* where Ernest Everhard urges the bourgeois business owners to side with the proletariat before they get destroyed by the oligarchs.

Perhaps the most significant lesson he took from his lecture tour was that being a national newspaperman-sociologist-author was not enough. He had the ambition to apply what he had learned on tour to a larger, hugely ambitious project of becoming the international commentator on the evils of industrial capitalism and so become a

[108] London, "Lecture trip: [notes]," JL 881.

spokesman for the world's poor. The same intent that drove him to go to the East End in London drove him to go around the world in a boat.[109]

Jack London Founds the SDS

The speech at Yale, as well as those at Harvard University, the University of Michigan, and the University of Chicago (and perhaps others as well; there are no reliable records) were organized and promoted on an ad hoc basis on behalf of the newly formed Intercollegiate Socialist Society.[110] The ISS is a microcosm of what happened to

---

[109] Russ Kingman asserts that when London ended his lecture tour, he "was more concerned with getting started on the building of his boat and his trip around the world. The Revolution could go on without him" (Russ Kingman, *A Pictorial Life of Jack London* [Crown Publishers: New York, 1979], 106). To make this assertion one has to ignore the facts that London, once he was home, spoke on the Moyer-Haywood-Pettibone case and wrote "Something Rotten in the State of Idaho," wrote "The Apostate" and *The Iron Heel,* gave a lecture at the Ruskin Club in February 1907 on competition, and gave "Revolution" a number of times during his *Snark* voyage.

[110] Because the ISS came into existence as London was touring and because the ISS existed only as a loose collection of study groups, it is a mistake to say that he toured under the auspices of the ISS. There was a group of officers nominally in charge of the organization, but they did not plan, arrange, or supervise lectures in the first several years of the ISS's existence. Local groups took care of their own lecture series with one exception. Shortly after London was elected president, Strobell told London that he was organizing the Harvard Union, the University of Chicago, and a New York City talk

because none had yet taken charge of "the speaker's committee." George Strobell also told London that Thomas Wentworth Higginson "moved around like a young man when he heard you were coming" and insisted that London arrange a meeting with him; I do not think this took place. He also gave him George Galvin's address and facilitated their meeting (Strobell, letter to London, 11 Dec. 1905, JL 19156).

Mark Zamen erroneously claims that "the creation of this society [the ISS] in September . . . soon led to a request for the writer—as well as several other prominent members—to undertake a lecture tour on the group's behalf. To this London agreed, and arranged to combine two tours into one, during which he would give `Revolution' and variations of his `Experiences' lecture (which often included `Klondike' and `Correspondent' segments), despite the diversity of topics originally listed by Slayton in its pamphlet" (Mark Zamen, *Standing Room Only: Jack London's Controversial Career as a Public Speaker* [Peter Lang: New York, 1990], 10-9). After London spoke on campuses, students then organized an ISS study group. So to assert as Zamen does that London's tour was a failed "effort to enhance socialism" is false; see ibid., 130. Earle Labor also confuses the timelines for Slayton's tour and London's participation in the ISS; Labor asserts that London undertook the tour for money ("badly overdrawn on his Macmillan account, he had devised a plan that would gratify his socialist colleagues as well as his creditors: he would do a lecture tour. This plan was prompted by Upton Sinclair"), as if Slayton hadn't made their offer a year before the September 1905 meeting of the ISS (Labor, *Jack London,* 223). Second, Labor doesn't discuss any of London's efforts on behalf of the ISS and thus unconvincingly argues that the ISS and the lecture tour were simply expedients for London to raise cash. Zamen, Russ Kingman,

American socialism in the twentieth century both in terms of its membership and its organizational trajectory. Its formation also afforded an opportunity for London, Upton Sinclair, Jane Addams, and other prominent radicals to meet. London was not the only one who was moved to action by the 1904 election, and Sinclair was inspired to undertake a national pedagogical mission by Debs's success. In December 1904, having completed his research for *The Jungle,* Sinclair conceived of a socialist organization that would "awaken an interest in Socialism among the educated men and women of the country," an idea similar to the teach-ins and independent study groups formed on campuses in the sixties by students who found their college courses irrelevant in the face of contemporary political change.[111] This is not a fanciful comparison. The ISS changed its name in the early twenties to the League for Industrial Democracy (LID); in 1933 it became the Student League for Industrial Democracy (SLID); and then in 1960 it changed its name to the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). Mark Rudd, who led the successful student strike at Columbia University in 1968, wrote in his memoir about his moment of radicalization during a meeting of Columbia's Independent Committee on Vietnam (ICV): The members of the ICV "took themselves so seriously you'd think this was a debate of the workers' soviet of revolutionary Petrograd in 1917. But they were also mesmerizing, articulate, and burning with conviction. By comparison, my professors seemed tame and bloodless. In my European history class, revolution was something that

---

and Labor all intentionally minimize London's participation in the ISS and his status as a leading socialist in the US.

[111] Quoted in Max Horn, *The Intercollegiate Socialist Society, 1905-1921: Origins of the Modern American Student Movement* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1979), 3.

had happened in 1789 in France. But these zealous radicals in the ICV were talking about the class nature of the American system and about revolution happening right now."[112]

It's as if he borrowed his rhetoric directly from Sinclair: "Since the professors refused to teach the students about modern life," wrote Sinclair in his autobiography, "it was up to the students to teach themselves; so I sent a circular letter to all the college socialists I knew of and invited them to organize."[113] In the 1904 letter, Sinclair and George Strobell—a Christian Socialist, a successful jewelry maker, and a friend of Sinclair—wrote, "the remarkable increase of the Socialist vote and sentiment in America

---

[112] Mark Rudd, *My Life with SDS and the Weathermen* (William Morrow: New York, 2009), 13-14.

[113] Upton Sinclair, *The Autobiography of Upton Sinclair* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1962), 113. Coodley, *Upton Sinclair,* Arthur, *Radical Innocent,* and Harris, *Upton Sinclair* all follow Sinclair's faulty memory about the formation of the society. It's only a matter of months, but obviously Sinclair took more care with the idea of the society than his biographers lead us to believe. The society's formation was not an impulsive act. Max Horn provides the correct chronology. See Max Horn, *The Intercollegiate Socialist Society, 1905-1921: Origins of the Modern American Student Movement* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1979), 1–10. Carmela Ascolese Karnoutsos, the only other researcher (as far as I can tell) who actually used the ISS's archive, emphasizes Harry Laidler's role in the ISS and thus unintentionally minimizes Sinclair's importance; nonethess, her work is invaluable. See Carmela Ascolese Karnoutsos, "Harry W. Laidler and the Intercollegiate Socialist Society" (PhD diss., New York University, 1974).

should serve as an indication to the educated men and women on the country that Socialism is something concerning which it is no longer wise to be indifferent." He sent the call to organize and a cover letter to every kind of leftist, asking the recipient to "sign and lend your influence to such a movement." It was sent to London the revolutionary, Leonard D. Abbott (the editor, anarchist, and public intellectual), Charlotte Perkins Gilman (novelist and activist), James G. Phelps Stokes (the so-called millionaire socialist and settlement advocate),[114] William English Walling (London's friend and husband of Anna Strunsky Walling), Clarence Darrow (well-known attorney who had defended Eugene Debs in 1894), Oscar Lovell Triggs (magazine publisher/editor, reformer, and tireless proponent of the Arts and Crafts movement), Benjamin O. Flower (editor of *The Arena* and a progressive, not a socialist), and Thomas Wentworth Higgenson (the famous abolitionist, women's rights advocate, and editor of Emily Dickenson's poetry), who all agreed to support the idea, and to William Lloyd Garrison, Julian Hawthorne, Thorstein Veblen, John R. Commons, Richard T. Ely, and George Rice Carpenter who refused, for one reason or another. Veblen thought it wouldn't succeed because a previous attempt at the University of Chicago had failed. Hawthorne thought college undergraduates were too immature to assimilate the ideas of socialism. Commons and Ely, both professors at

---

[114] London himself was sometimes called a millionaire socialist, and the term was usually used in a derogatory fashion in the press. Robert Dwight Reynolds, Jr., identifies and studies sixteen millionaire socialists, including Gaylord Wilshire, Rufus Weeks, William English Walling, and Stokes. See Robert Dwight Reynolds, Jr., "The Millionaire Socialists: J. G. Phelps Stokes and His Circle of Friends" (PhD diss., University of South Carolina, 1974).

the University of Wisconsin, declined on the grounds that they could not "endorse the socialist philosophy. Carpenter, who had been George Brett's outside reader for all of London's submissions, including *War of the Classes,* said he was in sympathy with the movement but that "`the time is [not] propitious.'"[115]

Sinclair also wrote to Fred. The Ruskin Club—as well as W. J. Ghent's X Club in New York City, the Social Reform Club, and other informal discussion/lecture groups—may have been an inspiration for Sinclair to form the ISS. Bamford, however, disagreed with a basic premise for the group: to recruit men and women from the entire spectrum of socialist thought. To invite men like Edwin Markham, William Dean Howells, and Clarence Darrow, said Bamford in his reply to Sinclair, was a mistake. Sounding as revolutionary as London, he wrote, "No militant body can be built up by such men . . . . We want men tingling all over with the glory and greatness of our cause."[116] Bamford, it turns out, was prescient.

In June 1905, Sinclair sent a slightly revised version of the call to organize, this time signed by London, Stokes, Higginson, Gilman, Darrow, Triggs, Flower, Walling, Abbott, and Sinclair. This was a powerful group of public intellectuals who represented a broad range of socialist thought. There were other differences as well besides intellectual ones. Only Abbott, London, and Sinclair paid dues to the Socialist Party, only Abbott was

---

[115] Horn, *The Intercollegiate Socialist Society, 1905-1921,* 3-5.

[116] Quoted in Karnoutsos, "Harry W. Laidler and the Intercollegiate Socialist Society," 40. Now that the first reel of the ISS archive—located in the Tamiment Library at NYU—is lost, Karnoutsos's and Horn's work is doubly important.

not native born, Gilman was the only woman, and London was the only proletariat by birth. Their diversity (it could have been greater; why more women were not included is beyond me) helped cinch the argument that this organization was aiming for an objective appreciation of a new political movement.[117] The call asked simply for people to send their names to M. R. Holbrook, who was the temporary secretary and the current secretary of the Collectivist Society.[118] It was published in socialist and mainstream papers, and over two hundred letters were received.

It also triggered some backlash in the press. In a June 1905 article in the *National Civic Federation Review,* the editor, Ralph Easley, denounced the proposal. He used long quotations from "The Class Struggle" to illustrate "the virulence of Socialism" and cited London's speech at the University of California and his quotation from Hunter's *Poverty* to show how overheated rhetoric makes socialism look "ridiculous" and perverts the youth of America.[119] Oscar Triggs responded to this article in the first issue of his new magazine, *Triggs's Magazine* (begun after he had left *To-Morrow*) and sent it to London. Triggs's response is significant for a number of reasons. First, he and Percy Sercombe, a fellow Chicago reformer, are pivotal figures in the study of London's thought because

---

[117] See ibid., 6.

[118] See "Intercollegiate Socialist Society [statement]," JL 801.

[119] Ralph M. Easley, "Socialists Seek to Inflame the Mind of American Youth," *National Civic Federation Review* 2 (June 1905): 9-10. This article, or others like it, triggered a correspondence between Easley and Morris Hilquit, which the latter republished as a pamphlet. See Morris Hilquit and Ralph M. Easley, *Socialism and the National Civic Federation* (New York: n.p., 1911).

they followed a similar track as London between the political and the aesthetic, and they will come up for discussion when I discuss London's 1906 essay "House Beautiful." A former teacher at the University of Chicago—an institution that seemed to always be lurking on the periphery during this period of London's activism—Triggs had helped publish Carl Sandburg's 1906 profile of London in Sercombe's *To-Morrow Magazine.*[120] Now, in his 1905 response to the Easley's attack on the ISS, he wrote, "Will someone explain the animus of the National Civic Federation in its opposition to a very innocent proposition?" Triggs's mild-mannered rhetoric must have tickled London, but he couldn't help but see an ally and a like-minded socialist in Triggs's blast at Easley. Trigg's laid the foundation for his response by comparing scientific experimentation to social experimentation. "The speculative thinker in sociology is branded as an enemy of the human race. . . . Anarchy and socialism are alike derided. . . . To deny the System [the System! how sixties of Triggs to say this] is to be infidel. . . . In view of the freedom permitted the investigator in science and other fields, does it not seem unreasonable and unscientific to oppose social experimentation?" Quoting from Sinclair's June 1905 call for the organization of the ISS, Triggs simply cannot believe Easley's resistance: "It is

---

[120] For more biographical information about Triggs, focused principally on his marriages, divorce, and children, see Claudia J. Keenan, "Edmund, Oscar, Laura," a two-part blog post at *Through the Hourglass,* www.throughthehourglass.com/2016/03/edmond-oscar-laura-1.html, and Mike Allen, "Working Class Thought Leader," *Splintercat: Copy with Impact,* http://www.splintercatcopy.com/working-class-thought-leader-oscar-lovell-triggs/. These blog posts triggered responses from Triggs's granddaughter, Heidi Lovell Triggs Clausen. For Sandburg's profile of London, see Charles Sandburg,

amazing that anyone should take alarm at so simple a proposal." He quoted from Easley's personal attack on Phelps--"some man of wealth whose capital has come to him through inheritance or marriage, and whose vanity is tickled by being called a `millionaire socialist,' devoting his wealth to the uplifting of the down-trodden masses—and then quoted Stokes's response to Easley's: "I simply agree with the basic principles of socialism and believe there *is so much that is good in the doctrine that we wish* to bring them to the attention of educated men and women throughout the country. The movement is purely educational." London underlined the italicized words in this quotation, rejoicing in the grit of the millionaire socialist.

In the next paragraph, where Triggs quoted from Thomas Higginson's rejoinder to a critical notice in *Harper's Weekly,* London also marked these words: "As Theodore Parker used to say, `I am not particular with whom I unite in a good action.' As to the object in view it is clearly enough stated in the call itself; the movement does not aim to produce socialists, but to create students of socialism.'" Easley attacked Higginson, too, calling him a "pulpitless clergy[man]," naïve about the objectives of the ISS. Higginson had famously proclaimed in his letter to *Harper's,* "those who seriously criticize [the ISS] must be classed, I fear, with those medieval grammarians who wrote of an adversary, `May God confound thee for thy theory of irregular verbs.'"[121] Easley, feeling that his very sense of being an American was being challenged, retorted, "Mr. Higginson can no longer plead ignorance of the facts as an excuse for his surprising association with

[121] Quoted in Easley, "The Origin of `The Intercollegiate Socialist Society' Disclosed: Its Defense by Thomas Wentworth Higginson, in `Harper's Weekly' Analyzed and Refuted," *National Civic Federation Review* 2 (July-Aug. 1905): 20, 11.

an organization whose purposes and whose origin are utterly at variance with his distinguished record as an American soldier and patriot." At this initiatory moment, in the summer of 1905, still overjoyed by their success at the polls in 1904, socialists across the spectrum were united.

Triggs closes his essay with a mild-mannered though radical statement, one that echoes Sinclair's take on American higher education and forecasts Mark Rudd's assessment in the sixties: "For my part I would sign a similar call for the study of anarchism, or of any other social theory. *College students are apathetic—too much so—if not actually reactionary*. . . . College professors are eminently `safe and sane' and can be depended upon to check the spread of any revolutionary contagion. At college one learns to divorce thought from action. It might be deemed dangerous for workingmen to think, but college-men not at all. They may be wise as serpents but they are harmless as doves."[122] So spake the ex-University of Chicago professor.

Again, London underlined the words I italicized; note how similar they are to Tom Hayden's description of writing the 1962 Port Huron Statement, SDS's foundational document: "We were rebelling against the experience of apathy, not against a single specific oppression. . . . Apathy, we came to suspect, was what the administrators and power technicians actually desired. Apathy was not our fault, not an accident, but rather the result of social engineering by those who ran the institutions that taught us. . . . It was for this reason that our rhetoric emphasized `ordinary people' developing `out of apathy'

---

[122] Oscar Lovell Triggs, "Oscar Lovell Triggs, in *Triggs Magazine,* for September," in untitled pamphlet, JL scrapbooks, vol. 7, p. 108.

(the term was C. Wright Mills's) in order to `make history.'"[123] Hayden, Triggs, and London all had first-hand knowledge of the failure of higher academia to motivate its students to even think about changing society.

Triggs in fact wrote a second essay in his first issue, this time focusing on the failure of academia to educate the young. It is the source for the infamous "observation" by Paul Shorey, the chair of the Department of Greek at the University of Chicago, that the "university ideal" (Shorey was a Platonist) was "the passionless pursuit of passionless knowledge."[124] Triggs cited London's early draft of the "Revolution" speech (its Berkeley incarnation) and called for students to put aside their indifference to national political matters and "take sides. Sooner or later you must choose whom you shall serve.

---

[123] Tom Hayden, *The Port Huron Statement: The Visionary Call of the 1960s Revolution* (New York: Avalon, 2005), 4-5.

