Author under Sail

Jay Williams

Chapter 18: Earthquake Apocalypse and Building the City, Boat, and House Beautiful

Bohemia Destroyed

In the afternoon of 18 April 1906, George Sterling wrote to his friend, "Dearest Wolf: We had a hell of an earthquake in Carmel (and assumably everywhere else in America) this morning. You should have seen Carrie [his spouse] getting from her bed to the front veranda in 1½ seconds! . . . The dog was so scared that her heart hasn't stopped thumping yet, and all the hens yelled `bloody murder.'"[1] George can't be faulted for treating the infamous event so cavalierly; he had no idea that his friends were in danger, that fires raged in San Francisco, that cities north of the bay were in ruins. According to initial reports, over two hundred people died, thousands were injured and 300,000 left homeless, and property loss was estimated at $100,000,000.[2] The Montgomery Block, or Monkey Block, survived; it housed Coppa's Restaurant as well as the apartments and studios of bohemians like Xavier Martinez, who hosted London there when Jack needed to recover from a night out. But Coppa's Restaurant, a hub of Bohemia, was looted and,

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[1] George Sterling, letter to Jack London, 18 Apr. 1906, JL 19046.

[2] See Associated Press, "Half the City Lies in Ruins," *Los Angeles Daily Times,* 19 Apr. 1906, 14. Millard reports eighteen years later that the property loss totaled between $500-750,000,000. Twenty-six thousand acres were burned by flames that stretched at one point to ten miles.

deprived of its clientele, moved to a new location.[3] The Bohemian Club, with its new exhibition of Old Masters—including a Rembrandt—burned completely.[4] Arnold Genthe

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[3] See Warren Unna, *The Coppa Murals: A Pageant of Bohemian Life in San Francisco at the Turn of the Century* (San Francisco: The Book Club of California, 1952), 54-55. The restaurant was left vacant, except for one night devoted to a final meal for Bohemia: "They brought their own food, vino and coffee from their places of refuge in the east Bay and consumed it cold from paper plates and cups, held on their laps. Permisison was obtained from a Colonel Clem of the State Militia for candlelight. So, with a sentry posted outside, the Coppans lit their candles as the night came on and recited their odes and made theit toasts. Then the crowd dispersed to the East Bay ferry. From there, some went on to New York, some to Carmel and a few, such as Maynard Dixon, to a temporary shelter until Papa [Coppa] should open a new restaurant" (55). The claim that London spent nights at Martinez's studio comes in Donald J. Hagerty, *The Life of Maynard Dixon* (Layton, Utah: Gibbs Publishing, 2010), 73. It certainly has, at least, the air of plausibility. That London was a frequenter at Coppa's is attested to in Charmian's diary entry for 10 February 1906. That is, on the second night of their return from the lecture tour, the Londons, with Sterling, Martinez, Laffler, Garnett, Austin Lewis, and "fool women" (!) had dinner at Coppa's and a "general racket" (Charmian London, diary, 1906, JL 217). Coppa's even threw the Londons a farewell dinner on 14 Mar. 1907 before the *Snark* sailed, entitled "Just Meat for White Fangs," featuring spaghetti with "Children of the Abyss Dressing," and "The Call of the Wild Salad" (menu, in London, scrapbook, vol. 8, reel 5).

lost his studio, his negatives, and his equipment. Maynard Dixon and William Keith lost nearly all their paintings. Ina Coolbrith lost her manuscripts, three thousand books, and years of correspondence; especially noteworthy were her letters to all those in the first *Overland Monthly* crowd. Jerome Hart and his *Argonaut* had to move to San Jose. The manuscript of *The Sea-Wolf,* locked in a safe, nonetheless burned beyond use for future scholars. Daniel Burnham's plan to turn San Francisco into a City Beautiful had been deposited the day before and burned with city hall. Sterling lost nearly all printed copies of his books. Henry Laffler lost his house, Xavier Martinez his studio. The Mark Hopkins Institute of Art and its thirty-five-year-old collection of paintings, books, and sculptures were gone. The Arts and Crafts furniture maker Frederick H. Meyer (who had worked with the architect Bernard Maybeck) lost his shop. The buildings of the three major newspapers and the offices and printer for *Sunset Magazine* were destroyed or severely damaged, as were all the theaters, libraries, and the Grand Opera House. Cultural San Francisco had been devastated.

Porter Garnet, Martinez, Maynard and Lillian Dixon, Allan Dunn, and Mary Edith Griswold—all writers and artists who formed a sizable portion of the bohemian core of the city—sought each other out on the eighteenth to help and console. Isabel Fraser, anointed the Queen of Bohemia by the bohemian cultural workers in 1902, told London three years after the quake that her identity as queen "was killed in the quake, burned in the fire, and from her ashes has risen one, Cholly Francisco [her nom de plume as a feature writer for the *San Francisco Examiner*]" signaling the death of an era, but not of

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[4] See Charles Morris, *The San Francisco Calamity by Earthquake and Fire* (1906; Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 54.

the eternal bohemian spirit.[5] Many artists and writers were among the thousands displaced, and they gravitated toward bohemian oases like Monterey and the Sterlings' own encampment.

But what the earthquake and fire took away with one hand, it gave with the other. As Fraser said, bohemia never dies. The event generated an immediate flowering of writing and photography, like blooms in cooled volcanic lava, the beginnings of a cultural renaissance. It began with the multiple stories of the earthquake and fire and thousands of photographs, among which we find London's contribution "The Story of an Eye-Witness" and his own photographs of ruins taken in May. (He did not take any photos on the 18th and 19th.)[6] His friend and editor Bailey Millard, in his 1924 three-

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[5] Isabel Fraser, letter to London, 1 Oct. 1909, JL 17470. Arnold Genthe imperfectly recalled the scene of her coronation: "I have a faint picture of Gelette Burgess, who was then editing *The Lark,* sitting at the end of the table poring libations into an enormous loving-cup to tast our exalted guest of honor [Fraser]." Among the guests were "Porter Garnet, Will Irwin [who was now editing *The Wave*], Maizie Griswold, now Mrs. Edwin Emerson, and George Sterling." (Genthe, *As I Remember,* 55).

[6] Not all of it was good art, of course, but all of it was sincere. For example, in *Sunset*'s summer of 1906 issue principally devoted to the event, the lead piece was Joaquin Miller's "San Francisco," which referenced his own volume, the Christian-themed *Building the City Beautiful* (Chicago: Stone and Kimball, 1893): "And jealousies burned away, /And burned were city rivalries, / Till all, white crescenting the bay, / Were one harmonious hive of bees. / Behold the bravest battle won! / The City Beautiful begun: / One solid San Francisco, one, / The fairest sight beneath the sun" (Joaquin Miller, "San

volume *History of the San Francisco Bay Region,* noted that after several disastrous fires in the city's early days, the city council created a seal with the image of a phoenix rising

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Francisco," *Sunset* 17 (June-July 1906): 12. The same issue had good reporting by the editor, Charles Aiken, E. H. Harriman, Katherine Chandler, and others, as well as a serviceable short story by Charles Norris, which I discuss below. Genthe's memories of the earthquake mix acute descriptions of people in shock—"there was no hysteria, no signs of real terror or despair," even though his Japanese servant had just left him "thoroughly frightened and was as pale as a Japanese can be" (one could do a productive reading contrasting London's treatment of his Japanese bodymen with Genthe's treatment of Hamada, whom he treats as inferior)—his calm demeanor, the altruism of the rich, taking breakfast at the St. Francis Hotel in the company of Enrico Caruso, and his walk through the city with a camera (Arnold Genthe, *As I Remember,* 87).

The Bohemian Club summer High Jinks was held in July. The grove play, written by Charles K. Field, was *The Owl and Care.* As Porter Garnett wrote in his history of the club, "The whole affair was in the nature of a defiance of Care who had so recently and so heavily laid his hand on the whole of the Western community." George Sterling wrote the next play for 1907; he entitled it *The Triumph of Bohemia,* which featured the subjugation of the Spirit of Fire by the tree-spirits (Porter Garnett, *The Bohemian Jinks: A Treatise* (San Francisco: Bohemian Club, 1908), 73-74, 78-92; London's copy is inscribed by Garnett: "Dear Jack: The Bohemian Club, working rather blindly it is true, and with many steps that are false and some that are backward, --is nevertheless giving to Art a <u>forward movement</u>. It is for this reason that I am interested in it; for this reason that I think it is worthwhile, Faithfully yours, Porter Garnett, Berkeley, Oct. 4, 1909")

from the ashes.[7] Once again, the phoenix rose. Dixon imagined the spirit of the city, not as a mythological bird, but as a mythological Spirit. For both the cover of the "New San Francisco Emergency Edition" and the June-July edition of *Sunset,* he painted a nude woman looking skyward in hope with the city's ruins strewn about at her waist. For the latter, he added a rebuilt white city cradled in her arms, the first vision of what the future city would look like. The city was resurrected, Millard made clear, because all through the April days of devastation "never was the community spirit in stronger evidence anywhere. A dozen eggs would be divided among three or four families. A loaf of bread would be cut in two. Nobody was permitted to go hungry." (499). In one of his few emotional outbursts, Millard, wrote, "It is doubtful if there was in all history a better spirit of cooperation during a great calamity." (507). He meant that this "true communistic way" was expressed nationally, for he noted how many other cities helped immediately in relief work. Much of the rest of his historical essay then reprints his immediate impressions published as "When Altruria Awoke."[8] He clearly suffered from a nostalgia for catastrophe, a kind of post-traumatic syndrome. As early as July 1906, when

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[7] In *Sunset Magazine*'s first issue after the fire, William Dallam Armes wrote a short essay on the history of the seal, and Theodor H. Hittell contributed a poem ("The morning comes; another light./Far brighter than the light of fire/Drives off the horrors of the night,/And bids new Phoenix to aspire"); see William Dallam Armes, "The Phoenix on the Seal" and Theodor H. Hittell, "Phoenix Redivivus," *Sunset Magazine* 17 (June-July 1906): 113-15, 115.

[8] Bailey Millard, *History of the San Francisco Bay Region,* 3 vols. (Chicago: The American Historical Society, 1924), 1:499, 507, 509.

he had lived in New York City for a month or so, working at *Cosmopolitan,* he told London that he was "simply vegetating and degenerating here. Should like to have an earthquake or something to wake me up. Never feel *`alerted'* as Whitman says."[9] As awful as the event was, the earthquake, like a combat situation, made him feel alive and awake in a way he not only never had felt before but also would never feel again. It was, as the quotation from Whitman indicates, a peak bohemian experience, never to be repeated.

"When Altruria Awoke": The telling title speaks to the communal spirit of the region, of which bohemia was a significant part. Altruria, we remember chapter 16, was a utopian community near Santa Rosa that supplied food to cooperative grocery stores run by socialists in Oakland and San Francisco. Millard highlights the bohemian economics of Altruria—of both the commune founded by Edward Payne and others as well as the ideal construct—as he recounts individual instances of selfless behavior: "I saw intrepid men and women rush into tottering houses to grasp their own or their neighbors' kin out of the stiff grip of Death. I saw fire-fighters do deeds that made one feel they were eager to give their lives to save the city. . . . What an amazing picture was there—the picture of *self-effacement.*" This was the lesson of the calamity: "Here was a luminous lesson in Utopian economics—a lesson for the whole doubting, artificial, selfish world—a dropping off of all mean play at precedence and all the cunning trickery of gain." Not a particularly religious man, Millard nonetheless saw all this lack of egoism as a sign that "the dream of Christ [had] come true."[10] To a skeptic like Mother Jones, who was not

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[9] Millard, letter to London, 23 July 1906, JL 15382.

[10] Millard, "When Altruria Awoke," *Cosmopolitan* 41 (July 1906): 237.

there, the whole event she imagined would be converted by "the sky pilots" of something quite opposite: "the wickedness of the people of the City."[11]

Millard was not a socialist, but his words could easily become the rhetoric of anticapitalism. Herman Whitaker, London's friend and author, appealed to the rest of the nation in *Harper's Weekly* that if it would help San Francisco then it would furnish "the world with proof that, in our time, `brotherhood of man' was not an empty phrase."[12] Whitaker, we remember, ran a socialist grocery store in Oakland where London first encountered serious political debate. On the second day of the earthquake and fire, he toured the grocery stores in the East Bay to see if they were charging inflated prices; only one was—another instance of what Millard called "Utopian economics."

For Whitaker and Millard, as for London in "What Communities Lose by the Competitive System," it was a contest between competition and altruism and the latter won—"to compete with one another only in heroism, were the unfailing acts of those altruists by the Golden Gate," effused Millard.[13] Carl Sandburg, writing from Chicago, gloried in the reports that "the San Francisco horror has shown that underlying all their hot rivalries and fierce contentions the human race is at the last a brotherhood, a

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

[12] Herman Whitaker, "Human Drama at San Francisco," *Harper's Weekly,* 19 May 1906, 698.

[13] Millard, "When Altruria Awoke," 237.

solidarity."[14] In the same issue of *To-Morrow Magazine,* Parker Sercombe, the editor, ran a one-page statement from Maxim Gorky. He seized the moment to, on the one hand, sympathize with San Francisco and its people, and, on the other hand, to call for help from America to relieve the suffering of Russia. "Misfortunes must teach us brotherhood," he wrote. "Not for power over each other must we think, not for wealth, but how to be masters of the whole power of the earth."[15] Yellow and gold then become the colors of the opposite of material gain. In a short story published in *Sunset* two months after the event, Charles Gilman Norris (Kathleen Norris's husband and Frank Norris's brother) portrayed the clichéd but dramatic turn in his main character's life as a turn from selfishness to altruism; spurned by the woman he loved, he tries to commit suicide only to be frustrated by the earthquake. When he realizes that thousands of people need medical attention, Claxton, a doctor, decides to live: "In the face of such far greater sorrow, his own selfish desires seemed puny and contemptible." He decides to help save "the heart of Bohemia," the city of San Francisco.[16]

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[14] Carl Sandburg, "Heroism at San Francisco," *To-Morrow Magazine* 2 (May 1906): n. p. He quotes London: "Jack London says, `An enumeration of the deeds of heroism would stock a library and bankrupt the Carnegie medal fund.'"

[15] Maxim Gorky, "To Stricken 'Frisco," *To-Morrow Magazine* 2 (May 1906): n. p. Gorky toured the US in 1906, suffering from some of the same personal attacks, especially on his married life, that London did. Since he stopped in Chicago, it is entirely possible that he gave this statement as an exclusive to Sercombe.

[16] Charles Gilman Norris, "The Valley of the Shadow: A Tale of the San Francisco Fire and Earthquake," *Sunset* 17 (June-July 1906): 111, 108. This story was reprinted—but

Altruism was not dead, though perhaps it was activated only by severe crisis, as a mode only of survival. In fact, Gaylord Wilshire predicted to London that the earthquake and fire would instigate "the greatest boon in real estate that ever happened in the city, and I am sure that labor is never going to be as well paid in San Francisco for the next six months as it will be again in the next century."[17] Some saw a phoenix rise from the ashes, others, the sweet smell of money. Once again bohemia would be co-opted by capitalism.

James Hopper created a first-person, hour by hour narrative of what he experienced. He was London's friend, a bohemian, a reporter for the *San Francisco Call,* and a short story writer, who would in a year supply the crew of the *Snark* with his Cal football jersey as a kind of banner. Like Millard, he lived in the city and was lying in bed. The quake struck and he flipped about like "a fish in a frying-pan." His essay in *Everybody's,* which London and Sterling thought the best of all the bunch, is poignant and strong because he captured the psychological impact of the disaster, both on himself and others.[18] An old man, obviously traumatized, tried to read with broken glasses the

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without the final two paragraphs—in *The Early "Sunset Magazine," 1898-1928,* ed. Paul C. Johnson (San Francisco: California Historical Society, 1973), 53, 50.

[17] H. Gaylord Wilshire, letter to JL, 20 Apr. 1906, JL 20530. I don't mean to portray Wilshire as heartless. His letter begins, "It must have been something terrific, the scene, yesterday when the thing was going on and I suppose even today it is something very terrible." But from the East Coast one could take a more objective point of view, and Wilshire predicted that those with money to invest would make a killing.

[18] See Clarice Stasz, "Family, Friends, Mentors," in *The Oxford Handbook of Jack London,* ed. Jay Williams (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 49; see also London,

inscription on the Dewey monument in Union Square hours after the quake struck, as if he had never seen the statue before. A man in "pink pajamas, a pink-bathrobe, carrying a pink comforter," walked barefoot across the gravelly square. Hopper saw people sit in the street, exhausted, resigned to burn to death. He saw groups of people in empty lots, sitting on their trunks and suitcases, waiting to die. Hopper himself pulled bodies from under stone and brick, both alive and dead. Disbelief and denial—"the twisted vision of us all"—characterized the general human reaction to the devastation.[19] Mentally as well as physically people had lost their grounding.

Mary Edith Griswold—a writer and editor for *Sunset* and, before she married the former Rough Rider Edwin Emerson, the roommate of Isabel "The Queen of Bohemia" Fraser—wrote what I feel is the best account of the three days of the fire, though it ends somewhat abruptly.[20] But she leaves the reader with the anxiety and fear that everyone in

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letter to Sterling, 31 May 1906, *Letters,* 2:578 and Sterling, letter to London, 7 July 1906, JL 19049. Sterling thought Whitaker's essay "pretty poor."

[19] James Hopper, "Our San Francisco," *Everybody's* 14 (June 1906): 760.

[20] Her husband also wrote an account. See Edwin Emerson, Jr., "Handling a Crisis: How Affairs in San Francisco Were Controlled by Men Who Knew Just What to Do," *Sunset* 17 (June-July 1906): 230-35. Emerson was on the East Coast lecturing during the earthquake and fire and donated his proceeds to the Red Cross. He too was a frequenter of Coppa's and a socialist. He would later get himself into hot water with Charmian when he was quoted in the *San Francisco Examiner* about the fight between London and Roscoe Eames over captaining the *Snark.* When George Sterling informed London about the report, London wrote, "Emerson is hopeless; nevertheless I wrote him a letter five

the city must have felt with the resolution of the fire still unknown. Written in the form of a diary and seemingly during the events she describes, her account has a powerful immediacy because of her command of the telling detail, both within and without herself, and because of her use of the present tense: "The fire is within two blocks of my house. . . . The firemen are frantic. If they don't stop the fire now the whole Western Addition will go—a policeman with a red face is running up and down in front of the house. A dead Italian lies in the middle of the street opposite my house. Members of his family sit around his body in a circle. I got so scared I couldn't swallow a glass of water. The heat on the balcony was intense—too hot to stay out there. The paint on the woodwork was blistering. Everyone was fire made. My home will surely go." That's the ending, written at Fort Mason while waiting for a boat to take her to the Oakland ferry. She writes

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minutes ago in which I told him you were right, in which I gave him several reasons why he should not have done what he did; and in which, by invidious comparison, I showed him that he was no man" (London, letter to Sterling, 25 July 1907, *Letters,* 2:703). Sterling, after meeting with Blanche Partington (who knew all parties involved), pleaded with London to repair the relationship. See Sterling, letter to London, 12 Sept. 1907, JL 19062. Later things got more serious in 1914 when London was falsely tagged with writing an antiwar essay called "The Good Soldier." Emerson, upon reading the essay, published a letter in the *Army and Navy Journal* denouncing London, mentioning the *Snark* voyage and the war in Korea as evidence that London followed "his own lawless impulses" (quoted in *Letters,* 3:1337 n. 4). The journal published a letter from London in which he called Emerson a child who, nonetheless, was welcomed at his ranch. See London, letter to the editor, *Army and Navy Journal, Letters,* 3:1336.

without a message, without the need to reassure, to partake in boosterism. She captures both the need to save oneself and help others but also the desire to see the fire at work, to confront the monster. Her friends Maynard and Lillian Dixon were insistent on taking her to their home in Sausalito, but she wanted to stay: "I know now why the people who live at the foot of Vesuvius all stay till it is too late to escape the lava." She had checked on the writers, editors, and artists of bohemia, but she managed to talk with and observe the ordinary people of the city: the Chinese employee at the Palace Hotel who was dusting; the African-American street preacher who regretted prophesying the fire and brimstone to be visited upon a sinful city (Mother Jones was right, at least in this one instance); the white upperclass woman "of stunning style who walked between two men, her hands in her muff. Others, like London, observed the refugees pulling their trunks along as they escaped the fire. Only Griswold noted the sound: "the screeching sound of the trunks dragging on the cable slots went to my marrow."[21]

One would think London would follow in Millard's and Whitaker's shoes and write the story of the event from a socialist perspective. Alternatively, he might have followed Hopper and Griswold and written it as a straight realist, first-person narrative with a strong psychological undertone. No, he aimed differently. He does mention that "never, in all San Francisco's history, were her people so kind and courteous as on this night of terror," but he doesn't detail any instances of kindness, and he certainly doesn't equate it with altruism. It's as if he had read Millard and Whitaker and Hopper and drawn this conclusion from them, not from his own experience.

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[21] Mary Edith Griswold, "Three Days Adrift: The Diary of a San Francisco Girl during the Earthquake and Fire," *Sunset* 17 (June-July 1906): 122, 120.

The greatest surprise in reading London's "The Story of an Eye-Witness" and especially in viewing his photographs is the absence of individuals. In his written text, London, having cemented his reputation as a national figure, a public intellectual as Cecelia Tichi says, now began envisioning the effect of national events upon the global scene. He could easily have contributed to *Sunset* or *Pacific Monthly* or *Overland Monthly* and emphasized his natal geography. Reading Hopper and others, London could see how references to actual people and places cuts two ways: they make the report as close to photographic realism as possible—a positive quality because it conveys immediacy and authority—but it also makes the report parochial. He imagined instead a national audience's take on the event. His article is the story of the fall of "the imperial city." You may think that San Francisco was only an adult version of a Gold Rush town, the sophisticated habitat of those had profited from mining in the fifties, he says to his audience. Or you might think of it was a gateway to the Pacific world. It's both of those, of course, but it is also the capital of, at least, the vast western American empire, and maybe of the empire as a whole, making Washington, DC merely the capitol of the nation. This is how London generalized the event. *Imperial* can connote cosmopolitan to be sure, a tamer persona for a global city. But it mostly connotes Rome and its world domination. Either way the earthquake and fire had far-reaching effects: on world trade, on world migration. Instead of fire and brimstone being visited on a sinful city, London imagines San Francisco paying for its capitalism.