[124] I place *observation* in quotation marks because Shorey, in his 1909 convocation speech at the University of Chicago, remarked that "I once, feebly feeling after epigram, defined the university spirit as the "passionate pursuit of passionless intelligence." The reporter took from this what slight point it possessed by recording it as the "passionless pursuit of passionless intelligence," and in this form the poor little saying was worried and mangled by the bull-dogs of the strenuous life and repeatedly held up to scorn as the last word of decadence by no less a sociological authority than Mr. Jack London" (Paul Shorey, "The Spirit of Chicago," *The University of Chicago Magazine* 1 [Apr. 1909]: 234). I trust that Shorey actually was misquoted and that he was using "sociological authority" ironically. Nonetheless, his concept of passion would have excluded politically charged education.

Soon the issue will be joined as sharply as that of slavery in the past or as that of temperance in the present. Even as you read this you exclaim: `Take what side! What issue!?' It is as I expected, you do not know what I am talking about." They do not know what he is talking about because the education that ISS was offering was missing from their college curriculum. They were still under the influence of institutionally manufactured apathy. "Professor Shorey of the University of Chicago is responsible for a new definition of the University Ideal. In speaking at the dedication of Lincoln Center he called this wonderful something we have all see but never understood: `the passionless pursuit of passionless intelligence." As if he had ESP and knew that London would seize on this anecdote, Triggs then easily glided into a quotation from London's early draft of "Revolution": "Jack London said recently to the students of the University of California: `As I look over the universities of my land to-day, I see the students asleep, asleep in the face of the awful facts of poverty I have given you, asleep in the greatest revolution that has come to the world. Oh, it is sad! Not long ago revolutions began, grew, broke out in Oxford. To-day Russian universities seethe with revolution. I say to you, then: University men and women, you men and women in the full glory of life, here is a cause that appeals to all the romance in you. Awake to its call.'" Did they awake to the call? asks Triggs. No, but "sooner or later you men and women of the universities, this apathy must be overcome. . . . Soon the issue will be joined as sharply as that of slavery in the past or as that of temperance in the present."[125] We can see why the abolitionist Higginson was

[125] I have stitched together Triggs's essay from two different sources because I was unable to locate the original; see Oscar Lovell Triggs, "Oscar Lovell Triggs, in *Triggs Magazine,* for September," in untitled pamphlet, JL scrapbooks, vol. 7, p. 108, and

courted to support the ISS.[126] For the socialists, economic equality was as important as racial equality. Within a couple of weeks of receiving these articles from Triggs, London wrote "Intercollegiate Socialist Society," his own attack on American college students, an essay I will turn to shortly.

In the summer of 1905, while Easley, Higginson, and Stokes were debating the merits of Sinclair's initial plans for the ISS, Sinclair and Trobel saw that there was an overwhelming positive response to their plan. Thus they issued a third call. Besides repeating the paragraphs of the second flier, it included "a proposed plan of organization." Devoid of definitions of socialism and of any political platform, this initiatory statement outlined who could be a member—high school and college students, their instructors, and anyone interested enough to apply for membership to the executive committee, what officers would be elected by the membership, and how they shall be elected. It also asked everyone who was interested to meet at Peck's restaurant in New York City at 2:00 pm on 12 September 1905. The event was reported in the papers. "Socialist Club Names Jack London President," but that seemingly objective headline quickly gave way to conservative bias. "The name of the society seemed to cause a considerable amount of trouble, for there were ninety-eight kinds of socialists present. Sinclair defined socialism as `anything the papers don't like. Then the clock stopped.

"Intercollegiate Socialism," *Public Opinion,* 4 Nov. 1905, 593. Triggs cites London's Berkeley speech in his last editorial for *To-Morrow;* see Triggs, "Universities and the People," *To-Morrow* 1 (Apr. 1905): 17.

[126] Apart from ideology, Sinclair contacted Higginson for personal reasons. When he was writing his Civil War novel *Manassas,* he interviewed Higginson, who was helpful. See Karnoutsos, "Harry W. Laidler and the Intercollegiate Socialist Society," 42.

This was regarded as a favorable omen. Some member shut the windows so the intense spirit should not escape and overwhelm the passersby." After detailing who was elected to office, the reporter couldn't resist a final jab: "and the treasurer [is] Mr. Lovejoy, who `is not used to handling large funds.'"[127] Ah, the Gilded Age reporter's wit! After the meeting and on the same day, Strobell sent London letter informing him of his appointment as president of the ISS; Sinclair became vice president, Owen Lovejoy, a college student, was treasurer, and the executive committee comprised Strobell, Graham Phelps Stokes, Mrs. Darwin J. Meserole (a wealthy wife of a banker and stock broker), John Willis Cooke, and Henry Laidler, a student at Wesleyan who stayed with the organization for fifty-five years.[128]

London accepted the offer to preside over this eclectic group of socialists, a kind of umbrella organization that, as I said, brought together a wide range of public figures

---

[127] "Socialist Club Names Jack London President," *Indianapolis News,* 13 Sept. 1906, JL Scrapbook, vol. 6, p. 185. According to Hillquit, William Ghent presided. See Morris Hillquit, *Loose Leaves from a Busy Life* (Macmillan: New York, 1934), 61. Among the attendees was Oscar Lovell Triggs. See Claudia J. Keenan, "Edmond, Oscar, Laura-2," *Through the Hourglass,* www.throughthehourglass.com/2016/03/edmond-oscar-laura-2.html

[128] See Sinclair, *The Autobiography of Upton Sinclair,* 113, and George H. Strobell, letter to London, 12 Sept. 1905, JL 19154. Strobell's letter made clear that London's appointment was intended to end once "the regular officers should be nominated and elected by referendum." In no way should London's resignation be construed as an abandonment of the organization.

with various political ideologies that could be called, roughly, socialist in nature. In Boston while he was on tour he was asked why the society and its study of sociology and socialism was formed, and he replied, "why am I interested in sociology? Because I was one of the poor people and I have been oppressed by the capitalists. Banded effort can balance things, individual effort never. I believe that every college should have clubs to study sociology. Let the thing appeal to the reason of the college man and if he thinks best then he can reject it. At least let him study the question. I believe that heredity and environment determine all that a man's life shall be, and one can change the balance, perhaps, by having a clean, pure healthy environment."[129] How large looms the "perhaps" for the author in the midst of an intellectual transition. As we saw in the previous chapter, London was modifying and enlarging his concept of the relations of environment, heredity, and politics. Edgar Sonne and Jim Hall were criminals made by society in equal measure to any possible heredity factors. In fact, this moment may well be the first time in a public utterance that London explicitly allowed for the effects of one's environment to help shape a person's being. He couldn't do it without equivocation because he hadn't disavowed his biological determinism. Still, under the influence of a broad range of socialists who all agreed in the necessity of changing one's environment for the better, London couldn't help but support the dominant Left ideology to help forge an alliance with all manner of socialists.

There is an interesting set of undated notes for an essay or debate that he entitled "Round Table" that removes the hesitant "perhaps. "The whole thing to show," writes

---

[129] "In "Jack London Tells Story: Author-Socialist Explains Why He Sought Adventure," *Boston Post,* 19 Dec. 1905, JL scrapbooks, vol. 7, p. 34.

Jack to himself, "that while heredity gives protentialities, environment realizes or crushes these potentialities. import of this to socialism." Nothing else in these notes, however, pertains to this "whole thing." One page (out of five) comments on the importance of labeling his time as the Machine Age: "We have mastered machinery? Yet machinery has mastered us. None of us can escape it. It has made the modern metropolis, the sweat-shop and the slums. It determines our art, our ethics, our very lives."[130] London's estimation of the importance of environment must have been modified by his reading of Edwin Seligman's *The Economic Interpretation of History.* He marked more pages in the chapter "Freedom and Necessity" than in any other, although this chapter is devoted to criticisms of Marx's theory than with its exposition. The first criticism Seligman deals with is economic fatalism or determinism, which he discounts. London marked the passages that quote Thomas Huxley on free will—"nobody doubts that, at any rate within certain limits, you can do as you like. But what determines your likings and dislikings?"—and, more to our immediate point, the controversy between Weismann and the neo-Lamarckians—"neither Weismannists nor Neo-Lamarckians deny the obvious fact of the influence of present environments on the individual as such."[131] Genetics is crucial and determinative, London was realizing, but, just as Seligman pointed out about the importance of economics, it cannot account for all human behavior and the amelioration of social ills. In one more passage that London marked, Seligman writes, "in the present industrial system the offer on the part of any one employer to double the

---

[130] London, "Round Table: [notes for article]," JL 1132.
[131] Edwin Seligman, *The Economic Interpretation of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1902), 93.

customary wages of his workmen will have no appreciable effect upon the general relations of labor and capital."[132]

Motivated by Triggs's two essays as well as by his election as president to the ISS, London decided to write an essay about the new society. He completed it on the train from San Francisco to Chicago at the beginning of his tour, and it was the first writing he did after he completed *White Fang.* Calling it "Intercollegiate Socialist Society" but published under the title "The Rise of Socialism," he outlines the reasons necessary for the ISS's formation. In fact, the first sentence of this essay forecasted his shift of emphasis away from biological determinism that he had expounded upon to the Boston interviewer: "Socialism to become operative must be expressed politically." It's as if he had decided that socialism had passed the test of biology and now needed to be promoted politically. His one note for the essay lays out its organization: "Potentia. In introduction, show how backward the American university—compared with European universities, etc.—radicals very few, etc. and then the response. [illegible word, beginning with "s" and ending "ing"] awakening."[133] London starts with the international situation, both historically (the French Revolution) and the current situation in Russia (especially the aftermath of Bloody Sunday). Then he moves to one of his foundational political

---

[132] Seligman, *The Economic Interpretation of History,* 95. See chapter 19 for Seligman's influence the writing of *The Iron Heel.*

[133] London, "Potentia," JL 1073. His diary for 1905 says the essay was 1510 words. The copy of "The Rise of Socialism" that I have is 1130 words. If the original manuscript ended with Sinclair's call to join the ISS, which I imagine it did, then its 407 words would make the total of what the *Syracuse Herald* had equal to the original word count, give or take twenty or thirty words.

philosophy principles: “The history of society has been that of a class struggle.” Once the working class has succeeded to power, then “cliques,” not “classes” will continue to “struggle”; he could not foresee the end of differences among the socialists, but they would be united in certain basic ideas. In a sentence that at once foretells the future of socialism in America, his future (both in the sense of having yet been written and of taking place in the future) novel called *The Iron Heel,* and his own hopes for mankind, he wrote, “It may be several centuries before the bread and butter question is settled, but then the only contention will be over questions of beauty, of art, and subjects which the working people have not time now to think about.” London may have been heavily involved in politics, but he never lost sight of his principal occupation nor of his desire for all to share in the bohemian life. If we all played-worked instead of being engaged in forced work, then the people could be attuned to the highest “considerations” known to mankind.

Then, in an unannounced shift in focus—making the essay seem like it is really two essays; in an apparent rush, he ignored this clunky transition—he moves from the international political realm to the state of affairs in universities internationally, if only to show how backwards and dangerous to progressive thought the American university is: “The radicalism of the German university is too well known to be elaborated upon. In Germany a man may be an announced and pronounced Socialist and yet retain his professional chair. In the United States, on the other hand, the announcement of a professor’s conversion to socialism is promptly followed by his dismissal.” Sounding very much like a member of the SDS, he offered a challenge to American university students: “Nor have the American students been a whit more radical than their

universities. A student riot in behalf of an instructor dismissed because of his political opinion has never occurred. Nor have the American students ever been known to riot because of their own radical political opinions, nor in sympathy with a strike of organized labor." Given London's ten-year dissatisfaction with the university system—beginning with his enrollment at the University of California for a semester and his continued encounters with university men and women who did not think for themselves and did not show the least sympathy with the working class or for revolutionary socialism—it's not surprising that he attacked complacent students. Clearly, London saw the ISS as an institutional means to continue his disparagement of higher education. Thus, we can see his participation in the ISS on the same continuum as his inclusion of professorial characters—from Freddie Drummond to Darrel Standing—in his fiction.

He continued his attack on students, borrowing heavily from Triggs: "Not that the American students are meek and spiritless. They riot and rush and rough it as readily as any students in the world. But they have had no call to express political and social dissatisfactions. They have not been vexed by political and social dissatisfactions. In such matters they have been quite satisfied. They have been conservative—very, very conservative." They needed the kind of education that only an organization like the ISS could provide. Why? Because of "the `university ideal.' This ideal has been well formulated by Professor Shorey of the University of Chicago. He calls the university ideal `the passionless pursuit of passionless intelligence.' According to this, warm human life has been no concern of the university. The university has not interested itself in the clay of the common road, but has kept its eyes fixed aloft on passionless intelligence—remote and dim and cold as the stars. And from this far gaze, the university has desisted

only long enough, at times, to look disapproval at the occasional professor who has begun passionately to reason about life and society and the meaning of it all." Here is the first time London used the phrase "the passionless pursuit of passionless intelligence," a phrase that became an effective shorthand during his lecture tour for all things wrong with the university system. The working class had passion. They lived on the street. They could not afford to take the God's-eye view of things. University students were swaddled in the American idealistic democratic conception of freedom and democracy. The working class knew this idealism was a political illusion foisted on the young through their education to convince them that there was no need to struggle, that inequality simply did not exist. "It was not the university that discovered" that "liberty and equality were passing away," and so it was up to the working class to form an organization like the ISS to reeducate the youth of America. Even before the election of 1904, which London again cited as his touchtone for activism, "there were Socialist party clubs and Socialist study clubs in half a dozen colleges." Thus, "the time was ripe for arousing the university and a call was sent out." He then included the June 1905 three-paragraph flier, asking for interested people to respond by mail and cited part of Higginson's response to *Harper's,* which Triggs had included in his article, that must have rung especially significant to someone who had not been shy about his influence by Herbert Spencer's work: "`The movement is based on the obvious fact that we are more and more surrounded by institutions, such as free schools, free text books, free libraries, free bridges, free water supplied, free lecture course, even free universities, which were all called socialistic when first proposed, and which so able a man as Herbert Spencer denounced as socialism to his dying day.'" No wonder the individualist Martin Eden is a

follower of Spencer. Given the resistance to socialism's multifaceted program, London asserted that "the Intercollegiate Socialist Society is militant and expresses itself in no uncertain terms." He cites an ISS call to students that premised the call for militancy on "the silence of our colleges and universities concerning the international movement (of socialism). . . . There can be no chance save in the active and persistent efforts by those of the student body who have come to understand the demand of the people for economic freedom and self-government." Students will have to fight for their economic and intellectual rights because the ISS "will not be met as a dove of peace by the universities themselves." Just look at the reaction of the editor of the *National Civic Federation Review,* wrote London. Easley says "he has received `a multitude of letters from university and college presidents and professors and ministers of the gospel,' who have thanked him for disclosing the real aim of the Intercollegiate Socialist Society." Easley and his cohort exist, as they explicitly state, to combat "the rising tide of socialism. . . . When the tide of socialism rises in spite of the passionless silence of the apathetic university it is time for the students themselves to learn the nature of socialism."[134] The

---

[134] "Fifteen Minutes of Socialism with Jack London," *Inter Ocean,* 26 Nov. 1905, 29. I am guessing that this quotation is also from the text of "Intercollegiate Socialist Society." to a news service titled Potentia and received fifty dollars; *Potentia* was also the title of an annual, where London, I imagine, assumed the essay would appear as well as in newspapers that subscribed to the Potentia service. Charmian's bibliography of London's work notes the publication date as October 1907; see Charmian (Kittredge) London, "Bibliography," JL 21287. Neither the manuscript of "Intercollegiate Socialist Society" nor its appearance in *Potentia* have been located. London's sales notebook says that it

ISS will not only encourage the young to study socialism but it will also help reform the university system and infuse it with the passion that animates the working class.

On his first visit to Chicago during the lecture tour, London was interviewed by a reporter for the *Inter Ocean.* The lead paragraph contained London's own rebuttal of Easley's attack. The reporter began: "[London] is a proponent of the `College Socialist

---

was "sent to *Potentia* By Potentia Syndicated" (London, "Magazine Sales. No. 3 Feb. 1903 to July 1907," JL 934). It appeared in the *Syracuse Herald,* sometime in December 1905; the clipping is pasted into London's scrapbook with just the year, no month, but surrounded by clippings from the first two weeks of December. Its relationship to the *Inter Ocean* piece is interesting. Apparently, the reporter for the *Inter Ocean* in Chicago had access to London's essay, for he interwove his interview with London with the essay itself. It is possible that the text in the *Syracuse Herald* is a reprint of the *Inter Ocean* material without the interview, but I think it more likely that the Potentia Syndicate sold the text to the *Syracuse Herald,* which then cut the text at the moment that London reprinted the call for the ISS. The reporter for the *Inter Ocean* had either the text from Potentia or, again most likely, a carbon copy that London must have brought with him on his tour. To be honest, I am not 100 percent sure that what I am quoting from is in fact the text for what in the sales notebook he calls "Intercollegiate Socialist Society." The most conclusive proof that this is the correct text is the match between the text in the *Syracuse Herald* and *Inter Ocean* and London's notes for the essay as well as the fact that he wrote "Potentia" at the top of his single page of notes as well as at the top of Triggs's article. But until either the manuscript itself or the *Potentia* text appears we will have to remain in some amount of doubt.