He is the eye-witness; oddly, he erases Charmian from the narrative, probably thinking that the singular first-person pronoun was more effective than the plural. He witnessed the destruction, and though Jimmy Hopper gave a better account of it, he

witnessed how “the heated air rising made an enormous suck. Thus did the fire of itself build its own colossal chimney through the atmosphere. Day and night this dead calm continued, and yet, near to the flames, the wind was often half a gale, so mighty was the suck.” But instances of reporting a single person’s fate, a single fire chimney, are few. London is dealing in generalities: streets, not a street; refugees, not a refugee. He creates, not a typology like that of pseudo-anthropological clans like the Sons of the Wolf, the Daughters of the Snow, but rather categories of destruction and suffering. We don’t feel the need to look at a map of the city as we do to trace Griswold’s and Hopper’s and Whitaker’s movements during those days; we don’t need to know where Market Street is, only that south of it is where “the working-class ghetto was.” This report is for the eyes of the world, not an account to let the people who lived through it know what exactly had happened beyond their immediate sphere of observation. “The hills of San Francisco are steep,” he says, describing the refugees carrying their personal effects away from the fire; no kidding! says the native San Franciscan, but for the reader outside the United States this would be an important detail.

London positions himself not as a native of the city—he could have, and there is no hint of emotion as he views scenes of his life destroyed by the fire—but as disinterested observer. London wants to stand apart in order to write for the world, but by portraying himself as a witness, and by writing in generalities, he creates the impression of being a disaster tourist. Millard praised his essay, but reminded him that he, and Hopper both had actually lived through the quake and the entirety of the fire; London had spent at most sixteen hours in it. They had participated; London had traveled to see it. He left the city on the morning of the second day, though he does not tell his reader that, and

in the final paragraphs of his report he tells us of events on Thursday and Friday that he himself did not witness. And he closes with an understatement that reveals why he did not follow Griswold and Hopper and Whitaker: "The government has the situation on hand, and, thanks to the immediate relief given by the whole United States, there is not the slightest possibility of a famine. The bankers and business men have already set about making preparations to rebuild San Francisco." He makes no attempt at promoting the civic pride in the residents' resilience, in their selflessness, in their humanity. Instead, as if taking a cue from Mother Jones and Gaylord Wilshire, he sees a simple and dispassionate economic cycle of bust and boom. Those who were rich—and his only two interviews are with rich men—are no longer, but will undoubtedly be soon. As he wrote to his friend Ida Winship, the "earthquake and fire, by destroying so much wealth (surplus product), set back the coming of socialism in U.S. fully six months."[22] As long as everyone is poor together, he seems to be saying, though with a certain amount of tongue in his cheek, there is no need for a political system built on economic equality, but the rich won't stay poor long. London passed on a chance to convey what it was like for the working class to live through a monumental disaster in favor of conveying to the world the essence of the apocalypse. It was part and parcel of his new authorial role, to make the transition from a national to a global author.

His report is, after all, entitled "A *Story* of an Eye-Witness," and we can remember his very first published work, in the fall of 1893, "Story of a Typhoon off the Coast of Japan." The latter was very much a nonfiction work, yet, at the same time, its emotional charge comes from the adept way London selected, ordered, and framed the

[22] London, letter to Ida Winship, 17 May 1906, *Letters,* 2:575.

events to such an extent that we felt we were looking at a Turner painting that conveyed the emotional, but not factual, import of the events he participated in. In 1906, London says he was an eye-witness to events he was far away from, he generalizes when he could write with detailed accuracy, and he thus creates a very different kind of emotional or human document than one conveying the truth of the quake, principally, the terror of being at the mercy of unseen and overwhelming natural forces.

One gets the same impression from his photographs, which seem more like postcards of a disaster than a recording of damage done. On 29 May, Charmian wrote in her diary, "Went [to] city taking Mayoungi. Spent over 3 hours in auto, seeing city and taking pictures."[23] Hopper, on the 18th, also rode in a car, commandeered so that he could speed from place to place and report on as many scenes as possible. But with the Londons and their servant, one senses their distance from the wreckage. In the photographs in which one can discern people, they either have their backs to the camera, or have their faces obscured in shadow, or are in such small scale in relation to the ruins that they appear only as filler. From such an intense socialist, and from a photographer who had shot close-up portraits of Koreans in 1904, and then South Sea Islanders on the *Snark* voyage, it comes as a surprise and disappointment that in neither written nor visual text did he render the catastrophe's effects on the individual Californian.[24]

"All the shrewd contrivances and safeguards of man had been thrown out of gear by thirty seconds' twitching of the earth-crust": thus he had summed up the material

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[23] Charmian London, 29 May 1906, diary, JL 217.

[24] At least Brett liked it, calling it "the most vivid account" he had read (George Brett, letter to London, 12 May 1906, JL 3063).

destruction. Four days later he told Charles Kerr that he was back in "gear," that is, writing again after the earthquake struck. The vast machinery of the region, epitomizing the Machine Age, included his own work. His writing is a machine—a car—that he drives and maneuvers. Yet, it drives him as well. A human body is a machine that is a human body. In a clear, brief statement in an undated note for an essay, he captures this interface between the organic and the inorganic. He wanted to write an essay—entitled "Scorching"—about how riding in "an electric car," speeding along at twenty miles per hour (!) could instill the gladness at being alive. "The swift-flying electric car. . . . The wind on the face. Flying ! flying! flying! . . . Home thirty minutes after; the hot bath; then dinner; then cigarette and evening paper. Finish: one feels it is good to be alive." (Note how reading a newspaper is an essential part of the good life.) That's the moral. But to begin with, when the electric car starts up, he captures the "anticipation, preparation" for the trip and then "getting down to it. Becoming part of machine, or machine part of me (enlarge, better). . . . Every sense on the alert, a sort of mental and physical exhaltation. All combined into me and the machine—the crossings, pedestrians, wheelmen, and women, cars, bridges, railroads, flagmen."[25] It's a Benjaminian catalog of modern life, the flaneur on a street car. It's a celebration of the Machine Age, despite its drawbacks. The machine is subservient to the body, but it can be a prosthetic device to intensify one's deepest urge, that is, to defy death. To be in gear—to write! to fly!—is to be supremely aware of being alive. Writing is always, for London, a matter of life and death.

[25] London, "Scorching: [notes]," JL 1159. It appears from the font of the typewriter that he wrote these notes in the early aughts.

So the earthquake was a lesson to the imperialists about the fragility of their creation, but it was also a challenge to those who embraced the age's benefits. An author like London could be stopped only temporarily, but the quake had lasting effects on his ideas about the future of man, especially the future of the cooperative commonwealth. There is a hint or two of the earthquake in *Before Adam*. Perhaps when the Fire People smoke the Folk out of their caves, he couldn't help but recall the masses of flames and the never-ending smoke of the fire he and Charmian had walked around on Earthquake Day. When the Lop-Ear, Swift One, Big-Tooth, and Hair-Face escape the fire and smoke, and wander in the swamp, he imagines them as "a handful of survivors after the day of the end of the world," a line he had used in "Story of an Eye-Witness."[26] This was not exaggeration, though it would quickly become a cliché. As Millard noted in his history, many people believed that the end of the world had occurred. Hundreds went to church to pray. Hopper thought it was "the end" as he was shaken out of bed.[27] Charmian felt "very

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[26] London, *Before Adam,* 235. John Hay notes this repetition and London's use of the sentence again in *The Scarlet Plague.* He also suggests a possible origin in London's reading of Wilhelm Meyer, *The End of the World,* trans. Margaret Wagner (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1905). See John Hay, "Jack London's Sci-Fi Finale," in *The Oxford Handbook of Jack London,* ed. Jay Williams (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 364-65. I have found no influence of Meyer's work on London.

[27] Quoted in Dan Kurzman, *Disaster! The Great San Francisco Earthquake and Fire of 1906* (William Morrow: New York, 2001), 38. See Hopper, "Our San Francisco," 759.

lonely in the conviction that my end was approaching in leaps and bounds."[28] Of course if the world had actually ended, there would not be a day after nor an author to write about it. Of course he means that the world as they knew it had ended, and like the Queen of Bohemia, resurrection from the ashes was possible. The empire had fallen, but in all likelihood it would return in a different shape. After all, a new and different economic order wouldn't come about from physical devastation.

Red Essays

Charmian London captured the physical apocalypse in her diary in two short words: she saw the "burning streets" of the city. (London's repeated "wall of flames" seems trite in comparison.) It wasn't a metaphor. Their friend Jim Whitaker reported in his story "Human Drama at San Francisco" that the bricks and cobblestones of the streets "actually burned like coal."[29] We can see the red flames in her word-picture, and certainly when London interrupted the writing of *Before Adam* again to write a 136-word introduction to his choice of his best short story for *Grand Magazine* redness and destruction were foremost in his mind. His British agent, James Pinker, wrote London in mid April that the editor of *Grand Magazine* would pay ten and a half pounds for "two or three lines" and the right to reprint the story as part of a long continuing series that had

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[28] Charmian Kittredge London, *The Book of Jack London,* 2 vols. (New York: The Century Co., 1921), 2:125.

[29] Herman Whitaker, "Human Drama at San Francisco," *Harper's Weekly,* 19 May 1906, 694.

already included Joseph Conrad, Arthur Conan Doyle.[30] His choice was "The League of Old Men," and he sent the typescript and introduction off at once. In its published form the introduction is only 116 words; the editors cut the first sentence ("I incline to the opinion that "The League of the Old Men" is the best short story I have written.") and rewrote a few others. Though brief, it is one of London's few public statements about his own work and why he finds merit in it: "It has no love-motif, but that is not my reason for thinking it my best story." To begin with, that is an odd formulation. Why would a story that is not a love story necessarily be a great story? Especially to the audience of a pulp magazine like *Grand?*

Unless he meant that to be a great story one would have to frustrate popular expectations and write something against the grain of the public's desire, which is what he wrote in a 1907 piece for *The Editor*. "I should advise the young story-writer to study the stories in the current magazines. . . . But I must append this warning: HE WILL SUCCEED WITH THE EDITORS OF TO-DAY; BUT IN THE CENTURIES TO COME HE WILL NOT HIMSELF BE ACCREDITED A MASTER OF LITERATURE."[31] London is repeating Brett's injunction to write material worthy of a "real place in the permanent world of literature," and a conventional love story simply

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[30] See James Pinker, letter to London, 19 Apr. 1906, JL 16645. He may have been paid half the price quoted; there is an entry of "Paid 5/5 Dec. 2/07" in London's sales notebook, seemingly indicating a payment of five pounds, five shillings. So, in today's currency, he received either $4000.00 or half that. Either way, it is an extraordinary payment.