Movement' that has come in for such severe criticism, particularly by the National Civic federation. Mr. London said in effect that the National Civic federation does not know what it is talking about so far as college socialism goes. He retorts that the Civic federation is in itself socialistic," meaning, I believe, that London could call any mutually supporting organization, even if formed to support capitalism, a socialistic endeavor, employing the wide meaning of *socialism* to refer to any social action. Of course, he was uttering this assessment tongue in cheek, but the enemies of socialism were on the attack, and London understood his tour, his support for the ISS, and his socialist publications not merely as a pedagogic enterprise but, to riff off of Cecelia Tichi's book, as a fight for America's soul.

Given London and Triggs's common interest in the Arts and Crafts movement (an aesthetic manifestation of their socialism), which we will see in the discussion of London's essay "The House Beautiful," its not surprising to see Triggs's paragraphs prominently used in a 1906 pamphlet advertising the ISS.[135] Other items in the pamphlet include the initial call to join the society, a list of officers, a reprint of Higginson's letter to *Harper's,* and its articles of incorporation. The latter concerned its "objects and plans" (to provide printed matter for the study of socialism by university, college, and high school students) and qualifications for membership (any student "above the rank of grammar school" as well as anyone "interested in the work of the Society, elected to sustaining membership by the Executive Committee, who pays $20 or more a year to the

[135] As a teaser to this shared aesthetic vision, I mention that Henry Meade Bland's 1906 profile of London was reprinted in Gustav Stickley's periodical *The Craftsman.* See JL scrapbooks, vol. 7, pp. 112-16.

propaganda fund of the Society"). The ISS's recommended reading list was divided into six sections: (1) Theoretical Socialism (elementary), which included Hillquit's *History of Socialism in the United States, History of Socialism* by Thomas Kirkup, *Economics of Socialism* by H. M. Hyndman, *The Social Revolution* by Karl Kautsky, and *The Communist Manifesto;* (2) Theoretical Socialism (advanced), which included Marx's *Capital,* Engels's *Origin of Family, Private Property and State,* Paul Lafargue's *Evolution of Property from Savagery to Civilization,* Edward Carpenter's *Civilization: Its Cause and Cure,* and Enrico Ferri's *Socialism and Modern Science;* (3) Current American Problems, wich included Ghent's *Our Benevolent Feudalism,* Lincoln Steffens's *The Shame of the Cities,* Brooks's *the Social Unrest,* Hunter's *Poverty,* Thorstein Veblen's *The Theory of the Leisure Class* and *The Theory of Business Enterprise,* Jacob Riis's *How the Other Half Loves,* Ida Tarbell's *History of Standard Oil,* Charlotte Gilman's *The Home* and *Human Work,* and London's *War of the Classes;* (4) Fiction, which included Bellamy's *Looking Backward,* Frank Norris's *The Octopus,* Sinclair's *The Jungle,* Bernard Shaw's *The Unsocial Socialist,* Zola's *Paris,* and London's *The People of the Abyss;* (5) Popular Pamphlets, which included a number of items in Charles H. Kerr's Pocket Library of Socialism series ("The Scab" by London, "Appeal to the Young" by Peter Kropotkin, "Trusts and Imperialism" by Gaylord Wilshire) as well as Robert Blatchford's *Merrie England;* and (6) Socialist Periodicals, which included *International Socialist Review, Wilshire's Magazine, Justice, The Worker, Appeal to Reason, Social-Democratic Weekly,* and *The Christian Socialist.*[136]

[136] This bibliography is from a four-page brochure entitled "Books on Socialism: Recommended to College Students by the Executive Committee of the Intercollegiate

When London published "What Life Means to Me" in *Cosmopolitan,* Sinclair told him it would be perfect for the ISS.[137]

About six months after the first public announcement of the society's formation, a progress report was released to the public, signed by Strobell, London, and Sinclair, but also by Morris Hillquit and Robert Hunter. The former was of course a cofounder of the Socialist Party of America, and London's association with him would be the equivalent of Norman Mailer campaigning with Bernie Sanders. The latter was active in the Settlement Movement and managed the University Settlement House in New York where William English Walling and Leroy Scott, author of *The Walking Delegate,* had lived. As I said, he had written *Poverty,* cited by London on his lecture tour and by Easley in his defamatory essay in the *National Civic Federation Review*.

Socialist Society," JL scrapbooks, 7, pp. 110-11. The brochure ends with a call for submissions for an essay competition.

[137] See Upton Sinclair, letter to London, 19 Feb. 1906, Jl 18262: "I have just been reading your article in the new Cosmopolitan. ["What Life Means to Me"] It seems to me one of the best things that our Socialist movement has brought forth. It is just the thing for the I. S. S. to take up and circulate. I want you to let me have line by return mail to tell me whether we may use it. I will also drop a line to Warren and tell him to read it, and if he cares to print it we will get him to make an edition for us out of the same type." Warren is Fred Warren, publisher of *An Appeal to Reason.* London agreed, and, as Harry Laidler wrote in 1915, it was one of the "chief literary gems" the ISS circulated during this time period (Harry Laidler, "Teaching the Collegians to Fight, Not Sleep," *New York Sunday Call,* 24 Oct. 1915, JLE 3149).

The progress report stated that the organization now had forty dues-paying members, though over a thousand people had expressed interest in helping the ISS. The ISS now had study chapters or reading groups at Wesleyan (the first to form), Michigan (the group that changed into the SDS in the sixties), Yale, Harvard, Columbia, Bryn Mawr, and the University of Chicago. Other campuses had expressed sincere interest, speakers were lined up, authors were committed to write essays, and volunteers were ready to distribute literature, but the ISS lacked the headquarters personnel to print and mail ISS material. So the progress report was really an appeal to the membership to fund a full-time secretary, and the signatories to the appeal—London, Sinclair, Hillquit, Hunter, and Strobell—pledged their contributions in the hopes that others would follow.[138] The appeals helped. In the first year, the ISS had $284.37.[139] By May 1907, when London had to give up his presidency and Stokes took over, membership totaled eighty-two and the bank account was up to $400. Four years later, the membership was 720 and the account contained over $4,000.[140] In 1911, the ISS hosted a speech by Victor Berger, newly elected as the first socialist congressman, at Carnegie Hall, drawing a large crowd.[141] In 1913, a year in which the *Intercollegiate Socialist* (edited by Laidler) listed fifty-seven college chapters on its masthead, William English Walling, who by then was

---

[138] "The Intercollegiate Socialist Society [statement]," JL 800; yes, this title differs from JL 801 only in the matter of the initial article.

[139] See Harry Laidler, "Teaching the Collegians to Fight, Not Sleep," *New York Sunday Call,* 24 Oct. 1915, JLE 3149.

[140] See Reynolds, "The Millionaire Socialists," 164.

[141] See Upton Sinclair, *My Autobiography,* 170.

on the executive committee of the ISS, spoke in Chicago to 350 members.[142] In 1916, it reached its peak number of chapters, seventy-one, and two years later it had declined to thirty-nine chapters.[143] As it turned out, Lovejoy did not have to handle huge sums after all, but the membership numbers became significant.

The student study groups, besides arranging speakers to visit their campuses, submitted essays to newspapers. For example, in 1907, the University of California group published "Words That Will Become Obsolete" in the *Socialist Voice;* Arthur George of the Berkeley group had sent it to London who passed it on to the *Socialist Voice.* It began, tongue in cheek, "We, the Simplified Language Committee of the Intercollegiate Socialist Society, recommend after careful deliberation, that the following three hundred words, with their roots, derivatives and related forms, be, as rapidly as possible [relegated to] academic obscurity, or entirely abolished. In order that this may be accomplished, we recommend that all habits, . . . and practices, that have caused their introduction into the language, be, by every possible means, done away with, and that new laws, standards and methods be sought, that shall, by their logical operation, render the use of these words obsolete." Included in the three hundred were *adultery, alien, assassin, anarchy, beggar, proletariat, profanity, polygamy, war, whore, working class, unmanly, syphilis, vagabond,* and *oligarchy.* In case readers might accuse the group of being destructive, not constructive, it created "an additional list of three hundred words, to represent the type of

---

[142] See William English Walling, letter to Anna Strunsky Walling, 7 Dec. [1913?], William English Walling Papers, Wisconsin State Historical Society, correspondence, box 1, folder 1.

[143] Horn, *The Intercollegiate Socialist Society, 1905-1921,* 85.

language that we desire to have preserved and brought into more general usage, reflecting the growth of those laws, standards and methods of social activity, which are indifferently known as democratic, republican or socialist, replacing the anarchistic language and ideals that now prevail." These words included *candid, belief, benevolence, best, better, brave, business, busy, faith, fame, family, federal, capital (productive property), celebrity, cash, literature, love,* and *loyalty.*[144] The emphasis on the linguistic nature of politics greatly appealed to the committee's advocate.

Even though a number of college men pledged to begin ISS clubs—including those at Harvard, Wesleyan College, and the University of Chicago; London had the power not only to antagonize his political opponents but to inspire the young—the ISS never sustained its national significance, at least until it changed its name in the sixties. Part of it was due to the itinerant nature of undergraduates as well as to their on-again, off-again interest, as exemplified by this short report in the *Socialist Voice* of Oakland: "It will undoubtedly be of gratification to the comrades generally to learn that the `Social Progress Club' at the University of California has at last settled down to business. Since the inception of our club, a year ago, little of practical value has been accomplished; of

---

[144] "Words That Will Become Obsolete," *Socialist Voice,* 16 Mar. 1907, 1, JL scrapbooks, vol. 8, n.p. Elipses indicate words blurred in the microfilming of the scrapbook. The newspaper published London's cover letter that accompanied the submission: "Dear Comrade Tuck: I am sending herewith a manuscript by Comrade Arthur George of Berkeley. You may . . . care to publish it in The Voice. If you don't, please return to me. Seems to me that there is quite a bit of propaganda in Comrade George's article. Yours for the Revolution, Jack London."

late, however, we have decided to carry on a more active educational and propaganda campaign which, I feel sure, can but result in great good. Arrangements are now on foot for a series of lectures to be held on the campus. We hope to keep the ball started by Jack London, rolling."[145] Whether that ball rolled or not is unknown. Henry Rallston, the undergraduate at Yale who signed London's name to his own essay "Things Alive," is another example of undergraduate dilettantism; after helping to form an ISS chapter at Yale, he graduated and eventually became a real estate agent in Florida. But this dilettantism is merely another form of the enthusiasm for socialism that took over the country after 1905. As Hillquit said, "Socialism became popular, almost a fad."[146] Hillquit, however, did not admit to its decline and portrayed the ISS as a move from "idea and symbol" in its first years to a "career of growth and expansion under the joint direction of Harry W. Laidler and Norman Thomas" after World War I.[147]

---

[145] "Socialism at the University," *Socialist Voice* (Oakland), 1906, JL scrapbooks, vol. 7 p. 143. This was most likely March 1906. According to A. M. Simons, after London's speech at Mandel Hall at the University of Chicago, the question and answer session—as well as the speech itself—motivated almost twenty of "some of the brightest and best known men in the University" to form an ISS club (A. M. Simons, "`The Social Revolution': Socialism at the Chicago University," *Socialist Voice* (Oakland), 17 Feb. 1906, 1). One can't discount the importance of London's personal appearances in forming ISS clubs, and then his disappearance from the organization.

[146] Morris Hillquit, *Loose Leaves from a Busy Life* (Macmillan Co.: New York, 1934), 55.

[147] Ibid., 61-62.

But American students were handicapped by a number of factors. They lived in "a play-world or imitation of the larger life outside their institution" (unlike their European counterparts) and susceptible to an inexperience "bordering on helplessness." And they were also faced with the large question of which socialism to commit to. The society's avowed purpose was to simply study all aspects of socialism, but with moderates like Hillquit and Stokes running the show—Hillquit was president for ten years—the society was guaranteed to remain aloof from any form of revolutionary socialism. Some eastern chapters did participate in the 1912 IWW strike at the Lawrence textile mills, and Walling praised the IWW at a time when Haywood's membership on the NEC of the SP was threatened. Walling, while a member of the ISS executive committee, also helped found the NAACP (W. E. B. Dubois lectured under the auspices of the ISS) in the face of opposition from men like Victor Berger; In fact, Hillquit resigned from the ISS when Walling accused him of being pro-German at the beginning of World War I. In 1918, Stokes resigned because of Hillquit's and others' pacifism. The war, which triggered the opposition between those who believed in the international solidarity of the proletariat opposed to capitalist wars and those who resisted German hegemony, split the ISS apart. To be specific, "the controversial 1917 St. Louis Declaration of the Socialist Party of America divided its executive committee on the issue of support of American entry into World War I, and the conscription of college students into the military and the passage of the Espionage Act of 1918 drastically reduced its membership and activities," wrote Karnsoutsos. "The Society never fully recovered from these blows," she concludes.[148]

---

[148] Karnoutsos, "Harry W. Laidler and the Intercollegiate Socialist Society," 2.

To some extent, then, the ISS stalled in its growth and influence for the same reasons that a nationwide socialist political party never accomplished more than electing a single Congressman to office: it tried to encompass too many conflicting ideologies within socialism. As I hinted at previously, Stokes was asked to give the introduction to London's speech at the Grand Palace. Soon after London spoke in New York City, the treasurer of the ISS, Stokes, the man whom Upton Sinclair described as "timid and sensitive, and does not believe in class hatred,"[149] gave a speech that the newspapers headlined "J. G. P. Stokes on Socialism: Takes Issue with Jack London," and it is worth quoting at length:

> The Socialist party has fallen into some of the errors the capitalists have fallen into; it is vitiated by the same note. There is a great deal of misunderstanding and error which prevails in criticisms of Socialists by capitalists and vice versa. For instance, at the Grand Central Palace, in New York, the other night, your friend and mine, Jack London, made this remark to his audience: "Every capitalist is your enemy and every workingman is your friend." I know what Jack London meant by that. Let us see if his statement is correct, if it is logical. What is meant by capitalism from the Socialist's point of view? I presume most of you would say a capitalist is one who by his vote or efforts helps to bring about the continuance in office of the capitalistic element. If that is true, how about the workingman who, by his vote and sympathetic aid, helps to keep the capitalist in control? I am not attacking the fundamental philosophy of Jack London. I believe the capitalist system is less conducive to the welfare of people

[149] Upton Sinclair, letter to London, 5 Jan. 1906, JL 18261.

> as a whole than the co-operative system. . . . If by a capitalist you mean one who constantly antagonizes the co-operative commonwealth, then he is your enemy, but if you mean he is only a person who receives profits from the capitalistic system, then the editors of your own magazines and periodicals are your enemies, for they have much wealth invested in big enterprises. Every man who endeavors to promote justice is a friend of justice. Every man who does not take advantage to secure what he does not justly deserve is a worker for justice, even though he be in error and blind. Is it fair or conducive to the support of your own movement to call such a man your enemy.[150]

Others within the ISS had similar reactions. Laidler told Sinclair that he disapproved of London's choice of "Revolution" for his New York City appearance under the auspices of the ISS.[151] Mabel C. Willard, a socialist and dedicated member of the ISS, told Sinclair that after London's New York City speech friends of hers who were sympathetic to the cause had been "shocked back into conservatism. To them, Mr. London seemed a `revolutionist, an unsafe leader of the youth of the country.'"[152] Further, as I mentioned before, Higginson, who had agreed to be on the board, did not attend the meeting at

---

[150] "J. G. P. Stokes on Socialism: Takes Issue with Jack London," *Newark News,* 20 Feb. 1906.

[151] See Karnoutsos, "Henry W. Laidler and the Intercollegiate Socialist Society," 87, where she cites, Sinclair, letter to Laider, 30 Sept. 1906, ISS papers, Tamiment Library, NYU.

[152] Ibid, 88, citing Mabel C. Willard, letter to Sinclair, 8 Apr. 1906, ISS papers, Tamiment Library, NYU. Edgar Burill, a professor of English at Lake Forest College, wrote to Ellis Jones that both Sinclair and London were likely to be unwelcome at his college—the former because Sinclair had antagonized Swift with *The Jungle,* and London was divorced, "hence an improper influence to come into contact with our innocent young ladies here!" (ibid, 89).

Peck's restaurant and cancelled his appearance at one of London's East Coast lectures, and it is fair to speculate that he did so because he differed so fundamentally from London's revolutionary message.

London did not respond in public either to Stokes's pronouncement or to Higginson's apparent cowardice, and his term as president was meant to be temporary, but it does seem fair to say that he distanced himself rather quickly from the ISS when he realized that active socialists of whatever ideology would not predominate in the society. He did write back to Bamford after his friend criticized him for becoming involved in the ISS. "It seems to me as clear as day that the socialists of the ISS will have to withdraw eventually and found their own clubs," wrote Bamford, because, as he told another friend, "only men who have the fire can communicate it."[153] But London countered that the socialists who joined the ISS would eventually turn it into a socialist organization, boring from within in the way that London hoped socialists would capture the trade unions. For now, however, he was being realistic about the political status of college students; not only were they not socialist, they did not know what socialism was and so socialist college clubs could not be formed. Only clubs that studied socialism would germinate. How odd to see London being more cautious, more patient than Bamford. Though Bamford was afraid that their disagreement would damage their friendship, London assured him it would not.[154] As it turned out, Bamford was correct. The ISS did not become a training camp for young socialists, and it seems London anticipated this.

---

[153] Quoted in Max Horn, *The Intercollegiate Socialist Society, 1905-1921,* 197 n. 5.

[154] See London, letters to Bamford, 24 Feb. 1906, 27 Feb. 1906, *Letters,* 2:554-55.

The Importance of Upton Sinclair

As deeply invested as London was in the tour, he was equally concerned about maintaining his writing schedule. He neither wanted to give up commitments he had made in late 1905 nor forego possible inspirations for new projects while traveling. Just before he left on his fame tour, he wrote to Bamford, explaining why he could not visit him any time soon. He felt his new writing commitments were overwhelming. He was a week from finishing *White Fang.* "I have agreed to review *The Long Day* for *The Examiner.* . . . I have agreed to write an article on the Intercollegiate Socialist Society, for an international News Syndicate [the Potentia syndicate]. I have agreed to write a 500-word article on Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* for the Trust Edition of *The Appeal to Reason;* and an additional review of *The Jungle* for either the Hearst Newspapers or the New York *Independent.*"[155] Partly he wanted to convey how busy he was—and thus, like a modern-day academic, how high his status was—and partly he wanted to convey his commitment to the Cause. "In addition I am burdened with correspondence from the Socialists all over the country, asking me to lecture, because they understand that I am going on this lecture-tour." He said as well that he had not yet prepared the lectures he would give, though surely by this point he knew he would give some version of "Revolution."

Further, he was begging for some amount of control over his life. Just as he had told Collier that he couldn't write for his magazine because he didn't want to be tied down to a single writing project, he had told Wagner that he didn't want to do the lecture tour if it interfered with his writing. Wagner had tried to reassure him: "A lecture trip

---

[155] London, letter to Frederick Bamford, 2 Oct. 1905, *Letters,* 1:531.

need not necessarily interfere with your writing. You could lay aside one or two months, say November and December, 1905, and let us fill up that time for you, and you can devote the rest of the time to literary work."[156] He let himself be persuaded, but just as he was leaving he felt his writing schedule was being dictated by others. Looking ahead, we can see his eventual departure for the South Seas as not only an attempt to become an international proponent for socialism but also an emphatic no to demands to give more as an author than he was prepared to do. For all his sincere protestations about the centrality of politics in his working life, he was first and foremost an author.

As I discussed in the previous chapter, in the fall of 1905 London finished *White Fang* and reported on the second Britt-Nelson fight nearly simultaneously, infusing the same themes in each of the two seemingly disparate genres. That moment when he decided to write about the civilizing of a dog seems to have excited a deeper concern about the savage, or primitive, a concern that would ramify at least through the writing of *Adventure.* We might even see the next novel after that one, *Burning Daylight,* as the culmination of his extensive treatment of the savage, for the hero is a kind of White Fang brought out of the North and civilized by capitalism.

Besides the thematic of the binary of savagery/civilization, his representation of the brotherhood of man took central place in his writing. Just as he was finishing *White Fang,* London also wrote a review of Dorothy Richardson's *The Long Day,* an act of solidarity with women workers in New York City. As he told Bamford, "the writer is a socialist woman, and the book is about the working girls of New York."[157] Mother Jones

---

[156] Slayton Lyceum Bureau, letter to London, 29 Nov. 1904, JL 18510.

[157] London, letter to Frederick Bamford, 2 Oct. 1905, *Letters,* 1:531.

had written to him in September, asking him if he would "kindly review a book written by a young girl who has been up against the rocks of Capitalism."[158] She alluded to the work she had been doing with the laundry workers in Troy, New York, and part of the reason London wrote the review was to be included in "the brotherhood of man." If the socialists of Alameda County could send money, then he could invest the power of his name and position as one of the foremost American authors in the cause of exploited workers in, as Mother Jones said, "the slave pens of Capitalism." London then wrote to Jack Barrett of the *San Francisco Examiner* to ask if they would be interested, and Barrett said yes. *The Long Day,* which grew out of Richardson's reporting on labor conditions for women in New York City, was "one of the most prominent examples of the extensive `working-girl' literature published at the turn of the century. The first-person story of a young Pennsylvania schoolteacher forced by circumstances to seek work in the factories of New York, *The Long Day* created a sensation when it was published."[159] Undoubtedly, London's review helped prolong that sensation. "Here is a true book," he began. "It is a human document." We remember that by this pairing of antimonies—the human and the document—he voices his central definition of literature:

---

[158] Mother Jones, letter to London, 29 Sept. 1905, JL 15620.

[159] Alice Fahs, *Out on Assignment: Newspaper Women and the Making of Modern Public Space* (University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, N.C., 2011), 176. Fahs rightly stresses how Richardson's newspaper work served as a rough draft for her novel, pointing out how paragraphs appeared word-for-word in both media. Here is another example of what I discussed in volume 1, 366-68, the porous boundary between newspapers and fiction.

"impassioned realism." The theatrical must be infused with the absorptive. In this case, the document speaks of how capitalism has rendered the human into a beast. Just as boxers lose their physical beauty so too do women workers face the reality of how physical labor destroys "that beautiful body. . . . How will she retain the color of in her cheeks? . . . How will she keep her springy step? . . . the resilience of her muscles?" If his discourse sounds "sexualized" it is because he fears that capitalistic manual labor will destroy the reproductive function of women: "last but not least, how will she keep the strength in her loins, from which, strong or weak, must come the next generation of women and me?"[160] Of course men, too, suffer from the threat of being rendered impotent by such work.

This review is invested, though lightly, with the dichotomy of savage versus civilized. "In the ancient world, where men ran naked, killed with their hands and drank blood from their enemies' skulls, one worked for oneself." Only London could imagine the political economy of the Bone Age. The point is that the means of production in civilized America are owned, not by the naked individual, but by the capitalists and "before the hungry individual can go to work he must get permission from the owned of a machine." The Machine Age is defined not only by the degradation of the worker, not only by the separation of labor and value, not only by the huge income gap between the proletariat and the plutocrat, but by the age's mismanagement of basic necessities. Either one starves or one works and in so doing destroys one's body. "Here is work to be done by every human creature that takes pride in the fact that he is human and not a beast."[161]

---

[160] London, review of Dorothy Richardson, *The Long Day*, JL 1075.

[161] London, review of Dorothy Richardson, *The Long Day*, JL 1075.

To be a beast would be to ignore the pain and suffering of women like those whose desperate work lives are recounted in Richardson's book. Now workers whose jobs degrade them aren't the only potential (work) beasts. Anybody, says our advocate for the weak and disadvantaged, could end up as such.

Both Richardson and Mother Jones greatly appreciated the review. After London had sent Richardson a copy of the review and a letter, Richardson wrote, "I hardly know how to express my gratitude and appreciation for your more than splendid review of The Long Day." He had asked her if she were a socialist, and she was enthusiastic in her affirmative response; she was in fact close friends with Eugene Debs, and she told London that in the not-too-distant past she had been more radical than now: "I used to be with the revolutionists a great deal, and there is nothing, of course, like the personal element in keeping alive the spirit of this, as with all other faiths."[162] Like so many socialists, including London, becoming a socialist was akin to a baptism. "I owe you a debt of gratitude for the magnificent review you gave my friend's book. I need not say to you how fully both she and I appreciate it," wrote Mother Jones, adding that she hoped to meet him during his lecture tour.[163] Not only did they meet in dramatic fashion at Fanueil Hall and the Grand Central Palace, but London, Charmian, Richardson, and the Wilshires spent an afternoon together in New York. Socialism and authorship blended together on the tour. There were other literary gatherings, with, at various times, Edwin Markham,

---

[162] Dorothy Richardson, letter to London, 2 Nov. 1905, JL 17181. Interestingly, she had no problem with what Fahs would call London's "loopy," "sexualized" digression about "the threatened body of the heroine and race suicide" (Fahs, *Out on Assignment,* 185).

[163] Mother Jones, letter to London, 6 Nov. 1905, JL 15621.

Elsa Barker, and Charles G. D. Roberts. And one can only imagine what Carl Sandburg and London would have shared had they met in Chicago instead of missing each other by a matter of days.[164] These gatherings of painters, photographers, novelists, and essayists represented a different sort of brotherhood. It was a community of artists, as strong or stronger as his political communities.

He continues the thematic of the brotherhood of man in his next artwork, "What Life Means to Me." Bailey Millard, the relatively new and energetic editor of *Cosmopolitan,* dreamt up this series, and, besides London, the contributors included John Burroughs, Edwin Markham, Julia Ward Howe, Upton Sinclair, and others. London was indebted to Millard. As had many New York editors, Millard had come East from San Francisco, having worked at every major Bay Area newspaper as well as all the minor ones, with one or two exceptions.[165] When he worked at the *San Francisco Examiner,* he

---

[164] See Penelope Niven, *Carl Sandburg: A Biography* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1991), 105; Niven discusses Sandburg's essay on London in *To-Morrow* on pages 105-6: "London was a dominant force in Sandburg's intellectual life" (106).

[165] See Bailey Millard, *History of the San Francisco Bay Region,* 3 vols. (Chicago: American Historical Society, 1924), 1:260. Millard relates that "so many San Francisco newspaper men went to New York in the 'nineties and later that at one time Manhattan seemed to be full of them. Hearst was accused of importing San Francisco journalists by the carload. Others went on their own initiative, and for a time San Francisco was nearly deserted by `the talent.'" (ibid, 1:258). Again it is worth noting that London did not leave his home state, thus marking him solidly as a western or Pacific Rim author. See Williams, *Author under Sail,* p. 69.

had accepted London's short story "Uri Bram's God."[166] Three years later, London thanked him for publishing some of his feature stories and asked if Millard might give him an opportunity to review some books. It seems that Millard had provided him the opportunity to write regularly for the *Examiner* in the summer of 1902, and, as I mentioned before, they knew each other well enough for London to close out his letter on a personal note, saying he identified with Millard and his unsuitability for working in a newspaper office nine to five, his love of good literature, and his need for the "fresh open life."[167]

So Millard thought of London first for his new series for the *Cosmopolitan.* He wrote to London in early November 1905; Jack had been lecturing for nearly a month by the time he got the proposal: "We are trying to secure from each of a half-dozen or more prominent writers and men of affairs an expression of his philosophy of life, in which a strong biographical note shall be heard [from *in* to *heard* is underlined by JL]. This expression is to be given in a three thousand word article, which shall sum up the writer's experience of life, [from *sum* to *life* is underlined by JL] tell what he stands for and what he would like to accomplish or see done in the world."[168] When Millard received London's response, he told the author that there had been a shift in the series' purpose: "From the tone of your note in reply to my request for the article on your philosophy of life, I should take it that you understand this to cover the history of your experience,

---

[166] See the Williams, *Author under Sail,* p. 367, for a discussion of the larger context for this submissiom

[167] London, letter to Millard, 21 Feb. 1903, *Letters,* 1:345.

[168] Bailey Millard, letter to London, 8 Nov. 1905, JL 15372.

rather than your views in relation to a citizen's object of existence. Our title for the article has been changed to `What Life Means to Me,' and I shall be obliged if you keep this in view when writing."[169] It's a subtle shift, but it seems to indicate a desire on the magazine's part to receive an apolitical essay, something that would not expound upon London's "views in relation to a citizen's object of existence." No matter. For London, there was no hiding the significance of his political conversion, and, in any case, he received the second letter after he had completed the essay.

Millard seemed happy enough with the essay. The magazine announced the series in February 1906 after having received London's copy: "What life means to the thinking man of eminence is a subject in which there is much curious and much valid interest. Take the man of large affairs, take the philosopher or the famous novelist. We read him and read of him, but how little do we know of his private view of life?" Not much, apparently. "Among those to respond to our invitation for literature of this sort was that forceful writer, Jack London," continued the editorial announcement, "whose views are so eloquent and refreshing that they will be the first to be printed in this noteworthy series." It wasn't the first time Millard had asked London for his opinion on a hot topic of the day. In the same issue as the editorial announcement, the magazine ran a piece by Frederick Upham Adams, who had asked ten prominent American men to comment on the general question, "Are Great Fortunes Great Dangers?" Adams asked a series of more specific questions concerning public ownership of utilities, taxation, and inherited wealth.

---

[169] Millard, letter to London, 24 Nov. 1905, JL 15373.

London's answers consistently were the most radical and unforgiving in their socialism.[170]

---

[170] To the question, "The wealth of several of our American capitalists is no conservatively estimated at from $100,000,000 to $500,000,000. Can a man render to his country or to mankind a service which will entitle him to so great a reward?" London said, "No; the sum of the remuneration to all our patriots and statesmen from the beginning of our history is not so large." To the question, "Does the possession of a billion of dollars in the hands of an individual constitute a menace to the republic?" London replied, "Yes; a menace as colossal as the sum of dollars." "If it shall become desirable to legislate to lessen the disparity between those of vast wealth and those of moderate or small holdings," imagined Adams in a more naïve time, "what measures would you recommend? How about an income tax? How about an inheritance tax?" London answered with his most challenging program: "I should recommend the application of the law of eminent domain to the land, and the making and applying of a similar law to the machinery. The result would be the collective ownership of all land and all machinery and then there would be no disparity of wealth. The income of every able-bodied individual would then be the income earned by his toil and not earned by his possessions." And, to the questions, "Do you favor the municipal ownership of street railways, gas plants and similar utilities? Do you favor or oppose the government ownership of railways? London was emphatic: "I favor municipal ownership of all municipal utilities; state ownership of all state utilities; national ownership of all national utilities."

His contribution to "What Life Means to Me" conveyed the same political-economic message, but in personal terms. If we divide up the title in three parts, we see that he formed the essay from a combination of genres: the self-help essay, similar to his imagined "Hints to a Beginner" series ("What Life"); the autobiographical conversion tale of the uninitiated, unthinking, uncaring citizen of America baptized by the fire of social responsibility and thus the making of the socialist heart and brain ("Means"); and the monumental, theatrical statement of one's presence in the public imaginary ("to Me"). The title resonates with "How I Became a Socialist" for three reasons. First, they were written at the invitation of magazine editors to establish a series. Second, they share the same combination of genres. Third, the meaning that he finds in life is the reason he became a socialist. "What Life Means to Me," however, subsumes the other essay. Written on the train to Kansas City in November 1905, it provided London with the opportunity to think systemically about his life so far—the centrality of socialism, to be sure, but more than that. Five years later, responding to a minister's sermon that attacked Martin Eden—and thus Jack London, if you followed the minister's lead in reading the novel as pure autobiography—because he had no faith, London responded with a paragraph from "What Life Means to Me." "Let me here quote some of my faith," he told Reverend Charles Brown in a letter to the *San Francisco Examiner:*

> I look forward to a time when man shall progress upon something worthier and higher than his stomach, when there will be a finer incentive to impel men to action than the incentive of to-day, which is the incentive of the stomach. I retain my belief in the nobility and excellence of the human. I believe that spiritual sweetness and unselfishness will conquest the gross gluttony of to-day. And last

> of all, my faith is in the working class. As some Frenchman has said, "The stairway of time is ever echoing with the wooden shoe going up, the polished boot descending."[171]

We'll explore the connection between that last sentence and *The Iron Heel,* but for now the connection between the two is clear; in November 1905 he hadn't had the idea for writing that specific novel, but he had the ambition for writing some kind of socialist novel. This essay looks forward in other ways as well. Cecelia Tichi points out that it forecasts the plot for *Martin Eden,* but it also looks forward to his lecture tour and deals with the anxiety of facing a national audience that may not be as receptive to his talks as the many California audiences he had already addressed in 1905. In fact, while reading the essay one gets the impression that it was written after the tour was complete—"I stayed in hotels and clubs and homes and Pullmans and steamer chairs with captains of industry, and marveled at how little traveled they were in the realm of intellect"—but he is actually recounting incidents and feelings he had while lecturing in the Bay area and during the first few weeks of his tour.[172]

---

[171] London, "What Life Means to Me," *Cosmopolitan Magazine* 40 (Mar. 1906): 530. As far as I can tell, the source for the "Frenchman's" quotation has never been located.