[31] London, letter to the editor, *Editor,* [? Apr. 1907], *Letters,* 2:684.

provides entertainment in the present, not repeated readings in the future. Thus, we remember that he felt compelled to include a love story in *The Sea-Wolf,* but only an entirely unconventional one.

So the second criterion points more explicitly to a timelessness of theme: "the voices of millions are in the voice of old Imber, and the tears and sorrows of millions are in his throat as he tells his story; and his story epitomizes the whole vast tragedy of the contact of the Indian with the white man."[32] Imber is the murderous Whitefish Indian who, with cohort of elders, killed hundreds of white people in the Yukon in order to stop their invasion of First Peoples territory. In the first volume of the present work I focused on Imber's revenge and the rapaciousness of the whites, the law that works without regard for the individual, and the odd invention of writing that Imber does not understand but is figured by the battle between the white men and the ghostly First Peoples. London, in 1906, remembered the red tint of the final paragraph. As the judge in Imber's case listened to Imber's confession he dreamed of the Anglo-Saxon race, "a mighty phantasmagoria" that had bloodied the very landscape of the entire world: "he saw it dawn red-flickering across the dark forests and sullen seas; he saw it blaze, bloody and red, to full and triumphant noon; and down the shaded slope he saw the blood-red sands dropping into night." (822) We might recall that London pronounced, in his defense of

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[32] London, "The League of the Old Men: [statement regarding short story]," JL 876. The Huntington's cataloguer did not realize what this manuscript was and so gave it an accurate but incomplete title. See London, introduction to "My Best Story and Why I Think So," *Grand Magazine* 4 (Aug. 1906): 86.

Rudyard Kipling's treatment of the Anglo-Saxon, that "the color of tragedy is red."[33] Now we see the Anglo-Saxon emblematized by Red-Eye and by the fires that destroyed San Francisco. But the principal tool of the Anglo-Saxon in the Machine Age wasn't the sword but rather "trade! trade! all the time was it trade!" (818) The white capitalists had conquered the Whitefish and other First Peoples by introducing capitalism into their socialistic world. And though the old men "called ourselves brothers" and fought back, it was no use. Read as a parable for the politics of 1906 America, "The League of the Old Men" tells us that murdering the ex-governor of Idaho or Andrew Carnegie or performing any act of anarchistic terror is anger misdirected and political action rendered ineffectual. In 1904, he told Brett that *Children of the Frost* was "by far my best collection of short stories" and in it "`League of Old Men' is one of my best two short stories."[34] We remember William Dall's judgment of London's characterizations of First Peoples—"they are unlike any Indians whatsoever"—and certainly London borrows from the myth of the Noble Savage. But what redeems his portrait of Imber is the political allegory of the tale. Yes, he stands for the "millions" slaughtered by whites; but he also stands as martyr to the socialist cause, a reminder, even to the judge, that blood-red economic competition leads to murder.

Not surprisingly, then, redness blazes forth in his next piece of writing, the first he undertook after he completed *Before Adam.* He sent "The Somnambulists," completed 13 June, written unbidden, to four top magazines, all of whom rejected it. Hamilton Holt of *The Independent* took it without fanfare, paid $30.00 and published it during Christmas

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[33] London, "These Bones Shall Rise Again," *The Reader* 2 (June 1903): 31.

[34] London, letter to Brett, 26 Dec. 1904, *Letters,* 1:459.

time. (We will meet him later when London writes "House Beautiful.") London saw how it could fit into a projected volume led off by "Revolution," a book of essays that needed three more before completion and publication in 1910.[35]

"Somnambulists" is a direct outgrowth of his work on *Before Adam.* It is a vessel containing the overflow of ideas that could not be directly expressed in the novel, thus

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[35] For some reason, Macmillan and Company's text chopped off the beginning of the first sentence of the essay. London wrote in manuscript, "Man is the mightiest and absurdist sleep-walker on the planet!" The book has it as "The mightiest and absurdist sleep-walker on the planet!" There is another change that might indicate both changes are actually emendations by London or Charmian in typescript or proof. See page 43 where the book has as a sentence, "Touch his silly vanity, which he exalts ainto high-sounding pride—call him a liar, and behold the red animal in him that makes a hand clutching that is quick like the tensing of a tiger's claw, or an eagle's talon, incarnate with desire to rip and tear." The manuscript: "Touch his silly vanity, which he exalts ainto high-sounding pride—call him a liar, and behold the red animal in him that makes a hand clutching that is quick like the tensing of a tiger's claw, or an eagle's talon, incarnate with desire to seize." Further, in the book, "for helping the merchant and banking classes to believe that society rests on their shoulders, and that civilization would go to smash if they got out from under and ceased from their exploitations and petty pilferings," but the manuscript reads, "for helping the merchant and banking classes to believe that society rests on their shoulders, and that civilization would go to smash if they got out from under and ceased from their exploitations and petty pilferings, from their cent per cent and tit-tat-toe" (London, "The Somnambulists: [essay]," JL 1236).

exposing the underlying biopolitics of that novel. It is an essayistic rant against humankind or at least those who deny their savage, caveman origins and their apelike character still in residence under the veneer of civilization. London's argument is that the vast majority of society are sleepwalkers, like Frank Zappa's pajama people. They sleepwalk because they are in denial, and the denial allows them to "dream drunken dreams of self-exaltation." All humans are "red" animals. In a master stroke that combines this essay with both *Before Adam* and "Story of an Eye-Witness," he writes, "The raw animal crouching within him is like the earthquake monster pent in the crust of the earth. As he persuades himself against the latter till it arouses and shakes down a city, so does he persuade himself against the former until it shakes him out of his dreaming and he stands undisguised, a brute like any other brute." Here is a further development of the effects of the quake: not only does it expose the thin veil of civilization that can be destroyed in a moment by natural forces—the quake and the "red animal" are one and the same—but now he's linking the veneer of civilization to a psychological state of denial. The fear of natural destruction—if it happened once, it can happen again—and the fear of one's worst instincts, those embodied by Red-Eye, are the same, and, if London were a psychologist, he would want us to work through that fear and wither the denial. But he's a social activist, so he exploits the bourgeois fears, taking the fear of earthquakes—something all classes recognize however much they attempt to suppress it—and ties it to the fear of the primitive, hoping that in this conjunction the bourgeois will be made to see how asleep they really are, so they can awake to socialism. Socialists are "clean, noble, and alive."

But only the right-thinking red animals feel this fear. The prize-fighter, the reddest of animals (we remember that Red-Eye is linked to a pugilist), is the figure for those who are at least partially awake. He becomes the central figure for the relationship between the primitive instincts inside the body and the somatic veil that covers those red instincts. A prize fighter accepts the body; he accepts the somatic foundation of human being. Those who are completely asleep—the capitalists, the professors, the college students, the independently wealthy, the sky pilots, the politicians—deny the body and glory the spirit. So they are the most dangerous because they are the ones living most fully their lives of illusion and have created the most fully developed rhetoric of the spirit, sacrificing the real glory of the body. The prize ring is not the only place where the body can be celebrated, as we saw in London's notes on riding a street car: "But to know that I live, that this is I, blent with the flashing steel and flying! flying! flying!" The prize fighter, like the author, like the street car rider, is a blend of soma and machine, and even in the notes for "Scorching," as in "The Somnambulists," he attacks those who deny the body, who waste it with "pills" and are "sallow of face and flabby of muscle."[36] This is the political message of *Before Adam,* the material he could not make room for in a fictional, absorptive narrative. Just as anger, say, red rage, can trigger the Red-Eye who lives in all of us, compressing thousands of years of evolution into a single moment, so too can an earthquake turn an "imperial city" into "the crater of a volcano." Time is so flexible that past can become present in a heartbeat, can become the future in another.

[36] London, "Scorching."

And so the targets of *Before Adam* and "The Sonambulists" become the targets of his futuristic novel of the fall, *The Iron Heel.*[37]

Created He Them

As a prelude to *The Iron Heel,* he wrote several short stories after "The Sombambulists": "Created He Them," "A Wicked Woman" (both the story and the one-

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[37] I see this reading of *Before Adam,* "Story of an Eye-Witness," "The Sombambulists," and *The Iron Heel* as a companion to Cecilia Tichi's own reading of the two novels and the earthquake article. She conjoins the four texts as evidence that "he was ever afterward a war correspondent. . . . As of 1906, London always was at the ready to tell the public—directly or subtly, flagrantly or in nuance—that war and its corollary, empire, were inglorious, wasteful, corruptive, and inhumane" (Tichi, *Jack London,* 91). For her, the earthquake was a moment in which London relived his experiences in the Russo-Japanese War. The difference between us is a matter of emphasis, with one of us emphasizing London's authorial role as reporter and the other, his authorial role as social activist, without either of us denying the validity or importance of both.

In all of the published letters by Eugene Debs, only one mentions Jack London and it concerns "The Sombambulists": "It is Jack London at his best," he told his brother Theodore, and he suggested that Theodore pass the essay to their friend Stephen Reynolds so that it might be read by the Terre Haute Club. "How it would make the dry bones rattle!" (Eugene Debs, letter to Theodore Debs, 23 Mar. 1908, *Letters of Eugene V. Debs,* ed. J. Robert Constantine, 3 vols. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 1:259.

act play), “The Wit of Porportuk,” “Finis,” and “Just Meat.” In between the third and the fourth, he wrote two essays: “The House Beautiful” and the foreword to *The Cruise of the* Snark. One might think he was writing stories merely to earn the money that he needed to build the *Snark,* and, yet, in September 1906 he had $8,882.67 in his bank account, or approximately $240,000 in 2016 dollars. So he didn’t hesitate when he wrote to two comrades in Oakland, telling them that he would lend them $100, a fifth of what they needed to purchase a printing press for socialist publications, including the *Socialist Voice*. Whenever he lent socialists money, he never expected to get paid back.[38]

The first story shows how much continuity there is in London’s writings from, at least, *White Fang* through the lecture tour to “The Apostate” to *Before Adam* and all the essays he wrote during the writing of the latter. In fact, “Created He Them” might be called “Just after *Before Adam*”— “Male and female created he them, and called their name Adam, in the day they were created” (Gen. 5:2)—as London again expands upon

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[38] See London, checkbook, 20 Sept-4 Oct. 1906, JLE 201. By the end of November, even with constant payments for labor and materials for the boat, his account stood at $8,038.58 in the black. See London, checkbook, 21 Oct.-22 Nov. 1906, JLE 201. See also London, letter to Walter V. Holloway and Thomas Booth, 29 Aug. 1906, JL 7546. Both were prominent socialists in the Bay Area. Booth ran for mayor of Oakland on the Socialist ticket in 1911, and Holloway, who would later ask London for a job on the ranch, wrote *The Supreme Court and the Constitution*. See Holloway, letter to London, 12 June 1913, JL 7547. Holloway would team up with Cloudesley Johns in Los Angeles to run a free-speech campaign.

his interest in past time to include the mythical moment of creation, a competing origin narrative to evolutionary theory.