[172] Ibid., 529. Charmian was confused about the date of composition. In *The Book of Jack London,* she re-creates a conversation in New York City in January 1906 between Edwin Markham and London about composing this essay: "Jack had not yet found leisure in which even to ponder what he should say; but a conversation with Edwin Markham stirred him to action" (Charmian London, *The Book of Jack London,* 2:105). But

The essay is structured in three parts, each part marked by a variation on the first sentence: "I was born in the working-class."[173] In the first part, he posits his childhood poverty as a "bottom"; it's not exactly an abyss, but it was something to climb out of. The essay's original subtitle was "The Confession of a Climber."[174] Not surprisingly, then, the image of a ladder—a socioeconomic ladder—predominates as he decides to earn as much money as possible to escape poverty and achieve "all that was fine and noble and gracious." (392) He does this by becoming first a newspaper boy, second an oyster pirate, and third a worker at various unskilled jobs. Exploitation matters little to him because "it was all in the game." But "too much work sickened me," he says, and that's what drove him to become a tramp: not resentment toward the employer who had hired him to replace two men, not the hard labor that he was engaged in, but rather an excess of work. This is not the story of Johnny in "The Apostate." It's an odd, incomplete, and vague statement of a major change in his life, especially since it marks the end of the first third of the essay. Rather than decide to work more intelligently, to take a different, less onerous job, he decided against all work: "I did not wish ever to see work again. I fled

---

London's sales notebook entry for the essay states, "Written in November 1905 and sold to Cosmopolitan. Received $345.00 in Jan. 1906" (London, Sales Notebook, JL 934).

[173] Sinclair begins his contribution to the series in identical fashion, though with a different intended result: "I was born in what is called the upper middle-class." Whereas London's birth automatically qualified him for membership in the Socialist Party, Sinclair's birth is an obstacle to overcome before he can become a member. See 41 (Oct. 1906): 591-95.

[174] London, "My Outlook upon Life: The Confession of a Climber," JL 964.

from work. I became a tramp." So without a real explanation, London tells us he is perfectly content to abandon the socioeconomic ladder and became accustomed to "bloody sweats in slums and prisons." (394).

The second part begins, "I had been born in the working-class, and I was now, at the age of eighteen, beneath the point at which I had started." Now he was in "the pit, the abyss, the human cesspool." To escape the abyss, one needs, not a ladder, but knowledge. At this point he dispenses with the abyss/ladder metaphor and turns to a second governing metaphor: the house. In eight months this metaphor would become literal in his essay "My Castle in Spain"/ "The House Beautiful." Here, in "What Life Means to Me," he imagines all the classes of society defined by where they might live in a house. The proletariat lives in the basement, the rich on the parlor floor, and the brain merchant in the attic, where the good bohemians live. "It was true, the diet there was slim," he wrote, "but the air at least was pure." (528). In the attic he found out he was a socialist. That is, he had been converted without knowing it, and only after he read intellectually did he realize what his philosophy of life really was. It was a combination of revolutionary socialism and an intense "warm faith in the human, glowing idealism, sweetnesses of unselfishness, renunciation and martyrdom. . . . Here life was clean, noble, and alive." But, and here the similarity to *Martin Eden* is pronounced, he becomes disillusioned because, after being admitted to the parlor floor—"as a brain merchant I was a success" (528)—he did not find life being lived. In lines forecasting extemporaneous remarks he would make on his tour," he writes, "I had expected to find men who were clean, noble, and alive. . . . It is true, I found many that were clean and noble; but with rare exceptions, they were not *alive.*" And then he repeats what he had

just written in his essay for the ISS: “In this connection I may especially mention the professors I met, the men who live up to that decadent university ideal, `the passionless pursuit of passionless intelligence.’” (529)

Suffering from the disillusion with the materialism and corruption of the successful, our narrator begins his third section: “So I went back to the working class, in which I had been born and where I belonged.” (530). Birth is biology is fate. Not only was he fated to return to the working class, but the upper floors of the house are fated to fall. “Then we’ll cleanse the cellar and build a new habitation for mankind, in which there will be no parlor floor, in which all the rooms will be bright and airy, and where the air that is breathed will be clean, noble and alive.” (530). The very air we breathe with be socialism. This is exactly the rhetoric of “The House Beautiful” and, looking even further into the future, his and Charmian’s intent for their ultimate living quarters, the Wolf House. The brain merchant-author imagined a stable, utopic dwelling in which the correct mode of life could be led, but the actual, flesh-and-blood author under sail would no sooner put down permanent roots in a house, no matter how perfect and grand in conception, than he would cease to write.

The essay is actually more interesting for what he left out than what he put in. Like his earlier essays about his beginnings as an author (“Getting into Print,” and so on), “What Life Means to Me” is the tale of someone who raised himself. It is further codification of his mythology of self-creation, of the man who never had parents, siblings, or a mentor. Amazingly, he never once mentions that he learned to write and that he had become a successful author. He uses the euphemism “brain merchant” instead of *author.* He never once mentions that he is married and that love might be a

fundamental concept of what makes life worth living for him. These absences are necessary to create a particular public image: the solitary genius. This conception of the author is more marketable than the image of a proletariat writer, true, but London is interested in making a different point. By calling himself a brain merchant, he means that he sells brain power, not a commodity like a book. The publisher sells books. The author uses his brain to write the book and thus sells his brain power. By constructing the publishing business in this fashion, he retains his position vis a vis the capitalists as a laborer using, not muscle, but brains.

Perhaps reminded of his previous newspaper work by his invitation from Millard, but mostly because he could not leave the world of newspapers for very long, he next wrote a mildly amusing piece on an obscure religious sect in Boston. (It contains a serious and highly significant paragraph pertinent to my discussion of *Before Adam* and *The Iron Heel,* which I will postpone until the next chapter.) Some Hearst newspaper reporters took him to the Odd Fellows' Hall where he witnessed a ceremony of the Holy Jumpers, enthusiasts who combined strenuous physical exercise with prayer and meditation.[175] "As I looked at six happy-faced Holy Jumpers disporting themselves on the muddy pavement in front of the Odd Fellows' Building yesterday afternoon I could scarcely refrain from joining them. They looked so happy. Besides, I haven't been getting much exercise lately."[176] One can almost hear our contemporary Dave Barry, the

---

[175] See Charmian London, diary, 1905, JL 218.

[176] London, "Jack London Sees Physical Culture Boom in Holy Stunts. His Brand of Religion, When He Chooses," *Boston American,* 19 Dec. 1905, 3; rpt. *Jack London Journal,* no. 5 (1998): 67. Although the *Boston American* was a Hearst paper,

humorist from the *Miami Herald,* in London's voice. The light tone befits his admiration of those who find the essence of established religions worthwhile but are able to encapsulate it in a modern-day social practice: "To praise the Lord, and at the same time to send the blood surging through all the body, flushing away waste tissue and building up new tissue, is certainly killing two birds with one stone." But London saw more than the benefits of physical exertion and prayer. In one beautifully succinct sentence, London captures not only the inner meaning of the Holy Jumpers but also what he most sought after in his own adventuring: "Their happy hearts became articulate through the flesh." As we will see in a discussion of the New Thought advocates in chapter 23, London sympathized with this direction in socioreligious thought, but he could never become more than a bemused supporter. Brother Ericson, who gave a sermon (and apparently stood still to deliver his talk), appealed "to the poor and lowly, to the tired and miserable and long-suffering. . . . In place of their misery and suffering he offered them gayety and laughter." He also offered an alternative to "the pomp and display of the churches [which] he called . . . `steepled clubhouses.'" Although the article gave London a respite from the intensity of the socialist movement, which would in London's view create a more hospitable world for fringe movements like the Holy Jumpers than the established religions, the fight for economic, political, and social justice had to do more than offer laughter in the place of poverty and demanded a seriousness unknown to New Thought advocates.

---

presumably in tune with London's needs and desires as an author, they tried to gyp him by initially paying only $25.00. In July 1906 he finally received an extra $75.00. See London, Sales Notebook No. 3, JL 934.

London had hoped to write steadily while on tour, but he produced only three brief works: the essay on the ISS, "What Life Means to Me," and his newspaper article on the Holy Jumpers. It seems that Slayton and London were wrong to imagine that he could maintain his usual productive writing schedule while on tour. Yet we can see from the latter as well as from some of the comments he made to reporters that he was mulling over ideas for sustained fiction. Nearly five months had passed since he had finished *White Fang,* and he used his time away from his writing desk to mentally plot out his next sustained period of writing.

Return to the Southland

Picking up where he had left off in October 1905, his very first work completed at home was a turn back to absorptive fiction about a Klondike dog; he completed "Brown Wolf" on 2 March 1906, a month after his return from the East.[177] It is often said in Jack London studies that, faced with the costs of his everyday life and the new financial demands of preparing for his and Charmian's trip around the world in a boat, London wrote what he wrote in 1906 and 1907 simply to pay the bills.[178] This in fact is not true.

---

[177] He sent the story to *Everybody's Magazine* on 3 March 1906, it was accepted twenty-five days later, and he returned corrected proofsheets on 8 April. It appeared in August 1906. He received $750.00 for 5900 words, and then he got 25 pounds in September for its publication in *Windsor Magazine* in England. See London, Sales Notebook No. 3, JL 934.

[178] Representative of this school of thought is of course Earle Labor. See Labor, *Jack London,* 235: "On March 2 he mailed off `Brown Wolf' to *Everybody's Magazine.* He

When London returned from his tour, he took stock of his contractual obligations with George Brett and Macmillan, realized he needed to complete a book of stories, and promptly set out to do so. He was contractually obligated to write stories, and "Brown Wolf" was his first of two to complete what would become *"Love of Life" and Other Stories.*

London made two sets of notes for this story, a definite departure from his practice; it seems likely that one set was written before the tour and another set after the tour as he thought harder about the story. In a July 1905 letter he told Brett that "in October I start East on this lecturing-trip, and during this lecturing-trip I have mapped out for myself to write a series of brief, nervous, strong, dramatic sketches."[179] In the first set of notes—written in words "brief, nervous, [and] strong"—entitled "Short Dog Story," he writes out the bare (dog) bones of a plot. Note how he leaves out plot details to first get at essentials:

> "A Dog—great love—one master. Second master. After years, both masters together--& dog has to choose between. First master in Klondike, all hardship, & suffering, & toil—second master, in Southland, all soft things,

---

was paid $750, but that was hardly enough to keep ahead of the mounting expenses of his latest dream. The *Snark* was exchanging his earnings for debts faster than he could write." John Cosgrave was back at *Everybody's Magazine* and accepted the story. See George Gilman Hall, letter to London, 20 Apr. 1906, JL 7064, for the acceptance. See the next chapter for an exchange between London and Cosgrave about short story aesthetics. He and Hall had very definite ideas about how to write a short story.

[179] London, letter to Brett, 3 July 1905, *Letters,* 1:497.

> comfortable. (How I win Brown.) The struggle in the dog. Tries to make both masters go off together. They agree to let him decide. Second master has a wife. A lick for her. His colossal perturbation & indecision. His whining & barking—his swift turns back and forth & between the two masters. Tucks head in wife's lap. First master goes off down trail. Can see him go, farther & farther. Dog lies down with second master. True to their compact, man & wife do nothing. They sit, watching & waiting, with beating hearts. And in the end, dog bounds off & runs to overtake first master. End with man & wife, sitting a bit apart, in same position. They look at each other. The woman smiles, but the tears well into her eyes. Man's eyes frankly wet. Maybe end right here, probably so—unless something tremendously appropriate and culminative may be said by one or the other."[180]

In the second set of notes, he begins to fill in the details. First come the names. The male main character is named first Jim, then Joe Irvine. By the time he had begun writing, though, he had already decided on Walt. Skiff Miller and Madge retain the names that he had decided on in these notes. Next he figures out that the two masters actually argue about the merits of each locale: "First master contends that dog is happier in the

---

[180] London, "Brown Wolf: [notes for a short story]," JL 494. It is also possible that when London's manuscript material was shipped to the Huntington Library and then catalogued, some notes that had been together were separated and the ones that didn't clearly mark themselves as about "Brown Wolf" were catalogued separately as "Dog Story." I would argue against this hypothesis because there are other groupings of notes titled "Dog Story" that have nothing to do with "Brown Wolf."

Northland." The second masters love the dog so much because it was so hard to win his affection. Within this context, London lets the idea out that the figure for his imagination is "remote and alien." This contest of wills—the master/author wooing his muse, taming it—leads London to see how the narrative will take shape. "Maybe beginning of story," he writes next, "and of their walk. `Where's Wolf?' wife asks. `Running a rabbit. There he is. And no rabbit. Describe Wolf. Then: `They loved the dog very much.'" I will discuss master (author)/dog (muse) relationship later, but now we see how the word *notes* is a bit of a misnomer. As he wrote out these notes, whole phrases and sentences form a rough draft for the story. More details follow: the first master is looking for his sister, then Wolf appears, licks his hand to the astonishment of the husband and wife, and "then the explanation begins." Now the narrative arc is firmly in his mind, and he sees the second master getting angry, Miller acting cool, says (in a line London used verbatim in the story), "`I reckon there's nothin' in sight to prevent me takin' 'm right here & now.'" In these notes, though, he imagined Miller making the "generous" offer of letting the dog decide between the two, not Madge. It's a subtle shift in narrative, but it is crucial in that Madge—obviously a Charmian London figure—provides a kind of moral compass for the men. In the story (and not in the notes), she tells Miller convincingly that "you consider only what you like. You do with him as you would with a sack of potatoes or a bale of hay.'" In both the notes and the story, Miller than voices a retrograde understanding of women: "`I know the ways of women. . . . Their hearts is soft. When their hearts is touched they're likely to stack the cards, look at the bottom of the deck, an' lie like the devil—beggin' your pardon, ma'am. I'm only discoursin' about women in

general,'" to which Madge sarcastically replies, "`I don't know how to thank you.'"[181] Never mind that London portrays both Miller and Walt as soft-hearted and "touched." It's Madge who sees the larger ethical picture. To commodify a living being, especially one capable of love for humans, is a sin. It leads to slavery. Future figures of Charmian in London's work will often function in the same way.[182]

The published story begins with an author figure and a scene of recognition and identity, as if London were restarting his authorial career as a fiction writer. Walt Irvine, a poet, waits outside his house in Glen Ellen, California, as his wife comes out, asking, "`Where's Wolf?'" and then calling out "`Wolf! Wolf! Here Wolf!'" Given that Jack's nickname was Wolf, that question, "where's Wolf?" addressed to her husband, becomes a kind query that hopes to discover what had happened to her writer-husband, the author she had known so well for years but that, after a long absence out East, seems to have disappeared. Walt assures he has not. "Mine is no futility of genius that can't sell gems to the magazines," Walt tells her, and then, as if he had just finished reading an essay by Jack London called "What Life Means to Me," he says, "I am no attic singer, no ballroom warbler. And why? Because I am practical. Mine is no squalor of song that cannot transmute itself, *with proper exchange value,* into a flower-crowned cottage, a sweet

---

[181] London, "Brown Wolf," *"Love of Life" and Other Stories,* p. 000. The notes read almost verbatim: "`I know the ways of women. Their hearts is soft. When their hearts is touched they're likely to stack the cards, look at the bottom card, an' lie like the very devil'" (London, "Dog story: [note for short story]," JL 611).

[182] See my essay "The Function of Charmian Kittredge London in Jack London's Fiction and Nonfiction," *Women's Studies* 46 (May-June 2017): 000-00.

mountain-meadow, a grove of redwoods, an orchard of thirty-seven trees, one long row of black berries and two short rows of strawberries. . . . I am a beauty-merchant, a trader in song, and I pursue utility." With the introduction of the Marxist term, *exchange value,* we recognize the fullness of London's conception of his authorial office at this moment in his career. The tour had only reinforced and clarified his economic position as an author. He didn't write for money; he wrote to create beauty and to live in bohemian splendor. But beauty paid, and he wanted to be paid for it.

Thus he compares himself to Orpheus, a figure London would have known from Offenbach's *Orpheus in the Underworld.*[183] But we sense a blustery, inflated tone, which

[183] See George Adams's essay on the importance of opera in London's life and work: *Oxford Handbook of Jack London.* Jeanne Campbell Reesman's reading of the story strains to incorporate the Greek myth of Orpheus, though there is no evidence that he read the mythological tale. Still, it was widely known and perhaps he knew it as part of one's general education. Nonethless, Reesman writes that "the key to `Brown Wolf' is the classical reference to Orpheus," as if a story has a "key." If we say, though, that the myth of Orpheus is a governing trope of the story, we miss how the two stories do not match, a fact that Reesman tries to mask. For her, the dog is Orpheus (Irvine can't be Orpheus because he "outwhistles Orpheus"), never looking back to lose Eurydice/Madge. Her reading continues in a strict biographical train, positing that London is "psychically on the trail with Skiff and Brown Wolf as much as he is at home in Glen Ellen, for that dualistic mode is the way his imagination characteristically works itself." (109) To say, however, that this "is the way his imagination characteristically works itself" is not the same as saying that London could imagine himself inside two different worlds, the North

Madge proceeds to puncture by calling him, not Orpheus, but "a street-arab." Neither one nor the other, Irvine is more like Edwin Markham than anyone else, a poet London had hung out with just two months previous—someone of genuine artistic talent who nonetheless succeeded in the magazine trade.