We'll get to a reading of the story, but first let's look at the more general place it holds in London's work. "Created He Them" is a significant story because its title was also the title of a serial—a series of short stories—London contemplated, perhaps in reaction to McClure's almost monthly insistence in 1905 that he write such a work for the magazine. "A Wicked Woman" would also be a part of the series. He completed only those two stories and then included them with ten other non-Klondike stories to comprise *When God Laughs*. But he left behind notes for twenty-five stories and a one-act play. Four clues indicate he wrote most of the notes in 1905: first, he told George Brett in July 1905 that he had "mapped out for myself to write a series of brief, nervous, strong, dramatic sketches." He often declared that his planned work would be radically different from anything he had written previously, and this is how he characterized these stories.[39] Yet in December 1905 he confessed that, while on the road for his lecture tour, he was unable to work on "that set of `Created He Them' sketches."[40] Second, he clipped a newspaper article from June 1905 about a Vermont woman who had murdered her husband and attached it to a typewritten sheet with "Created He Them" written at the top; third, a number of stories involve plot lines from the life of Charmian's Aunt Netta Wiley Eames, and since she appears in "Planchette," written in the summer of 1905, a narrative based on Charmian's idea, one can easily imagine the four of them—Jack, Charmian, Netta, and Roscoe—sitting 'round the fire in Glen Ellen swapping plot ideas. (In their

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

[40] London, letter to Brett, 2 Dec. 1905, *Letters,* 1:538.

idyllic surroundings, they hatched Hitchcockian stories of murder, disappointment, and tragedy.)[41] Fourth, he planned for one of the *Created He Them* story ideas to also be a curtain raiser that London intended for Blanche Bates, the actress he hoped would star in *Scorn of Women,* the play he worked on from late 1904 through June 1906. "A Wicked Woman," the one-act play found in these notes—based on the story by the same name—is on a continuum with *Scorn of Women* and his general interest in 1904 through 1906 to write a successful theatrical production. One can see London developing these story ideas as he is writing "Planchette" and *White Fang.* The lecture tour interrupted all his writing plans; as we saw, he had hoped to write *Created He Them* while on the road. As the afterglow of the tour and his national prominence as a socialist spokesperson wore off he settled into writing pure absorptive short stories again, and now he consulted his batch of notes for *Created He Them*. We remember that "When God Laughs," the second story he completed after his return, is a disquisition upon relationships between men and women. It is a story that could have fit well with the projected theme of *Created He Them,* and, not surprisingly, he grouped it, "Created He Them," and "A Wicked Woman" into the same collection, *When God Laughs,* after he realized he could never finish *Created He Them.* Given that the stories for this series were first dreamt of in 1905, that is, before his electrified interest in the primitive and the elasticity and infiniteness of time produced *White Fang, Before Adam,* and *The Iron Heel* it is not surprising that the plots he had on

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[41] Aunt Netta, while working—or, more likely, volunteering—at the *Overhland Monthly* in 1899, met Jack and made him one of her protégés, a role she encouraged in men, most likely a platonic relationship. Charmian first met Jack at her aunt's house. I am grateful to Susan Nuernberg for relating this information to me.

hand in that summer of 1906 did not result in finished product beyond "Created He Them" and "A Wicked Woman." He was too preoccupied with creating his pair of time-travelling novels.

We'll return to *Created He Them* and the ideas he had for the serial. First, however, we need to jump ahead in time. When London returned from Australia after ending the *Snark* adventure, he pulled out notes for short stories, including those for *Created He Them.* He began to add to them, but thought he might have a second, related series in mind to be called *The Smoke of Life.* In a post-1909 note, he wrote, "Be sure to get in some good, innocent sketches. Keep sexual stories together under title of `Created He Them.' Maybe collect the other stories under the title of `The Smoke of Life.'"[42] By "other" he means neither "sexual" nor tragic, as he had first imagined the thematic content for *Created He Them.* In 1905 Charmian helped him type up some general

[42] London, "Created He Them: [notes for a short story collection]," JL 565-66. My dating of the notes relies on two elements. First, among the typescript pages of notes, there are four pages on a larger, thinner paper than the other twenty-six. One of those four pages is the typescript of "Burton's fight with death," labeled "Smoke of Life or Created He Them." None of the twenty-six mentions "The Smoke of Life." Because he wrote the published story "Created He Them" in 1905, I am dating anything not connected to "The Smoke of Life"—that is, the *Created He Them* series—as 1905. I believe he concocted the idea for "The Smoke of Life" post-1909, probably in 1911.

observations about *Created He Them*.[43] He envisioned a series of "short, sharp, trenchant" stories of between two and three thousand words (though "Created He Them" turned out to be 3800 words). "Tense and terse all the way through," they would all be tragic, but in different ways: "business tragedy; political tragedy; tramp tragedy; criminal tragedy; working-class tragedy; slum tragedy."[44] Tragedy and sex aren't mutually exclusive, of course, but his notes do indicate a different emphasis at one or another point with no clear resolution for the general tenor of the series.

"Other stories" or even "good, innocent sketches" is not an effective way to characterize a series, so *The Smoke of Life* seems conceived as merely a kind of catch basin for stories related to but not to be included in *Created He Them.* Seven *The Smoke of Life* stories are clearly labeled as such, and they were filed with a newspaper article entitled "Feigned Insanity to Get into the Madhouse and Now She Can't Get Out," published in a Bay Area newspaper around the first of June 1905; apparently, he moved this story idea from *Created He Them* to *The Smoke of Life,* and, again, here is another indication that London was concerned about the borders between sanity and insanity that got expressed in *Before Adam*. So, post-1909, London was sorting stories between the two series titles, yet these seven stories in *The Smoke of Life* are not "innocent," or at least not all of them. One places an "old maid, not pretty, middle-class, never had known

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[43] He made a list of alternative titles for the collection: *The Taste of Life; The Bitter and the Sweet; The Bitter Taste of Life; The Bitter-Sweet; The Fiber of Life; The Constitution of Life; Men and Women.* See London, "Created He Them: [notes for short story collection]," JL 566.

[44] London, "Created He Them: [notes for short story collection]," JL 566.

satisfaction of passion" on a beach alone. A man approaches, makes sure they are alone, and "then the brief little struggle, and her sinking back with a satisfied sigh." The man robs her of her watch and purse, and the final line of the notes reads, "Must make her disappointment dramatic."[45] She thought love, not theft, followed from rape.

A second, similar story comes from an incident in Upton Sinclair's *The Industrial Republic;* since it was published in May 1907, London read this book after he had returned from the South Seas. This story, clipped from a New York newspaper, tells of the fate of a young woman, newly orphaned and unable to find work where she can "keep pace with the machine" due to an unspecified physical handicap. She appeals to the House of the Good Shepard to take her in, but they take only "fallen women" who want to redeem themselves. So that night she sleeps with a man for money and then comes back. "Describe minutely the girl; prove her virtue by her modesty, her talk, her hard work, etc." Another tragic story, more akin to those in *Created He Them,* has a man and a woman agree to commit suicide together, only the man chickens out and the woman "stares at him reproachfully" as she dies. A brief sketch of another story, based on Robert Browning's *The Ring and the Book,* is a *Rashamon*-like story, with the same plot told by two different people with two different "psychologies." Another story is simply "Sterling's father's conversion to Catholicism." Then there is a Kananka's schooner's captain who loses his feet to sharks, is saved, and then begs to be "thrown back in," which he is; this idea is congruent with a series called "Sharks" that he was putting

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[45] London, "Smoke of Life: [notes for short story]," JL 1208. This is the typescript of London, "Smoke of Life: [notes for short story]," JL 1207, the handwritten notes for the same set of story ideas.

together during the *Snark* voyage. And finally the seventh story idea has a man named O'Brien (an idea unrelated to the 1907 short story "The Passing of Marcus O'Brien") killed for some reason by unnamed men who do not notice "the vessel" coming toward them. Most likely, in the completed telling of these ideas would we be able to see what differentiates them from the stories in *Created He Them.* But the significant fact we glean from this set of notes is that London was contemplating a series related to *Created He Them* and that he still considered the latter to be a viable project four or more years after its inception.

Post-1909, he jotted down four ideas entitled "Created He Them." First, there is a one-line note about a robbery: "A thief-cashier caught, and scene with Directors." Would this be a political story, a case of sabotaging a bank and trying to destroy capitalism from within? Would it be a simple crime tale? So many of these notes cry out for more explanation. A second, also brief note concerns "a leader of the people, sincere, honest, altruistic, etc.," in short, a respectable socialist, who is then "turned upon by the very people he wished to save, and reviled, and even physically abused." One is tempted to read this biographically, as if London is venting his frustration at being criticized for all his (free) work on behalf of the Cause; but I think that would be a case of overreading. He is obviously attracted by the irony and by the often senseless behavior of the masses, as we saw in an essay like "The Golden Poppy." A third, somewhat longer note treats a scene in "the Home for Feeble-Minded children." First he wanted to "work up the five or six girls individually. The stigmata, the vacuousness of each, the peculiarities of each." He also wanted to capture the "general atmosphere of the Home." The focus would be on the irony of the girls' lack of self-knowledge, each one asserting, as they waitress for the

entire home, that "`Thank God I am not feeble-minded.'" It's a joke on the surface of things, a tragedy below. London will use the word *stigmata* in another story note, this time about a criminal, betraying his belief that merely by looking at someone could tell that he or she were criminal or insane.

A fourth story idea dealt with a criminal, though because London only typed one line about a newspaper clipping we don't know if she—Mrs. Rogers the murderer—exhibited typical criminal stigmata. From an unknown paper London clipped the newspaper article (we anticipated this source of story ideas to appear, though only one clipping survives) entitled "The Case of Mrs. Rogers and the Death Penalty," not so much for the argument in favor of hanging a murderous woman but for the story of her and her estranged husband whom she kills with the help of her new lover. In fact, his instruction to himself is to end the story with the murder. Sometime later he constructed a note for a portion of a book idea called, simply, *Man* or *The Brute:* "for the brute that is in man, quote verbatim from confession of murderers, Mrs. Rogers, filed away in `Created He Them' material." This book idea centered on the conceptual integrity of combining insanity, rage, murder, and the primitive: "Show how close to the brute—insane----feeble-minded. Temporary insanity—common to all in bursts, when suddenly all things are muddled, the mind is obfuscated, there is a flutter, it is seen in the change of the eyes, etc., and the harsh or silly word is spoken—everybody this way." A wife may be "sweet" "with all the virtues," and yet "with the tottering of her reason, murder me, murder her baby. Describe how one may see such in the asylums." Or she might give birth to "a monstrosity—a microcephalous idiot." Red would be the predominate color for this story, and in 1913 he would create Darrell Standing, respectable professor, who is

taken over by his "red rage" and murders a colleague. This could happen to anyone, anyone at all, perhaps even most likely in a haunted author.