Brown Wolf is a beautiful object himself, and, coincident with London's evolving interest in the remote past and the remote future—a major theme of the next chapter of the present work—he seems to have come either from the past (he is after all a living being whose savagery is like that of the animals of the Bone Age) or from the future (the narrator calls him "remote and alien as a traveller from another planet"). In a book he most likely just finished, *The Universal Kinship* by J. Howard Moore (I will discuss the

---

and the South, which is all that Reesman is really saying. And even if that isn't enough, for London's imagination encompassed more than just two locales. Further, if you follow the Orpheus myth, then you have to abandon it at the end of the story, for Wolf chooses one place over the other. A reading that relies so heavily on the myth of Orpheus cannot explain Wolf's choice. It probably goes without saying that Reesman is blind to the economics of the story beyond saying that Irvine's soliloquy about the transmutation of words into money (she calls it a "confession," as if it were a sin to write and earn money) "points to London's desire to shed the tragic mode of his `Long Sickness' and get on with the business of living." (109). Reesman does not consider the context for the composition of the story, the fact that London had just returned from his tour promulgating socialism. Irvine's practicality is synonymous with Miller's utility, and the dog can inspire both. Biologically, however, he is suited for the North, and Miller knows this when he at the end he silently reminds Madge to stay silent, too.

book and its influence in full in the next chapter), London marked a passage that buttressed the evolutionary science of a dog's lifelong loyalty to a single owner.[184] Like Buck, Brown Wolf is affiliated with London's muse, being beautiful and timeless. The narrator offers no explanation for Irvine's obsession to capture him and to keep him. After Brown Wolf appeared on the ranch, like a down-and-out tramp, they fattened him up only to see him depart. Irvine happens upon him by chance, captures him, and sees him leave again. This capture and escape happens again and again until "he accepted the inevitable." (1076) They decide he is a Klondike dog-wolf, and, like Buck, longs to run wild in the North. But like White Fang, he can also settle in Sonoma Valley, content to lead a semi-domesticated life as Walt Irvine's familiar. He lies at Irvine's feet while he writes.

When Skiff Miller the Klondike mailman—an author figure in his own right—appears on the ranch, like Wolf, out of nowhere, a battle between the North and the South begins. Should Wolf be domesticated? is one way of putting the question. The larger question, however, is, dual. The first part has to do with biology: can he be domesticated? Isn't there something essential about the wolf-dog that makes it wild? The second part is London's metaphoric treatment of his relationship to his muse. We remember that while Wolf lay at Walt's feet, he was distracted almost to the point of paralysis: "Between petting and talking, [Walt lost] much time from his work." Walt has a muse already, a southern muse that is poetic in nature and seems most able to inspire poetry about the beauty of their surroundings. Wolf, however, is a muse of the Northland for writers describing a world with barely a landscape at all, just whiteness.

---

[184] See J. Howard Moore, *The Universal Kinship* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1906), 143.

The end of the story was forecast at the beginning. Wolf's continued attempts to escape Sonoma Valley are now climaxed. The North has come to him in the figure of Skiff Miller, and inevitably the two are reunited.[185] Biology trumps the civilizing process, and we cannot escape our past. Miller will manage the letters of the English language with this muse by his side, and London thus reaffirms his commitment to writing about the Northland. The abyss of the "Devil's Dice Box" and "An Odyssey of the North" may not be his dominant source any longer but it was his first conception of the source of his imagination. When White Fang came and stayed south, London's imagination found other sources, other abysses from which stories arose.

In eighteen days he would begin another Klondike story to complete an eight-story collection. But first he had to fulfill a promise to Upton Sinclair and write a review

---

[185] There are two interesting discrepancies between the manuscript and the story's book publication. First, in the final paragraph of the former the second sentence reads, "Not once did he turn his head, his wolf's brush standing out straight behind him what of his speed." In *Love of Life* the final four words have been deleted. Until we can examine the typescript, which seems to have disappeared, we won't know if the change was made before it was sent to the magazine or while the story was in proof. Most likely it is the former because the change appears in the book version, and Macmillan set type from a typescript provided by London and not from the magazine version of the story. The second is of a different editorial order. In the manuscript, the final line was "The man and the woman sat on in silence." He wrote that line, then crossed it out, and then signed and dated the manuscript. He could see the story was not about the effects of Brown Wolf's departure on Walt and Madge. The story was about the proper place of Brown Wolf.

of *The Jungle,* which had been published in the *Appeal to Reason* from February to November 1905 and then by Doubleday Page in February 1906.[186] That London published three different commentaries on this book not only testifies to his sincere appreciation but also marks *The Jungle* as central to his political-literary philosophy. No other book and no other author during his career received so much public attention from him. Sinclair, in 1905, was not famous, he was twenty-seven, and he was broke and depressed. London, though only two years older, was now nationally famous and rich and eager to pull as many deserving unknown authors into the limelight with him. This was another duty of the office of American author as London understood it.

First, in the July issue of *The Appeal to Reason*, London's initial comment about the novel, solicited by Sinclair, appeared on the second page in a box above the installment for chapter 16: "The Jungle is going splendidly. I liked the opening but now I like it least of all. The way the story picks up and keeps picking up is tremendous. It has

---

[186] The original manuscript was published as Sinclair, *Upton Sinclair's "The Jungle": The Lost First Edition,* ed. Gene DeGruson (Peachtree Press: Atlanta, 1988), which shows how much Sinclair edited his manuscript to create his final text. The manuscript as Sinclair first wrote it was published nearly simultaneously in three different publications: Wayland's quarterly journal *One-Hoss Philosophy,* the *Press-Post* (Columbus, Ohio), and *The Appeal to Reason*. He then edited the manuscript heavily, it was rejected by Brett at Macmillan, and then accepted and published by Doubleday Page. In chapter 12, I discussed the composition and publication of the book, including Sinclair's correspondence, sometimes desperate, with London and George Brett in which he pushed for time, money, and recognition.

stirred me and made me sit right up time and again. There has been nothing done like it. You have my heartiest congratulations."[187] I mentioned earlier that London told Bamford in late 1905 that he had promised a five-hundred-word review for *The Appeal to Reason*'s "Trust Edition" and a longer newspaper review, all this as a response to Sinclair's impassioned plea sent to London in September 1905: "Warren [Fred D., the managing editor of *The Appeal to Reason*] and I are agreed that two things are wanted. (1) He is preparing a Trust Edition—three or four million copies (fact). He will put an account of the book in this, and he wants a 500 word review of it from you. (2) An article about it to appear in the Independent the week the book is published (about Feb. 1) This can be easily arranged, as Holt asked me for an article about my work this very week. The article could be called "A Proletarian Novel", or something like that, and discussed as a picturesque product of the War of the Classes."[188] London's notes for the shorter review seem written immediately upon receipt of this plea: "Jungle A Proletarian novel The Uncle Tom's Cabin of Wage Slavery."[189] The latter phrase opens the review: "Here it is at last! The book we have been waiting for these many years! The `Uncle Tom's Cabin' of wage slavery! Comrade Sinclair's book `The Jungle!' and what `Uncle Tom's Cabin' did for black slaves, `The Jungle' has a large chance to do for the wage-slaves of today."

---

[187] London, comment on *The Jungle,* in *The Appeal to Reason,* 29 July 1905, dlib.nyu.edu/undercover/jungle-story-chicago-upton-sinclair-appeal-reason. According to Sinclair, this brief note netted him four thousand dollars from new readers of *The Appeal to Reason.* See Sinclair, *The Brass Check,* 32.

[188] Upton Sinclair, letter to London, 23 Sept. 1905, JL 18258.

[189] London, notes for review of *The Jungle,* JL 1115.

The review emphasizes its proletarian nature and the necessity for the proletariat to read and promote the book. The general public may laugh at the book or abuse it, he says, but "the most dangerous treatment it will receive is that of silence." "Comrades," he exhorts at the end, "it is up to you!"[190]

---

[190] London, "A Word to the Appeal Army from Jack London," *The Appeal to Reason,* 18 Nov. 1905, 5. The editors of *Letters* published this blurb, using its reprint in *Wilshire's Magazine* as their text, a faulty choice because it appeared after its original publication in *The Appeal to Reason* and because they include Wilshire's instruction at the end of its publication—"Send Sinclair that $1.20 to-day" as a line written by London. See London, letter to "Dear Comrades," *Letters,* 1:540-41.

I mentioned in chapter 12 that the analogy to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* probably originated in a general remark made by Leonard Abbott in *The Comrade.* The analogy was applied specifically to *The Jungle* was first made by Fred Warren in *The Appeal to Reason* when he announced to his readers that his periodical would serialize Sinclair's novel: "It will be the Uncle Tom's Cabin of the Socialist movement" (unsigned editorial comment, *The Appeal to Reason,* 4 Feb. 1905, 5). Warren may well have been aware of Abbott's comment, and/or he may have been making the analogy based on his reading of Sinclair's first novel, *Manassas,* which in part depicts slave life in the South. See Harris, *Upton Sinclair,* 67, and *Sinclair, The Jungle,* ed. James R. Barrett (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 351 note for page 317. See also Elliott Shore, *Talkin' Socialism: J. A. Wayland and the Role of the Press in American Radicalism, 1890-1912* (Lawrence, Ks.: University of Kansas Press, 1988), 168 for the attribution to Warren. Although Shore mentions London only once, his book is an invaluable guide to the still-underanalyzed

A little over three months later, on 6 March 1906, London wrote his extended, emotional, unadulterated laudatory review that in time became a kind of manifesto for the socialist movement. Again likening the book to *Uncle Tom's Cabin,* London took his own advice and shouted his praise from the rooftops. He ignored the obvious weaknesses of the book and instead forecasted that "not only may it become one of the `great sellers,' but it is very likely to become the greatest seller." He promoted it as a conversion story, which it is, not as a tract on food safety, which it became in the minds of the average American reader. He explained why it had to take place in Chicago, an argument he would adhere to when he wrote *The Iron Heel* later in the same year: "he selected the greatest industrial city in the country, . . . the most perfect specimen of jungle-civilization. . . . Chicago certainly is industrialism incarnate, the storm-center of the conflict between capital and labor, a city of street battles and blood." It is also obvious that his focus on the binary civilization/jungle shows him still mulling over his next novel, *Before Adam.*

Short of calling the novel a human document, London insisted on its veracity in the face of the kind of criticism he routinely received: that the incidents seemed so extreme that they could not be true. He in fact references himself (rendered anonymously as "a public speaker" on tour in New York city) who had cited statistics about wages in Chicago that newspapers had called lies.[191] He also references a discussion he had in

---

importance of Wayland, Warren, *The Appeal to Reason,* and radical journalism during this period in American history.

[191] Sinclair was well aware of this kind of attack. After Brett told him to cut out some of the more sensational material, he asked Lincoln Steffens for advice. Steffens told him,

Chicago with A. M. Simons, who had been Sinclair's guide in 1904 when he was doing research for *The Jungle;* Simons, whose pamphlet *Packingtown* had been influential for Sinclair, told both Sinclair and London about the accidental drowning of a child in a puddle. His review stresses how un-American America had become: "it depicts what our country really is, the home of oppression and injustice, a nightmare of misery, an inferno of suffering, a jungle wherein wild beasts eat and are eaten."

Jurgis's narrative fit right into London's own autobiography; early on, working in the jute mill and the electric company, he thought he could ascend the ladder he had just described in "What Life Means to Me" by working hard and harder. Thinking of his own experiences as a child laborer, London forecasts one of his next short stories, "The Apostate" when he quotes extensively from the chapter in which little Stanislovas works in a factory placing lard cans in reach of a machine for three dollars a week. Sinclair of course would have read "What Life Means to Me" after it was published, but, influenced as he was by *The People of the Abyss* and other works by London, he includes his fellow socialist author in the narrative, calling him "a young author, who came from California, and had been a salmon-fisher, an oyster-pirate, a longshoreman, a sailor; who had tramped the country and been sent to jail, had lived in the Whitechapel slums, and been to the Klondike in search of gold. All these things he pictured in his books, and because he was a man of genius he forced the world to hear him. Now he was famous, but wherever

---

according to Sinclair, "`The things you tell are unbelievable. I have a rule in my own work—I don't tell things that are unbelievable, even when they are true'" (Sinclair, *The Brass Check,* 32).

he went he still preached the gospel of the poor." London modestly does not mention this passage.

Nor does he directly reference Jurgis's conversion to socialism, the main intent of Sinclair's narrative. The point for Sinclair, as I mentioned in chapter 11, was not to convince the American people to pass stringent food purity laws but to horrify the public in order to convince them to become socialists. London does refer to the "over four hundred thousand men and women" who as socialists are promoting the book. And his review closes with a sarcastic direct address to capitalists: "Dear masters, would it not be wise to read for once the literature that all your working-class is reading?" In the end then, London and Sinclair and "London" and Jurgis emphasize the conversion power of literature and speechifying. Perhaps we in our own time have reached the abysmal bottom of education in the US when the president is proud to not have read a book. But in 1906 even the "masters" read books; they just didn't read the right ones.

London had now successfully built up a reputation as an important book reviewer, but there are two reasons why we do not think of him participating in this traditional role of the literary man. One is that the books he chose to review principally involved socialism, not contemporary fiction. Two, his review of *The Jungle* was his final one. He would write blurbs, letters of encouragement, and introductions to books, but never another formal review. Partly, he was soon out of the country, reading only the books he deemed absolutely necessary for his future writing projects, and so he was also out of touch with those who might ask him to write reviews. Partly, he never really saw book reviewing as an integral part of his authorial office. It was too much like office work,

writing on command. He had larger aspirations, so at the height of his fame and influence he chose to no longer endorse or reject the writings of his contemporaries.

George Brett and the Function of Charmian London

George Brett and Jack London had last had a sustained correspondence when they conversed about *White Fang.* After that and all during the tour, London and George Brett's relationship held its own. Brett had asked London in September 1905 if the author could coordinate his tour with Macmillan's advertising department, and London provided him with his itinerary (though I haven't found any evidence that the company actually tried to promote his work in conjunction with the tour).[192] But before this, in the summer of 1905, they had to work out some contractual items. Macmillan balanced their books in July and issued year-end royalty checks in November. London, in June, had asked Brett for an accounting and an advance on the year-end royalty because he needed a down payment for the Hill Ranch, the beginning of his project to piece several properties—

[192] See George Brett, letter to London, 20 Sept. 1905, JL 3046, London, letter to Brett, 29 Oct. 1905, *Letters,* 1:533-34. The first letter in which London sent Brett his itinerary is apparently lost. But see Brett, letter to London, 6 Oct. 1905, JL 3052, for Brett's acknowledgement of receiving London's itinerary. He mention in the latter that "I hope to be able to make some use of it that will benefit us both although several of the towns mentioned have no really good bookshops in which your books can be exhibited I think during your visit," meaning his tour. In the September letter he acknowledges receipt of a "signed agreement," which is probably their annual contract, which hadn't changed in terms of royalties and production.

when they came up for sale—to form what he called his Beauty Ranch. Brett agreed and sent him a check for $8300 ($214,000 in 2016).[193]

Thus in July Brett continued and expanded the conversation. He raised the questions of the special term in their contract—that is, did London still want monthly payments as advances toward royalties—of his actual royalty rate, and of what London owed Macmillan in terms of book production—a volume of short stories and a novel for 1906. London replied that he had three-quarters done on a book of short stories (he had just finished "Planchette," which would complete *Moon-Face*) and that *White Fang* would stand as his yearly novel. Brett agreed and pinned his monthly payments to $300 a month. Brett also assured London that his royalty rate of 20 percent was the highest of any of American author; further, he suggested London might take less in order for Macmillan to have more money to promote the book. "The author gets on each book about three times to four times as much as the publisher, so that the amount of margin which is left for the working of a book, in case it needs large sums spent upon it, is insufficient."[194] London responded with a new idea: instead of 15 percent on the first five thousand copies and 20 percent on any sold over that, he would receive 15 percent on those that sell fewer than five thousand total, and 20 percent for those that sold more than five thousand. Brett reminded London that the initial costs of "plates, composition,

---

[193] See Brett, letters to London, 1 June 1905, 12 June 1905, and two items (letter and a receipt for sending London's check) from 13 June 1905, JL 3037-40, and London, letters to Brett, 26 May 1905, 7 June 1905, and 20 June 1905, *Letters,* 1:483-84, 1:488-90, 1:492-94.

[194] Brett, letter to London, 11 July 1905, JL 3046.

typesetting, illustrations," and so forth justified the lower royalty rate for the first five thousand, but he was happy to make the change.[195] The new contract was signed in September.[196]

Sometime after he had gotten home, he made a list of Klondike stories that had been published but uncollected and saw he had 34,935 words for a new volume to follow *"Moon-Face" and Other Stories*.[197] We have already seen how he completed "Brown Wolf" to fulfill his contractual obligation, but after he completed it, he hesitated to add it to the collection because it did not take place in the Klondike. Then he wrote a straightforward Klondike story called "A Day's Lodging," begun a day after finishing his review of *The Jungle* and decided to include both stories as well as "The Story of Keesh," a relatively ancient story completed in 1901. Thus he had one story from 1901, two from 1903 ("Love of Life" and "Negore the Coward"), three from 1905 ("The Sun-Dog Trail," "The White Man's Way," and "The Unexpected"), and his two newest stories of 1906 to comprise *"Love of Life" and Other Stories*.