A fifth story idea that can be traced reliably to the post-1909 period is the only note that is headlined "Smoke of Life or Created He Them," thus providing hard evidence that the two serials were linked in his mind. It features a Dr. Burton, close to death from consumption, who travels to Arizona, presumably to get well. But he's so close to dying that "death took shape before him in a half-breed Indian. Spitting blood in the face of death." Nonetheless, he is "a fighter" and determined to see another sunrise, does so, and lives.[46]

None of these stories seem to share a thematic in the way that, as we shall see, the "sexual stories" do, and even the *Created He Them* notes take us out of the sexual realm. Neither series would be unified by either a heroic figure or by the same community of characters or by a strong, consistent theme. Perhaps that is why he never got any further with *The Smoke of Life* or *Created He Them*. The original conceptions were built on rotten timbers. Yet he was committed to writing a serial or two, and in 1911 he would write *Smoke Bellew* and *A Son of the Sun. The Smoke of Life* became *Smoke Bellew.*

Let us return to 1905-1906. The series *Created He Them* is more promising because more thematically cohesive than *The Smoke of Life*. First, in a story possibly

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[46] See London, "Burton's fight with death: [notes for short story]," JL 503. London wrote out two manuscript notes for this story idea. This one is the longest and closest to the typescript, yet he wrote "Death took shape before him in a half delirium."

related to that of the consumptive Doctor Burton,[47] we have, in two lines, a Mrs. Burton who is forced to chose between her two children, to be separated by divorce, one to her and one to her ex—"an Eastern divorce proceeding." This is Machine Age domestic living. This story seems connected to a different, somewhat anomalous story note of two lines: "The old maid who holds baby to her breast to suckle, when no one is around. Make splendid development of character, situation, history, before this culminating act." We usually think of London as one of America's preeminent defenders of children, especially of children exploited by capitalism, but these notes show how focused London was on the possible tragedies of motherhood, though its manifestations are only barely hinted at.

Mothers are creators, not so different from author figures, and, apart from the treatment of sexuality and sexual relations, this series is focused on women as either authors or author figures. Given the title of the collection (and the general theme of this biography), we should not be surprised at this focus: God as author who names his first (two) characters (he is not particularly imaginative) Adam. Sex and authorship come

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[47] In a handwritten note, filed at the Huntington separately from the *Created He Them* and the *Smoke of Life* series, the two Burtons' stories appear on the same note page entitled "Dramatic Sketches": "Dr. Burton's struggle with death—describe trenchantly," and "Mrs. Burton's choice in one day, between her two children (divorce) Court allowed her one, and her husband one" (London, "Dr. Burton's Struggle with Death: [note for dramatic sketch]," JL 604). "Dramatic" doesn't necessarily mean "written for the stage." Some of the typescripts of the handwritten notes for *Created He Them* were catalogued separately at the Huntington.

together in a story note concerning the lie a woman tells her new husband: she tells him she is a virgin. He believes her, although he says, "this is the one thing she has the right to lie about." Then "some man" tells the husband with "excellent and convincing evidence" that she did in fact lie. The husband lies in his turn, telling him that he knew this already because his wife had been truthful about her sexual experiences in the past. "Make very dramatic," writes London, "after man goes, husband sits a few minutes; then sighs with resignation." He feels "a hurt in his palm" and looks down at his hands. "He has driven his nails into the flesh." The story is about the sexual relations between a man and a woman, but, seemingly more important, the story is about conventionality and unconventionality and the price one pays when one thinks one is the latter and turns out to be the former. And then we go one step further: the woman, telling a lie that is believed by her audience, fulfills the role of an author as London conceived it. And, if I may be allowed a flight of fancy, if only to help develop the suggested theme of the series title, if this unnamed woman author figure is the Creator, then her husband, wounded in the palm by nails, resigned by the hurt done to him by his wife-Creator, is Jesus the Son of Man, prefigured in the Old Testament as Adam. In fact, all the author figures in *Created He Them* are women, as if to say that if God were a man, then God as a woman could do much better. It is a pity London didn't fully develop this story.

Several plots for the sex stories came from Netta, who, we may remember, was a bohemian magazine and newspaper writer whose lover and future husband Edward Payne had helped found Altruria. Netta's relations with men, in particular Payne and her first husband, Roscoe Eames, were free and unconventional; the three formed a ménage a trois

for many years, with each also taking lovers from outside their circle.[48] We remember that she and Roscoe were figures in "Planchette," and she was the source for four of the stories in *Created He Them*, one of which would become both a short story and play entitled "A Wicked Woman," which I will discuss a little later.

Three have to do with her "innocence," her life before she became a free-love practitioner. In one, she is an author figure, a young girl taken up by a "rich woman (athletic) who has fast young son." While "on summer outing" she "meets Netta. Is fascinated by her sweetness and artistry and innocence." They go to live in the woman's San Francisco house where the son falls in love with Netta, though he is "already engaged." One night, "he comes to her bed, she is all innocence. . . . A case of `innocence putting out the eyes of lust,'" and Netta and he maintain their chastity. Later, Netta discovers him kissing "a warm young girl" and decides to leave the house. She tells the mother, and the story ends with the "mother crying aloud and repeating `the beast! the beast!'"

London considered writing a novel with this story as a chapter. Based on the "development of Aunt Netta from girlhood," it would link her mother's denigration of her looks—"`It is God's will you should be plain looking'"—and her sisters' condescension—"`you will be loved-not because of your beauty but because of your goodness'"—to "Roscoe love affair . . . and Ned [who must be Edward Payne]." After the episode in San Francisco with the rich, athletic woman, she returns home, renews her

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[48] See Ed Herny, Shelley Rideout, and Katie Wadell, *Berkeley Bohemia: Artists and Visionaries of the Early Twentieth Century* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, 2008), 166. Thanks to Clarice Stasz for first turning me on to this book.

affair with Roscoe and the novel ends with their marriage. Ned seems to have been moved completely off stage until he returns in the notes for what would become "A Wicked Woman."[49]

Netta also told London a story that he entitled "Mormon Harry and the Woman Professor." Netta's brother, Captain Kittredge (Charmian's father) was stationed in Salt Lake City for a number of years and fought Native Americans. Mormonism was a frequent conversational topic on the ranch; later, London would use the historical account of the Mountain Meadows massacre in southern Utah for a scene in *The Star Rover,* and Kit and Charmian's mother, Daisy, appear in *The Valley of the Moon.* Here, the story involves a professor, a painter, and a photographer. The photographer is Netta, though it was Bessie who had taught London how to use a camera, and it was Anna who accompanied Bessie and Jack on a day trip during their honeymoon, taking the well-known photo of the newly weds standing in water with their hands locked behind their heads. The professor—"magnificently intellectual"—is married, but "her marriage is not particularly a success." She kisses the artist ("the magnetism of the artist. Women rush to him. He roused love spontaneously": a description London could easily attribute to himself) in a scene reminiscent of that involving London, Anna Strunsky, and Bessie London when, sailing on the bay, they devise the plot for *The Kempton-Wace Letters* in 1902. The professor (Anna?) then falls into violent self-recrimination, comforted only by Netta the photographer. Once again there is no resolution, only "woman remains sobbing and Netta stroking her hair." We never find out why it is important that the painter is a a

[49] London, "Created He Them: [notes for short-story collection]," JL 565. The typescript is catalogued as London, "Aunt Netta: [notes for a novel]," JL 457.

Mormon, and it's possible that Ninetta, in telling this story, was drawing on London's own story of his day in a boat with Anna and Bessie.[50]

Anna Strunsky and her refusal to marry London was clearly on his mind; when was it not?! In a page-long note on another *Created He Them* story, Anna is named and characterized as an admirable martyr to her attraction to "the man [to be drawn "dimly and colossally"] Anna really loved all the time." This may be a man, who at the very beginning of the story, has died, thus freeing her to marry one of two other men: Zion (perhaps modeled on William English Walling) and Cameron, whom she eventually marries. Cameron threatened to kill himself if she doesn't get married, and, once they do, she receives a letter from Zion, who doesn't know of the marriage. He argues that she should marry him, not Cameron, and threatens to shoot *himself.* The notes end with the explanation that both Zion and Cameron were aware of Anna's real love, and presumably the story ends with Anna (an author figure) haunted by the ghost of the man who died.

There is a sex story that again, may have been inspired by the broken love affair between Jack and Anna. Instead of a male figure perhaps based on Jack being described "colassally," we have a "woman [who] is of the colossally ethical type." The man and woman haven't had sex, "but they love, and it has dawned upon the woman that they love and that he has the wife and child." Because she is so damned ethical, and strong, and self-sacrificing, they separate forever, but not before, at the moment of final departure,

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[50] London, "Created He Them: [notes for short story collection]," JL 566. This is the typescript of London's handwritten notes, which are missing a page and in some places not as filled in as the typescript; that is, London was adding material to his original handwritten notes as he typed. See London, "Aunt Netta: [notes for novel]," JL 456.

she takes him into her bedroom, "makes him lie down with head on her pillow," and while he "lies there for a moment in torture," she "looks at him with infinite yearning, imprinting on her mind the picture of him lying there." It is enough. She leads him back to the door, they say good-bye, and she returns to the bed "to kiss passionately the pillow, and in the morning to kiss it again."[51] If he had only had a wife and no children, she would have stayed with him. It's this kind of unfulfilled desire, this sexual frustration that marks these stories as not quite Victorian, not quite modern. London's characters exist in a sexual gray area where convention wars with desire, and lack of resolution in these stories mirrors the constant and unresolved sexual tensions between men and women.

Netta may have been responsible for one more story; because there isn't a note about its source or a clue within the story itself that betrays its teller, we may have to assume London found this story outside the family circle in Glen Ellen. However, there are two moments in the notes that suggest the idea originated with someone else; it may have even been Charmian, who seems to have typed it up (there are no handwritten notes): "keeping in mind the super-fineness and nobility of the wife, the husband, and of the other woman, have the wife probe into their innermost depths of feeling, frankness, sincerity, whatever you will, for their reasons for their act, their justification, if any (and there must be justification), and then it's up to the author to work in the different psychologies of the characters." Never in all the notes I have looked at is there a direct

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[51] See London, "Dramatic sketches: [notes for plays]," JL 612. This is the handwritten version of the story idea. Although it is catalogued as "notes for play," there is no indication that London meant to construct a play from this plot, and the typed version clearly indicates that it was meant to be a part of the short story series.

address to "the author" to do something. The second moment is more opaque, but equally suggestive: "The unhinging of the culprits (?) must be done, delicately, OF COURSE----but it must be done," says the note, as if the person who had come up with the plot was insisting to London that the "unhinging," whatever that may be, must be represented some how. The plot is similar to Netta's stories: "Wife,---say a happy wife----blunders into her husband and her best woman-friend in the act. Show-down for all three." Since each is "intellectual" they discuss the matter abstractly as well as personally. The wife is shocked but then accepting; she "pulls herself together with sudden light of fair-play breaking over her soul." There is no resolution, but the story is about the "psychologies," and there is no resolution, merely a devising of "some sort of satisfaction with the various standpoints of the actors." Although London didn't write any of these ménage a trois stories, they are forerunners for his big novel of infidelity, *The Little Lady of the Big House.*

Infidelity and suicide are recurrent plot devices in *Created He Them.* One of the stories involves a "consumptive, an artist or poet"—foreshadowing Brisseden in *Martin Eden*—who is about to shoot himself when his wife find him. Giving into his determination, "she goes out [of the room] and lets him do it."[52] This idea may be a variation on an idea based on his friend Frank Strawn-Hamilton's life: "Sketch Hamilton's nature. He oft-repeated threats of suicide." A friend hands him a gun and tells

[52] The sheet on which this idea is typed is entitled "CREATED HE THEM"; see London, "Created He Them: [notes for short story collection]," typewritten, JL 566. The handwritten note from which this is typed is entitled "Dramatic Sketches" and is filed separately; see London, "The Consumptive: [notes for dramatic sketch], JL 550.

him, forcefully, go ahead, but do it outside so you "`don't make a mess on the carpet.'" The story ends with Hamilton writhing "on the floor in agony of cowardice," trapped in the aporia of too sick to live, too afraid to die. Then there's the three-line story idea involving a married woman who brings a young girl into her house (a domestic situation similar to Ninetta's before she married Roscoe) only to see her hook up with the husband. The woman "compels" the girl to commit suicide and then, as a final touch, says only "nice things about the dead girl" to her mother at the funeral.