---

[195] See London, letter to Brett, 1 Aug. 1905, *Letters,* 1:504-5, and Brett, letter to London, 6 Sept. 1905, JL 3049.

[196] See Brett, letter to London, 20 Sept. 1905, JL 3051. Apparently, London's letter along with the contract—if indeed he wrote a cover letter—has been lost.

[197] See London, sales notebook, JL 934, for the list of stories and word counts (usually he had a title in mind, but not for this collection). "A Day's Lodging" comes before "Brown Wolf," indicating to me his hesitancy to use "Brown Wolf." "The Story of Keesh," a mere 3,330 words, comes last, as a kind of filler and an attempt to collect as many of his published stories as possible. There is no thematic coherence to the collection.

"A Day's Lodging" (in another sign that he was just getting used to writing absorptive short stories, he did not have a title in mind when he started; on the final page of the story, he wrote a note to Charmian: "make title `A Day's Lodging.'") is a reimagining of "The Scorn of Women." The marital problems of the Southland infect the Northland. "A Day's Lodging" begins with a passage of writing from something called "Narrative of Shorty"; Shorty may or may not be the same character who appears later in *Smoke Bellew.* His narrative reads as if it were testimony in a trial, putting us, the reader, in the position of jury. The question posed by Shorty is who started a stampede over "`NOTHIN'" and why. Could it be John Messner, who starts off the story with his dog team carrying on an unknown mission? We like Messner immediately because he, like Madge in "Brown Wolf," recognizes that it is unnatural to "break you to harness, curb all your natural proclivities, and make slave-beasts out of you.'" (1088) We also are reminded of the cover of *The Call of the Wild.* For the past three years, London has stuck to his analogy between dog workers and human workers. His lecture tour only made him more inclined to make the analogy more explicit.

And, of course, he hasn't relented on the portraying the North as Ghostland: "The world slept, and it was like the sleep of death." (1088). We expect talk of ghosts next, and we are not disappointed. When the doctor and Tess settle in the cabin, and he mentions her name, Messner "became suddenly alert. He looked at her quickly, while across his face shot a haunting expression, the ghost of some muried misery achieving swift resurrection." (1091). Though "the ghost was laid again," momentarily at least Messner becomes ghostlike, overtaken by his past relationship with Tess. By depositing the bag of gold in the hole, he disposes of the ghost, at least temporarily.

The story is similar to London's model story of the source of his imagination. Like "The Devil's Dice Box" and "An Odyssey of the North," we have all the elements in place. A cabin with gold and writing—"the light in the cabin was dim, filtering through in a small window made of onion-skin writing paper" (1091)—and chance. A stroke of "luck" placed these three characters alone in a cabin. But the abyss is absent; in fact, London makes a point of placing the cabin on a rise above the river. And madness and death are absent; though Messner's temper flares, he has changed, says Tess, and he maintains his calm. "`I don't get excited any more,'" he tells his wife. (1095). The Kilkenny cats have disappeared. The story, like "Brown Wolf," is thus not about the Northland and the imagination so much as it is about marriage and the Southland. But, still, like "Brown Wolf," it demonstrates a slow shift in London's thinking about the sources of his imagination. Married to a woman he loves—Charmian/Madge—and no longer married to Bess/Tess, he signals that his inspiration could be more dependent on love and the right woman that it is on ghosts and the fear of death.

It seemed possible that changes in one's circumstances, most importantly in relationships, could impact significantly ones relationship to one's own creative interiority. After the lecture tour, women become more central to not only his creative vision but also his understanding of how that vision comes to him. Women have always been central because they are independent and creative spirits—we think of Frona Welse and Maud Brewster—but now they become central because they are independent and creative and married to author figures. Graham Womble and John Messner are not author figures—though, presumably Messner was, given that he is a former English professor from the University of California—and that may be why, at the end, Tess curses not just

Messner but also Womble. "`You beasts! You beasts!'" she cries at the end, unhappy her treatment by the men, who, by their own admission are unethical in their trade of money for woman. "The woman, leaning against the bunk, raging and impotent, watched herself weighed out in yellow dust and nuggets in the scales." (1100). Though Messner at both the beginning and the end of the story treats his dogs humanely, he cannot be said to treat Tess the same way, no matter her own fault in running away with Womble. If Shorty's narrative has placed us in position of jury, we end up finding in favor of Tess.

For all their entanglement with the Northland, "Brown Wolf" and "A Day's Lodging" seem to signal London's real interest in staying in the Southland. His next two stories, now that *Love of Life* was complete, take place wholly in California. They begin what he envisioned would be his next collection of short stories, but in fact that collection—*"When God Laughs" and Other Stories*—stalled. He didn't complete its final story until 1909, it and wasn't published until 1911. We'll get to the reasons for the delay in the third volume of the present work. For now, we can focus on this recent, inchoate shift in London's conception of the origin of his imagination and look closely at his final two stories before he began *Before Adam* and before the San Francisco earthquake and its profound impact on his thinking and writing.

I said that his next two stories seem to signal London's intention to abandon the Klondike, but "When God Laughs," being more theatrical than absorptive, feels as if it could take place in the North as well as the South. It features two men (they could almost be ex-miners returned from the North) in a cabin in a storm, discussing the philosophy of love. Typical of London's theatrical productions, the story is all dialogue, no setting. We know it takes place in California only because the characters make mention of it.

The text begins with an acknowledgement to Harry Cowell ("with compliments to Harry Cowell") and a stanza from Charles Swinborne's long poem "Félise" about the death of a love between a man and a woman. She may appeal to the gods to make him love her again, but "none shall move the most high gods, / who are most sad, being cruel." Harry Cowell wrote an essay entitled "Rest: A Mood"; in 1904 London sent it to his friend Blanche Partington.[198] The essay, a light, meditative piece on the death, fits nicely with the thematic of "When God Laughs," as well as the previous two stories. One may think a dog really loves you, and then he runs off with a previous, more loved master. One may think he loves and is loved in return, and then the woman runs off with another man. God laughs at your expectations. Whether the man leaves the woman, as in Swinborne's poem, or whether she leaves him, love cannot remain for long. Other like-minded poetry suffuses the story: lines from William Sharp (Fiona Macleod), Alfred Austin, Curtis Hidden Page, and Mitchell Kennerly. All are marshaled by the two debaters in the story, Carquinez Monte and the unnamed narrator, who over wine argue about how to choose the proper life style in the face of disappointment, decay, and death.

---

[198] See Harry Cowell, "Rest: A Mood," *Town Talk,* 30 Jan. 1904, 7, and London, letter to Blanche Partinton, 19 Sept. 1904, *Letters,* 1:445. There is no hard and fast evidence (yet) that this is the essay referred to by London. Its content certainly fits the import of the story, and all the dates line up. Nothing else is known of Cowell, though a Harry Cowell was the son of Henry Cowell, a rancher in the Santa Cruz area, and London may have known them because of their similar occupations with the land. The editors of the *Letters* guess that the Cowell mentioned in the letter to Partington is "possibly S. Emma Cowell," but why?

Cowell closed his essay by writing, "Is this world weariness a method used by a gentle Providence to make us in love with the mysterious, veiled face of Death? I know not. As for me, I shall wait until it be dark before I make myself ready for sleep." Here is London's own and often-repeated affirmation that he shall live his life and make use of his days in the face of their apparent uselessness and pointlessness.

In such a self-consciously literary story, we shouldn't be surprised that we come face to face with several author figures: the subjects of the extended discussion about love and death, Marvin Fiske and Ethel Baird, are sculptors, and the narrator's companion is a painter, Carquinez Monte, who seems in description similar to London's friend Xavier Martinez, and who more likely than not once challenged London in the way that Monte does: "`Think not that you have escaped by fleeing from the mad cities. You with your vine-clad hills, your sunsets and your sunrises, your homely fare and simple round of living! . . . The gods know how to deal with such as you. . . . You have elected surcease. Very well. You will become sated with surcease. You say you have escaped satiety! You have merely bartered it for senility. And senility is another name for satiety. It is satiety's masquerade. Bah!'" (1103-4).[199] He echoes Cowell, who writes that "the artist . . . [is] the most fortunate of men [because he or she] serves Beauty, most delightful of mistresses—and most exacting." Thus even the artist cannot find peace in surcease. "Neither by day nor by night may he rest him. There are no Sundays in his calendar. . . . This side of Death, what sleep, think you, is there for him?" Perhaps you

[199] Arnold Genthe's one published memory of London and Martinez together is of them arguing: "Hot arguments on any subject which came into our minds were the order of the day, and I have a picture in my mid of Jack London sitting at one end of the table, intense and questioning, and Marty at the other, gesticulating with a chicken bone." Genthe remembers Martinez wearing an "inevitable red flowing tie." (Arnold Genthe, *As I Remember* (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1936), 69.

think, as Harry did, concluding his roster of occupations that seem immune to constant toil and world weariness, that the bohemian or "aristocrat," as Cowell calls him, would be exempt. "More than once I have been guilty of thinking that the ambition of the aristocrat to remove himself as far as possible from the necessity of working is, after all, not wholly selfish, not altogether unworthy, but even noble. No enviable rest, however, no peace that passeth understanding, is his. . . . Human, he tries in vain to escape the common lot of man."[200] No, Cowell and Monte want to make clear to London and the narrator that you can leave the city, move to the "arcadian homes and vineyards" of Sonoma Valley, but you cannot escape. [201] Though the narrator and Monte begin discussing the narrator's escape to the country, they equate his desire to live in the country with Fiske and Baird's marriage. To the narrator, they (and he) have finally achieved happiness. To Monte, who has the final word, both the narrator and the married couple are only deluding themselves. "We never win," he says at the end. "Sometimes we think we win. That is a little pleasantry of the gods." (1111). When London says that god laughs, he means that Death laughs at our attempt to become immortal through love and art. Carquinez Monte comes to his conclusions because of his "white vision," a variant of the White Logic that structures a similar debate in *John Barleycorn;* Carquinez is also the name of the straits where London almost drowned in a drunken accident, an incident he relates in *John*

---

[200] Cowell.

[201] Ninetta Eames, "Haunts of Jack London," *Cosmopolitan* 40 (Dec. 1905): 227. This puff piece written by Charmian's aunt confirms that London was now so famous that even his home life is of great interest to a national audience. The title may indicate Ninetta's understanding of London's relation to his imagination.

Barleycorn. No wonder that "When God Laughs" begins with Carquinez feeling "the mellow warmth of the vine singing in his blood." His white vision comes from alcohol.[202]

The debate was the mustard seed of the story that London outlined in his notes. He lists his characters: the narrator was to be named Monte, then Manuel, Carquinez, and then he decided not to use the first name and then he decided the narrator would be someone else. The woman was Ethel Baird and the man, Marvin Fiske. But for the latter London's first choice was a surprising one: Martin Eden. [203] But there is no easy one-to-one correspondence between fiction and nonfiction. We are not dealing with autobiography, though London is using his own life as he used newspaper and magazine articles: a basis of fact to be played with.

So, further, in the notes, Fiske is described as "a Dante, a la George," that is, George Sterling. In "A Wicked Woman," another character is based on Sterling—Ned Bashford—and we learn why George is nicknamed the Greek. Given that Fiske is Martin Eden is (and is not) Jack London (these are rough approximations) but also Dante and Sterling, and given that Carquinez "savored of the Greek," drinks hard, and is an artist, and given that George the Greek appears in "A Wicked Woman," and then also in *Martin Eden* as Brissenden, we see how much London was thinking of fictionalizing his and his

---

[202] There is an extraordinary line about Carquinez that is a mere aside to the story but that betrays London deep understanding about the nature of alcohol. It comes at the end of his description of Carquinez's drinking habits: "It was worth while to get Carquinez to loosen up." (1102).

[203] See London, "A Wicked Woman: [notes]," JL 1417. For some reason, four sheets of notes for "When God Laughs" are misfiled with the notes to "A Wicked Woman."

friend's lives during this moment in his authorial career. A big shift in the autobiographical source material occurs, then, when he comes back from the South Seas. We can loosely characterized the shift as a movement from George to Charmian, a permanent shift from doubting the value of monogamy to its glorification.

The notes outline the vague setting: "First the narrator and the mountain bungalow. Then the beginning, or conversation leading up to man & woman. We discuss satiety. Told by the fire at midnight in mountain bungalow, a sou'easter storming and crashing. Once, in the tremendous gusts, a tree falls. Rattling of windows—sometimes whole house ashake aquiver." But, befitting the theatrical nature of the story, the rest of the notes contain dialogue. Even though one is tempted—and may be right to do so—to read the story of Marvin Fiske and Ethel Baird as stand-ins for Jack and Charmian, the notes indicate that London identified more with the unnamed narrator by using the first-person pronoun in samples of dialogue instead of the word *narrator*: "He: You remember her? I: A warm saint, holy as love and sweeter. He: That is she! You know! A warm saint, sweet-fleshed and woman—and yet, somehow—drenched through with that holiness as air with perfume." London notes that both Marvin's and Ethel's previous loves had died and that "rather than the French joy in the flesh" (London's euphemism for sex, of course, but also something more: a philosophical, bohemian love of all things sensual, of the pleasures of the body) "they had the Saxon soberness in the flesh," though this gets reversed in the story: "They were not cold wraiths," ghosts that is, even though both are artists. "They had no Saxon soberness in their blood. Tempermentally theirs was the French joy in the flesh. Everything is good—so long as it is not possessed. Satiety and possession are Death's horses; they run in span." Sex redeems ghostliness. But Monte has

his moment of hesitation: “Who am I to delve into their soul-stuff?” he says. “I am but a frog, in the dank edge of a great darkness, gazing goggle-eyed at the mystery & wonder of their soul-flames. On my lips their love-philosophy is mangled.” Nevertheless, delve he does. He has read the couple’s letters. He has read Ethel’s diary. He had watched them closely. “Before I understand their secret,” he says, “I wonder & wonder. One day a book of verse—a page well used—book opened to it. `Not yet, sometime [lines from Curtis Hidden Page’s poem “Love’s Waiting Time”].’ They would keep love, the fickle sprite, the fore-runner of young life. It is illumination. I see with white vision their blameless souls, & I laughed, hee hee, for it is the blameless souls of children. They do not understand. They play with nature’s fire. They laugh at God. They would stop the cosmic sap. They have invented a system which they bring to the gaming table of the universe and win out. Beware! God runs the bank. They cannot win.” And so he discovered the secret of their love’s seeming permanence: they never kissed, let alone had sex.

In this way, the way of the anchorite, they maintained the freshness of their desire and kept surcease and satiety at bay. Except that the gods, according to Carquinez, cannot stand for humans to be happy. “I watched. I said nothing. As the years pass—`ah ha,’ I laughed to myself. `They have outwitted God! They have shamed the flesh and blackened the face of the good earth-mother. How were they to know? They were artists, not biologists.’” And so, partly because of the biologic imperative to procreate and partly because the gods have their own logic, they took desire and love away, randomly, one night, and a week later Fiske died in an accident and Baird retreated to a convent. (In the notes, Fiske dies three months after the departure of Cupid and she dies as well, her diary going to Carquinez.) The narrator is angry at the close of the narrative, not convinced by

the moral of the story. No matter. Carquinez has the last word. Carquinez may not win us over either. He is at the end described as "a veritable Mephistopheles in velvet jacket." (1111)[204] If the devil makes the argument, then shouldn't we reject him and his arguments outright? Yet, it is Carquinez who enunciates what must be the ultimate answer to the question of satiety. He says of the couple as he observed them trying to cheat the gods at their own game, "They would learn that their system was worthless and throw it away. They would be content with whatever happiness the gods gave them and not strive to wrest more away." (1109). Like the best of London's theatrically minded stories, "When God Laughs" succeeds because it presents a world dominated by complicated, seemingly contradictory thought. If the gods are indeed cruel, then the devil can help us lead lives of at least temporarily attained happiness. One must continue to make art and love despite—or because of—the grinning noseless one.

We shouldn't be surprised that London had the devil of a time placing this story. It was the first one he gave to Paul Reynolds, under terms of a new partnership, which I will discuss in the next chapter. Reynolds first took it to E. M. Ridgway of *Everybody's Magazine,* who had just accepted *Before Adam* and was starting a new, eponymous magazine. He was dying for a new short story from London, but not an "objectionable" one like "When God Laughs."[205] Reynolds took it to several others, but "your story `When God Laughs' is going to be a very difficult story to handle," he told London, and asked if he would take a lower rate and object to selling to the *New York Herald* or some

---

[204] Interestingly, in London's notes it's the narrator who is described as Mephistophelean. London, "When God Laughs: [notes for short story]," JL 1397.