The only story that doesn't involve infidelity and/or suicide is a kind of jokey tale of "a typical criminal" who kills a shopkeeper in his store and then hangs a sign on the door, saying, "Closed on Account of Death of the Proprietor." Is it revenge? Randomness? The red rage? We'll never know. The story ends anticlimactically: "His footfalls on quiet street." This murderer gets away.

He drew on the lives of three historical figures outside of his circle of family, friends, and acquaintances for two other stories that make *Created He Them* truly a reflection of this inbetween age. In one, he takes Aveling and Eleanor Marx—the daughter and son-in-law of Karl Marx—"a pair of free-lovers . . . [whose] basis of their relation had been freedom—spiritual, anarchistic freedom," and destroys them. He has fallen for another woman, tells Eleanor, and then leaves the house so that she can commit suicide. "Have reader accompany him on walk, and return with him to find her dead." The servant has already called the doctor, and the notes (and presumably the story) end

with the doctor's pronouncement: "`She is dead.'"[53] Eleanor Marx did discover her husband in love with another woman, and she did commit suicide.

Another tragic historical figure that London used to picture his age while completing his notion for this series was the California poet and editor Madge Morris, a mother-author figure. He may have heard about her life from either Joaquin Miller (who was a mentor and promoted her work) or from George Sterling or from some other source. Not much is known of her life before she married Har Wagner, the editor of *The Golden Era* and biographer of Joaquin Miller, and some details in London's notes would be new to her potential biographer.[54] These life details, London told himself, should be told in "condensed realism," a fascinating variation on his better known expression "impassioned realism." The terms overlap. Writerly realism, as opposed to photographic realism, cannot represent every object with exact fidelity in a frame created by the author, nor should it. Much has to be left out; the entire picture has to be condensed, and the selection process has to be motivated by the best way to convey intense emotion to the reader.

The details, then, that London selected from the life of Madge Morris were meant to her difficulties as a mother to become a successful cultural worker. She was born "in the mountains"; her family was traveling to California in a covered wagon. A "wandering

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[53] For the handwritten version of these notes, see London, "The pair of free-lovers . . . [notes for dramatic sketch]," JL 1033.

[54] See Sherilyn Cox Bennion, *Equal to the Occasion: Women Editors of the Nineteenth-Century West* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1990), 126-27 for the most complete biography available.

taxidermist" taught her how to read and write. Still living in those mountains—most likely the goldfields of the Sierra—she walked seven miles to school and read only newspaper poetry. Her mother was illiterate and smoked a pipe, "a sheer animal of a woman." When Madge was fourteen, her mother arranged a marriage between her and Jem, a less than ambitious "crevice (one who crevices like a pig for gold)." By the time she was twenty-two, she had given birth to seven children, five of whom died. She left Jem and took the two children to San Jose, where she decided to write and submit poetry. The editor of the *San Jose Mercury,* liked them, interviewed her ("outrageously clad in a faded calico") for a job as a reporter, and helped her divorce Jem. This was sometime in the late 1870s, early 1880s. Her Fourth of July poem for 1882 "rings all over U.S.," and with the help of Wagner, she eventually becomes a regular contributor to *The Golden Era* (sometimes publishing in the same issues as Brett Harte, Ambrose Beirce, and Mark Twain) and publishes several volumes of poetry and a novel. But London's story (which says she marries the editor of the *Mercury*) ends before her success. The "final scene" is the funeral for one of her remaining two children. Jem and her mother arrive from the mountains: "they sat one at head and one at foot of dead child, smoking pipes." A real Wisconsin death trip, true indeed. Her sexual subjugation by her husband is the principal barrier to her authorial drive, but London's emphasis is on the combination of authorship and death, the tragedies of the writing life.

A particular tragedy of his own writer's life appears in a two-paragraph note: "a young fellow of twenty, gold [a typo for *gone*] wild at college." He comes home to meet his uncle, "incensed at being uncle's bastard." But his uncle tells him that he is a bastard,

but "not HIS bastard, as doubtless he had often heard whispered."[55] It sounds, sadly, like a confrontation between Jack and his stepfather John London, the foundational biographic moment for all his stories of infidelity. A different sort of foundation stone for these stories of betrayal appears in a note for a story between a man and a woman who first argue whether "any woman in the world will go in under another woman's guns to cut out the man she loves." She denies it then does exactly that to get him to love her. "Then a tragic awakening for the woman" as she realizes what she has done. The self-realization is the tragedy, for the story ends with her "putting her arms around him, `Yes, dear; you're right.'" "Instinct compels." Fighting biology is futile.[56]

Biology, race, and insanity are central themes of a story that connects to the story of the girls in the Home for the Feeble-Minded and that resonates with *Before Adam* and Frederick Bamford's time spent in the Napa sanitarium that had a lasting effect on the

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[55] London, "Created He Them; [notes for short-story collection]," JL 566. London had typed out these notes in a slightly different version for something he first called "As between Men," which he thought he might use as an "opening for a novel"; later, he cut out the paragraph of notes and pinned it to a notebook sheet labeled "Dramatic sketches." London was pulling ideas from earlier story idea notebooks and rearranging them for the series *Created He Them* (London, "As between Men: [notes for a dramatic sketch or novel]," JL 455).

[56] London, "Created He Them: [notes for short-story collection]," JL 566. The handwritten notes are catalogued separately from JL 565 as London, "Anna's mood. . . .: [notes for dramatic sketch]," JL 446. The typescript has additions in London's hand, again showing how he was elaborating the story idea as he typed it.

Londons. We remember that Red-Eye in that novel was portrayed as partially insane. Here, the story note begins, "Insane asylum sketch. Napa." The story concerns three characters: a Jew, a professional gambler, and "a man of violence," obviously a modern-day Red-Eye who is "the biggest toad in the puddle" and, like the others, insane. The Jew loans money to the gambler, who wins big only to lose his money, as does the Jew, to the insane toad who robs them both. The asylum is a kind of Southland Devil's Dice Box, the pit where London's imagination resides—death, chance, gold. There's an added twist, though, an explicit political charge to the story: the Jew and gambler "are both capitalists, the only two in asylum." The rest, we presume, are apolitical or unaligned individualists, like the toad who is out to enrich only himself by thievery. London originally designated this idea for *Created He Them,* but at some point he crossed out the series title and wrote, simply, "Short Story." On the typescript he added "(Humorous)."[57] He too was fascinated, but not enough to complete it. Again, we wish for more development of this fascinating sketch, for it would be interesting to know if London was beginning to imagine the whole nation had gone psycho and the Napa Sanitarium was a microcosm, a forerunner to Ken Kesey's unnamed hospital in *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest.*

Finally, we have come to the short story whose title would also name the proposed collection: "Created He Them." It may seem like a lifetime has passed since he wrote his last short story—"The Apostate"—because we have discussed a major novel and four complicated, age-defining essays, but it has only been two and a half months. The notes for the story have a number of elements in common with the notes we have been discussing. Insanity is replaced by alcoholism (considered a subset of insanity in

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[57] London, "Insane Asylum Sketch: [notes for short story]," JL 798.

most medical literature at the time), and we have suicide as well, a suicide scene that London had tested in the two short notes about a man—one based on Frank Strawn-Hamilton and one unnamed—who are all but encouraged to shoot themselves. In one set of notes for the story, George arrives at his brother's house to take him, Wick, to the Livermore Sanitorium. Wick doesn't want to go. They take a street car to a train station, and there, across the street, George gets a bottle of whiskey and almost misses the train. At Livermore, they walk the grounds until it's time for George to go. Wick announces he won't leave. George takes out a gun, gives it to Wick, and tells him to go off to a thicket and shoot himself. Wick goes off, but can't do it and says he'll stay. George leaves and the story ends. In the second set of notes, written at a different time on a different sort of note paper, the story begins the same way with George arriving at his brother's house, who, this time, is named Al.

London used both sets to write the story, for phrases from both appear in the story; both story ideas, though each is incomplete, together form nearly the whole of the finished manuscript. From the first set, George, at the moment he hands Wick the gun, says, "`Then there is only one thing for you to do.' Points to thicket. `If you don't I'll have to do it for you.'" When Wick decides not to kill himself, George hears "Wick's voice—at sound, George starts as though it had been revolver." In the second set, he sees George meeting Al's wife at the beginning, a refinement of the first set and retained in the story. "Describe her and children, her haunted eyes, the lines on her young face that were not the handiwork of mere worry." Small wonder that she is haunted by an alcoholic, a significant detail indicating her status as an authorial figure, though her work is never mentioned. George tells Al that if he doesn't go he'll lose his job, his marriage,

and his children. Al agrees to go, leaves the room, George follows him, and finds him drinking whiskey. Al "smashes glass and bottle to the floor. A look like a wild beast in eyes of Al." They hear Al's wife "sob as they go out the front door. As in the first set and the finished story, George almost misses the train when he buys Al a new bottle. The final pages for these notes are missing, but presumably they treat the scenes at the sanitarium: walking the beautiful grounds, Al deciding to leave, George giving him the gun, and Al unable to shoot himself. It's a domestic tragedy and shows London's preoccupation with alcohol, suicide, and the tribulations of a wife-mother. It retains the irony of the series's title: what sort of God would do this to humans?

The final story of this complicated and deep set of notes is called "A Wicked Woman," he finished it a week after "Created He Them," and its plot comes from Netta. The notes outline the bare bones of the story: Netta and Roscoe live in Los Angeles where they have a romantic interlude during which she allowed him to kiss her. This moment convinces her she is a "wicked woman" because "she thought a woman ought to marry a man if she allowed him to kiss her." She didn't love him, he "cried all night" when she told him so, and her family sends her off, not with an older athletic woman with a son, but to Santa Barbara. Her family—Captain Kitt and two sisters—write her letters, telling her not to marry Roscoe. In Santa Barbara, after receiving the letters, she tells her friend Ned that "she has sinned," and Ned storms about, insisting Roscoe ("the scoundrel! . . . . the villain!) marry her. But then he realizes she and Roscoe didn't have sex, and he calms down, having "realize[d] that she is a perfectly innocent woman of twenty." The story ends with "his shaken faith restored . . . speaking soothing, cheering

words." Virginity once more decides the fate of a relationship between a man and a woman.