[205] Paul R. Reynolds, letter to London, 28 Aug. 1906, JL 16941.

other newspaper. Also, he wanted to change the title to "Where the Gods Laugh" (or maybe he meant "When the Gods Laugh" because he consistently called the story "Where God Laughs"). "This would carry out your idea and would eliminate the atheistic or perhaps irreligious suggestion which the title at present conveys."[206] London put the kibosh on that suggestion, quickly. And then Reynolds proved his value: after nine magazines rejected the story, "I got The Smart Set to take it," even though they couldn't have the English rights; London had hired James Pinker, the English agent, to handle those for all his work. So Reynolds had to sell cheap, and London got $200 for the story, way below market value. But if he continued to write "objectionable" tales, implied Reynolds, he would continue to make less money. "Have you not got some other short stories that you would let me sell that I could get a big price for, such as I got on BEFORE ADAM?"[207]

The story was ill-suited for a general audience not just because of its "irreligious" title. It wore its radical politics on its chest, so to speak. Monte of course is not the devil, though alcohol-fueled cogitation may make him seem so. Rather, he's a politically active artist. It's no small detail in the story that Monte wears a red necktie: It "stood for the red flag (he had once lived with the socialists of Paris), and it symbolized the blood and brotherhood of man." Coupled with the detail that Messner's dogs in "A Day's Lodging" are like wage slaves and that Walt Irvine in "Brown Wolf" participates in the bohemian

---

[206] Reynolds, letter to London, 4 Sept. 1906, JL 16943. See Reynolds, letter to London, 12 Sept. 1906, JL 1694.

[207] Reynolds, letter to London, 26 Oct. 1906, JL 16945.

economic distribution system, these stories demonstrate that London's socialism was never far from the surface.

His politics boiled to the top in his next story, "The Apostate" even though it is one his most intensely absorptive stories; it's as if his theatrical dimension had become embedded in his subconscious. I mentioned before that two sources other than his own experience as a child laborer (narrativized to some extent in "What Life Means to Me") may have inspired him to write this story. The first was Mother Jones, who, during his lecture tour, had challenged him to write about child labor. With Jones in attendance, his lecture at Fanueil Hall centered on child labor, and we remember that he quoted from Jones and her own research into child labor and exploitation. The second was Sinclair's *The Jungle,* in which Stanislas helps run a canning machine. But there was a third source or, better, a motivation or intent. A series of notes entitled *The American Abyss* written before 1906 shows London considering a cross-Atlantic version of *The People of the Abyss.* Among his ideas for various topics (whether they would be chapters in a book or essays collected as a book is impossible to determine) is "Take a gamin, who has never been out of the city, down to the country."[208] Although this is not quite the plot of "The Apostate," it certainly shows London thinking about not just the opposition between city and country but also the debilitating effects of extreme poverty on children. It connects directly to the data and narrative concerning child labor in textile mills that he developed for "Revolution"; in fact, one of his notes for "The Apostate" reads "Johnny—look up in Ruskin talk," an allusion to "Revolution," which he delivered to the Ruskin Club on 27

[208] London, "The American Abyss: [Notes for a Sociological Study of New York and Chicago]," JL 438.

January 1905.[209] "The Apostate" then is a natural outgrowth of his reading of *The Jungle* and his reminiscences for "What Life Means to Me" and provides the capstone to his lecture tour.

There are at least two newspaper and magazine sources for brief episodes in Johnny's work life. London had already formed the idea of the story when he consulted an article from his files called "Turning Children into Dollars" by Juliet Wilbor Tompkins. Next to a paragraph describing the general and unbearable noise inside a twine factory, London wrote "description of his work first part of story." London didn't borrow any of the language from that paragraph, but he did from the next one he marked with the notation, "when the inspector came." Tompkins described a scene in a soap factory between a one-legged boy and an inspector who was hiding:

> And then a one-legged boy is discovered lurking behind some barrels. The inspector eyes him reproachfully; she has had that individual boy dismissed from three factories within the year. He is a wan and stunted little person, his body

---

[209] See Kingman, *Jack London: A Definitive Chronology* (David Rejl: Middletown, Calif., 1992), 52. It may seem odd that he would refer to "Revolution" as the "Ruskin Club talk" because he had delivered the speech multiple times on tour. Yet he had resigned from the club in July 1905, the last speech he gave before writing "The Apostate" was "Revolution" in January 1905. It seems then that he wrote these notes for "The Apostate" or "Rebel" sometime in 1905, just as he had composed notes for "Created He Them" and "A Wicked Woman," keeping them in reserve until he returned from his tour. London was careful to never leave himself facing a blank page with no preparation for another story to write.

> eloquent of his needs, his face dully obstinate. “Why, Antone! And you promised me faithfully that you would go to school,” she [the inspector] exclaims. Antone bursts into tears. “Please, inspector, two babies died on us, and we’re awful poor,” he sobs.[210]

In “The Apostate” London renders the scene this way:

> The one-legged boy was not so fortunate. The sharp-eyed inspector haled him out at arm's length from the bin truck. His lips were quivering, and his face had all the expression of one upon whom was fallen profound and irremediable disaster. The overseer looked astounded, as though for the first time he had laid eyes on the boy, while the superintendent's face expressed shock and displeasure. "I know him," the inspector said. "He's twelve years old. I've had him discharged from three factories inside the year. This makes the fourth." He turned to the one-legged boy. "You promised me, word and honor, that you'd go to school." The one-legged boy burst into tears. "Please, Mr. Inspector, two babies died on us, and we're awful poor."

London marked and employed yet one more paragraph, this one describing a different sort of factory job:

> [A boy] sat all day in a closet lighted by a gas jet, with a little stick in his hand, watching a great stream of cloth that pored down from above and passed over a hot roller that ironed its surface, his business being to gude the cloth if it showed a tendency to swerve to the right or the left from the roller. It was easy work—

---

[210] Juiet Wilbor Tompkins, “Turning Children into Dollars,” *Success Magazine* (Jan. 1906): 15, 17.

> horribly, wickedly easy. Not a muscle of his body was getting proper development; his mind slept undisturbed as his eyes dully watched the cloth stream. A born poet might have worked out his greatness in that hot cell. . . . But this was just an ordinary, human boy, easily demoralized, easily persuaded to let all his faculties rot in return for about two dollars a week.[211]

In "The Apostate," Johnny, like Tompkins's nameless boy, might have had an active mental life, if not for the dulling routine:

> When he was eight, he got work in another mill. His new job was marvellously easy. All he had to do was to sit down with a little stick in his hand and guide a stream of cloth that flowed past him. This stream of cloth came out of the maw of a machine, passed over a hot roller, and went on its way elsewhere. But he sat always in the one place, beyond the reach of daylight, a gas-jet flaring over him, himself part of the mechanism.
>
> He was very happy at that job, in spite of the moist heat, for he was still young and in possession of dreams and illusions. And wonderful dreams he dreamed as he watched the streaming cloth streaming endlessly by. But there was no exercise about the work, no call upon his mind, and he dreamed less and less, while his mind grew torpid and drowsy. Nevertheless, he earned two dollars a week.

The namelessness of Tompkins subject—of both the boy and the factory—and the way London retains it indicate the all-pervasiveness of the American debilitating factory system and the amoral quality of capitalism; if London had specified Johnny's locale, this

---

[211] Tompkins, "Turning Children into Dollars," 15.

national indictment would have lost its power. Further, note how London converts Tompkins's would-be "poet" into Johnny the dreamer. Dreams become synonymous with poetry, with writing. Johnny's artistic sensibilities are defeated by capitalism, a conclusion we will see active at the end of the story.

The second source is similar to the first and pertains to the next job Johnny managed to land. On 16 August 1905, Owen R. Lovejoy, the assistant secretary of the National Child Labor Committee, addressed the annual convention of the International Association of Factory Inspectors. An unknown socialist newspaper printed the speech, London clipped it, and circled a story Owen related:

> The proprietor of a successful glass house recently with pride brought me to a small boy who sat on a low stool tying glass stoppers into small bottles. He sat bent over his work, the bottles held between his knees and the bundle of string at his hip, his body thrown forward and his chest contracted, his thin arms flying with the swift and accurate motion of a perfect machine, as he hurried in his labor for ten hours a day. Three knots were made for each and his daily task was 300 dozen bottles. As a machine he is perfect, but as the precursor of a healthy man he is a failure. He has been reduced to a bundle of quivering nerves.[212]

---

[212] Anon., "Child Labor Legislation: Owen R. Lovejoy's Address to Factory Inspectors," 17 Aug. 1905 [?], publication unknown, n.p. See London, subject file, "Socialism," box 555, JLE 1523. See also Owen R. Lovejoy, "The Modern Slaughter of the Innocents," *Men and Women* (Oct. 1905): 3-4, where Owen retells, in briefer form, the story of the little boy in the glass factory, which London again circled in pencil. See London, subject file, "Socialism," box 555, JLE 1554.

Here is London's reworking of this pitiful story:

> He got work in a glass factory. The pay was better, and the work demanded skill. It was piece-work, and the more skilful he was, the bigger wages he earned. . . . It was simple work, the tying of glass stoppers into small bottles. At his waist he carried a bundle of twine. He held the bottles between his knees so that he might work with both hands. Thus, in a sitting position and bending over his own knees, his narrow shoulders grew humped and his chest was contracted for ten hours each day. This was not good for the lungs, but he tied three hundred dozen bottles a day. . . . This meant that he had attained machine-like perfection. All waste movements were eliminated. Every motion of his thin arms, every movement of a muscle in the thin fingers, was swift and accurate. He worked at high tension, and the result was that he grew nervous. At night his muscles twitched in his sleep, and in the daytime he could not relax and rest. He remained keyed up and his muscles continued to twitch.

Here is perfect example of London's use of newspaper reporting. He takes a near-photographic account and colors it with feeling, adding necessary detail and emotional effect. This is the process of impassioned realism. It serves as the proper narratological method to counter capitalism's Machine Age hegemonic discourse. Avis Everhard, in *The Iron Heel,* will adapt this same aesthetic for her manuscript.

"The Apostate" begins with a prayer and then an injunction from little Johnny's mother: you don't work, you don't eat, as Daniel Clyne's Hungry Chuck Biscuits said many times to his hippie audience for underground comics in the sixties. Unconscious of her import, Johnny's mother is voicing a principle from Laurence Grondlund's influential

tract on the fundamentals of American socialism, *The Co-Operative Commonwealth,* a book London relied on when he wrote his first essay on socialism, "What Socialism Is." Grondlund wrote, "Adam Smith observed that `the produce of labour is the natural recompense of Labour;' and St. Paul declared that `if a man will not work, neither shall he eat.' The New System—as our definition points out—will put these doctrines into practice."[213] But there is a tension in Grondlund's work between those who work and those who chose not to; for socialism will allow for the latter: "Our Commonwealth leaves everybody at perfect liberty to work as much or as little as he please, or not at all, but makes his consumption exactly commensurate with his performances."[214] (80) Grondlund has no plan for those who do not work, but to escape from the wage-slavery system is not an effective means of protest; it only raises the status of an individual, not the class. But this seems to be what London advocates in this short story. The life of a boy is more important than the reformation of the economic system.

There is another, equally powerful valence to the beginning of the story, which has more to do with its fictional mode than with economics. Johnny's antagonism toward God is an important theme in the story. In his notes, London wrote, "Work up his Revolt against God. This early in story. . . . Head story with the child laborer's prayer." And when London first imagined Johnny going down the road, feeling bad, he wrote, "As he went down the road. Just tired. He thought of the roaring loom room. His revolt against God etc. was over. He had no bitterness."[215] When the reader reads the opening prayer he

---

[213] Laurence Grondlund, *The Co-Operative Commonwealth,* 84.

[214] Grondlund, *The Co-Operative Commonwealth,* 80.

[215] London, "The Apostate: [notes for short story]," JL 448.

or she is actually praying; it's impossible to read a prayer without praying. It's a performative. Thus, as we enter into the state of prayer we become deeply and movingly absorbed. The prayer, the mother's injunction, and the title tell us not only that capitalism is a religion but that workers who rebel—the original title was "The Rebel"[216]—are akin to that original rebellious angel, Milton's Satan. Johnny works at a job in the jute mill, and the hyperrealistic details of his job come from London's first-hand knowledge. In this poor world of bread, coffee, cold pork, bobbins, and weaver's knots, only sleep, dreams, and the illusions borne from lack of knowledge of the larger world provide relief. Relief though is temporary. Johnny is not capable of time travel, like the heroes of *Before Adam* and *The Star Rover.* In fact, trapped in the here and now, Johnny experiences time in a frighteningly monotonous way: "Nothing ever happened. There were no events to mark the march of time. Time did not march. It stood always still." (1123). He had no future, and he had but a miniscule past. There is a moment in the narrative that we see London explicitly deny Johnny what other of his future characters will have: "There was one other memory of the past," in Johnny, his paltry memory consisting only a vague picture of a girl he once had a crush on, the lucky discovery of a quarter on the sidewalk, and eating prunes (once) and custard (twice) at home. This other memory was a "nightmare," a "race-memory of man that makes him fall in his sleep and that goes back to his arboreal ancestry." (1123) In less than a week, London would write of his narrator in *Before*

---

[216] See Charmian Kittredge London, 23 Mar. 1906, diary, 1906, JL 219. See entry for 28 March where she mentions the title change. A number of pages of London's notes for the story are headlined "Rebel" or "The Rebel." See London, "The Apostate: [notes for short story]," JL 448.

Adam, "Rarely were my dreams tinctured with happiness. . . . I was a city boy. . . . I . . . wandered in my sleep through interminable forests." Thus there is an exchange between these two works. Johnny, like any human, comes from an "arboreal" past. But without memories that the narrator of *Before Adam* has, he is denied his humanity. His interior life is as poor as his exterior life. Johnny and his mother are not author figures, and their world has no imagination in it. Though there is an abyss—the "American Abyss"—and a cabin (the family's house is more like a shack or cabin), there is no writing and there is no gold. And there is certainly no luck. For an author so deeply invested in all facets of the imagination—its origin, its longevity, its care, its power—this loss of the imagination is the most tragic casualty of poverty. Johnny used to have "dreams and illusions," when he was eight. But now, no longer. He is twelve. God laughs indeed.

Now we see why he is fixated on a tree when he comes to the realization that escape from the machines and the oppressive present is actually possible. When he tells his mother that he is leaving to go "anywhere," "the tree across the street appeared with dazzling brightness on his inner vision." (1127) With proper rest from his machine work, a kind of imaginative power returns to him. He now knows that he can do something besides work. It is the insight of all bohemia. Johnny isn't rescued by radicalization or political action. He is rescued by the imagination. Individual creative production counters mass production by machinelike people rendered identical, their particularities erased as they all become the same machine.[217]

---

[217] As Susan Nuernberg has pointed out to me, London's story is a counterweight to Taylorism, the dominant managerial discourse of the Machine Age. Though I have never run across a reference to Taylor and his work in London's archive, it was thoroughly

The larger point raised in the story is the true meaning of the Machine Age. We might take it to mean, as London sometimes did, that it denoted the technological advancement of his time. It signaled speed, efficiency, productivity, progress, all in the name of increased wealth. For London, however, the cost was greater than the reward. If a child should be born in a factory, be raised in a factory, work in a factory, and die in the factory, then this child is no different from a machine. Amelioration cannot come from child-labor laws, for it keeps bread winners out of families desperate for cash. Progressivism was not a choice. If socialism cannot replace capitalism (the theme of his next novel, *The Iron Heel*), escape to the country—that is, bohemianism, a complete transformation of one's life—is the solution. "The Apostate," with its hyperreal details and unrelenting narrative of the daily life of poverty is an absorptive story with a strong theatrical urge. It stands as one of London's most accomplished blendings of his two principal modes of fiction writing.[218]

---

infused in the belief systems of those who opposed socialism. Nuernberg highlights Taylor's paternalism, for he believed that workers like Johnny could not think for themselves or would only advocate for higher and higher wages until they would grow lazy and therefore unproductive and wasteful. Unions were useful only insofar as they allowed management to better organize their workers. See Martha Banta, *Taylored Lives: Narrative Productions in the Age of Taylor, Veblen, and Ford* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), for Taylor's attitude toward workers and how best to manage them.

[218] In volume 1 of the present work, I linked "The Apostate" to his hobo stories and how London used the figure of the hobo as a representation for the authorial self. See page 50 in particular.

His final five works between his return from his tour and 1 April 1906 when he began *Before Adam* tell us much about his growth, position, and status as an author. "Brown Wolf" is a Klondike story that takes place in the South. "When God Laughs" takes place in the South though it feels as if it occurs in the North. This easy mix of locales speaks not only of London's position as a Pacific Rim writer but also of his national prominence. He had mastered all locales, though his return to the Klondike made that locale a kind of touchstone, a place to return to be replenished as an author. George Brett published *"Love of Life" and Other Stories* in 1907, and it seemed an oddity, for by then the Kipling of the Klondike had shed, in his public's mind, both Kipling and the Klondike as authorial markers. Now, with the publication of *The People of the Abyss, The Sea-Wolf,* and *War of the Classes,* as well as his sensational appearance across the country in the name of socialism, books like *White Fang* and *"Love of Life" and Other Stories* must have seemed atavisms. If London was aware of this, then his next novel was not simply about prehistoric humans but about writing stories that were, in a sense, biological predecessors to his newest work. The time of the Klondike was the modern-day Jack London's prehistory as an author.