The story itself adheres to this rough outline but is more complicated if only because there are so many more characters. Netta becomes Loretta, Roscoe is Billy, a sister, Daisy, has a small role, and Captain Kitt becomes Daisy's husband. Loretta has broken up with Billy and after being consoled by Kitt and Daisy, they all decide Loretta should go to Santa Clara and visit Mrs. Hemingway and her husband Jack. Given that "Loretta was so innocent a young thing that were it not for her sweet guilessness she would be positively stupid" (1140), Daisy and Kitt decide to set her up with someone who could appreciate her innocence: Ned Bashford. Ned, instead of being based on Edward Payne, is now based on George Sterling of all people, and we learn why he was nicknamed the Greek, if only indirectly and circumstantially. In direct contrast with Loretta, he was a jaded, cynical young man who, not surprisingly, lived, not at the Bohemian Club (as George did), but at the Athenian Club. He was "artistically and temperamentally . . . a Greek." That is, following the Nietzsche of *The Gay Science,* he "had passed through the long sickness that follows upon the ardent search for truth" and found there was none. He quoted Nietzsche: "`To worship appearance, to believe in forms, in tones, in words, in the whole Olympus of appearance! . . . Those Greeks were superficial—*out of profundity!*" (1141) To give up on a unifying source of all truth, like God or even biology or any other science, is to be "brave," and shows one knows "how to *live.*" Only one kind of person can achieve this: "worshippers of shapes, tones, words." In

other words, "artists."[58] This is the redemption that London felt after completing his own search for truth—his own "long sickness"—and obviously it was something Sterling went through as well, cementing the bond between the Greek and the Wolf.

When London sent the manuscript to George for commentary, George wrote, "`A Wicked Woman' is daring, and decidedly amusing, but so much out of your vein that coming from you it seems trivial," but Sterling misses London's philosophical point.[59] True, it seems so conventional a story. Loretta and Ned eventually fall for each other and seem destined to marry until Loretta receives a letter from Billy (Roscoe) that tells her she ought to be ashamed for not marrying him since she had kissed him. Loretta is thrown into great confusion, being such an innocent, and believe Billy when he says "`our kisses were terrible if we didn't get married. . . . When a woman allowed a man to kiss her, she always married him. . . . It was the custom.'" (1147). Ned, relieved that they didn't have intercourse, consoles her and then quickly proposes. In what is meant to be a

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[58] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nietzsche contra Wagner,* in vol. 11 of *The Works of Friedrich Nietzsche,* trans. Thomas Common, ed. Alexander Tille (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1896), 90-91. This passage, which London marked, appears in the epilogue, on the first page of which London wrote, "the whole epilogue," apparently a note for Charmian, to whom he had written in 1904, "Have been getting hold of some of Neitzsche [sic]. I'll turn you loose first on his *Genealogy of Morals*—and after that, something you'll like—*Thus Spake Zarathustra*" (London, letter to Charmian Kittredge, 29 Sept. 1904, *Letters,* 446). See chapter 19 for a fuller discussion of London's reading Nietzsche.

[59] George Sterling, letter to London, 7 July 1906, JL 19049.

perfectly innocent and charming ending, they end up in each other's arms, kissing, defying convention and planning their marriage.

If that was all there was to the story, then, yes, Sterling would be right. The plot *is* trivial. But the psychology is not. London wants to create a set of Machine Age lovers; in the theatrical version of this plot, Ned even says about Loretta that "it is remarkable to find such a woman in this age. ~~She is so naïve.~~"[60] The last sentence is crossed out only because London then decided to put those words in Mrs. Hemingway's mouth so that Ned can agree with her. Ned, before he meets Loretta, believed "women were faithless and unveracious," but, "faithful to his German master, he did not strip from them the airy gauzes that veiled their untruth." (1141) Thus he can play with Loretta, relishing the appearances and unafraid not to look underneath the illusion. George Bernard Shaw even makes an appearance as another of Ned's authorities on women and sexual relations, and another tie-in to *Scorn of Women*. But then he truly, madly falls in love: "he confused superficiality with profundity, and entangled appearance with reality until he accounted them one." (1141) To see how a single woman is different from all other "faithless" women means one has fallen in love. When he tells Mrs. Hemingway that Loretta "was different from other women. There was no masquerade about her. She was real," she agrees and then winks knowingly at her husband. Ned's philosophy has fallen apart—until the letter arrives and for a moment he is right back where he started: disillusioned by the nefarious duplicity of Woman. So this seemingly conventional courtship, trivial in nature, is itself a mask over the very real philosophical questions about the relations

[60] London, "A Wicked Woman (Curtain-Raiser): [1-act play]," JL 1415.

between men and women. What is attraction? What is trust? What is the role of sex? What is the social determination of such a relationship?

London sent the story first to *Collier's,* then to *Life,* and finally to *Smart Set,* knowing full well that a top-notch fiction magazine like *McClure's* or *Harper's* or *Atlantic Monthly* would reject it outright. *Smart Set,* though they seemingly missed the philosophical thread that London had woven into the trivial plot, accepted it somewhat reluctantly, saying, "Frankly, we should have preferred to receive the type of story that has come to be particularly identified with your name," that is, a rugged, manly Klondike story. They offered a mere sixty dollars, which London took.[61] There was a slight misunderstanding between author and magazine, though. London had instructed his English agent, James Pinker, to sell the story in England per their usual arrangement; Pinker, however, alerted London that *Smart Set* may have retained world rights, and, in fact, they had. Without realizing it, London had not only received a mere five cents per word—he was asking fifteen cents a word now—but also cheated himself out of the extra income that came from UK sales. It is possible that no other magazine would have bought this story, but in the future he and Pinker would terminate their relationship because of a mix-up involving another short story sale to *Smart Set,* as if they hadn't learned their lesson from the sale of "A Wicked Woman."

Out of this story came a one-act play by the same title, as London brought his purely theatrical mode to the front burner. The notes for the play show he wanted to deviate in a number of ways from the short story, but the finished manuscript shows he decided not to. He played with the title: "Innocence"; "Miss Innocence"; "A Young

[61] See *Smart Set,* letter to Jack London, 14 Aug. 1906, JL 18550.

Thing"; "Little Miss Innocence," until he decided on "A Wicked Woman."[62] At first he thought it should be set in a "Country House in Santa Barbara," and then decided on Santa Clara, as in the short story. In his notes for the play, Ned, "a young and jaded man of the world who has lost hope and faith in woman, and who is in love with Netta," and Netta (he uses only one word to describe her: "innocence"), who may or may not be in love with him, meet in the living room with the Lady of the House (in the published version Mrs. Alice Hemingway, as in the story, a reprise of the Mrs. Effingham character from *Scorn of Women,* which, again, he was polishing up for publication) and witness Netta come in, open mail, and relapse into a troubled state of mind. "Roscoe arrives," and Netta, "fortified by letters" (apparently borrowing from the notes for the story that he didn't use, London is using the letters from Kitt and her sisters urging her not to marry Roscoe), refuses Roscoe. "Why did you kiss me?" he asks, and they argue until Ned enters and she sends Roscoe away. Ned, discovering "her virtue," proposes marriage and she accepts. Curtain. It's a romantic comedy, pure and simple now.

In the published version of the play, the references to Nietzsche are gone, and the absorptive qualities of the short story are washed away in the floodlights of theater. If women didn't like *Before Adam,* presumably they would love *A Wicked Woman,* with its Huck Finn-like self-condemnation for trying to overturn convention; Netta hates herself for thinking she should not marry Billy. They would love how Loretta, in her innocent way (maybe she isn't as innocent as Ned thinks she is), tries to get Ned to say that he thought she and Billy had had intercourse and that's why he had thought originally that

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[62] See London, "A Wicked Woman (Curtain-Raiser): [1-act play]," JL 1415. The play was published posthumously in *The Human Drift* (1917).

they had to marry. But she relents without him saying it, and they kiss and, with Jack and Alice Hemingway looking on, expecting her to be embarrassed, she utters the final line of the play: "I don't care." She doesn't care if they know, she doesn't care about convention, she doesn't care what her family thinks. Loretta is the original Nasty Woman.

We have, in the end, another complicated set of notes that yields very little in the way of published material. Like the novel about Jesus and other nearly fully formulated novels, here is yet another significant work of art—two if you count *The Smoke of Life*—left on the cutting room floor. We have two sets of notes for two different short stories, showing that London was contemplating these stories for a year, at least, and that he was heavily invested in them. One set—those for "A Wicked Woman" originated from the same source, Netta—as three other story ideas and then generated a script for a one-act play. All these are thematically linked to other story ideas, creating a network of plots involving infidelity, suicide, and women author figures. They show London working through the aftereffects of his multiple relations with women in 1904 and 1905, before he settled down with Charmian (who demanded nothing less than an equal partnership).[63]

But more significant than the biographical implications of this series of writings is what this web of words shows us about the interconnections of his work. Having returned from Korea in 1904 and anxious to write a play, London converts "The Scorn of Women" into his first three-act theatrical production, from which he turns to write a fully absorptive novel, *White Fang,* which is thematically connected to "Planchette." This story, told to him by Charmian and featuring characters loosely modeled on her aunt and

[63] Many thanks to Susan Nuernberg for helping clarify the relationship between Jack and Charmian.

uncle, is then connected to the short story series *Created He Them* through a common source of plot, namely, Ninetta Eames, who provides the plot for "A Wicked Woman," which London converts into a one-act curtain raiser by the same title. It is completed four days after he mails Brett the finished manuscript of *The Scorn of Women.* That is, in June 1906 inbetween the writing of *Before Adam* and *The Iron Heel* (two novels intimately linked and together forming a thematic and linguistic triangle with "Revolution" in their concerns with the failure of capitalism to elevate humans' conditions above that of the Bone Age) he had been deeply engrossed in writing and rewriting and publishing plays. This period of switching between modes and genres of writing, of testing the limits of traditional authorial practice, is, as we have seen, not new in his career. His juggling of forms of writing defines his career.

Absorption in 1906

The pendulum of his compositional practice swung back to the absorptive, and in July he wrote a Klondike tale, "The Wit of Porportuk." This would be the second of only four short stories he wrote in 1906 that took place in the North. The main character, El-Soo is "a full-blooded Indian," and, in an odd moment of hyperbole, London describes her as "fire, the living flame of life." (1149) Picked out of her village after her mother died, and, though her father, a chief, still lived, she was taken by a nun to the mission at Holy Cross, where Sitka Charley had given money in the 1905 story "The Sun-Dog Trail." She learned to read and write and "excelled in mathematics." She also was an artist and in a different place and time "she would have made literature or music." Out of

the mess of stories in *Created He Them,* an assortment London could not unify, he brought the idea—now almost an obsession—of the woman author figure.

But this author figure had her creativity, her fire, cauterized by religion, by the nuns of the mission. Instead of learning to create, she learned "cleanliness and righteousness" and Catholicism, and we will see what London thought of "cleanliness" when we next turn to the essay "The House Beautiful." She carried her education and her fire back home to tend her sick father in his bohemian enclave, a "large log house," "a bacchanalian ruin" (1150, 1152) which "shook with the roar of wassail and of song," "a cosmopolitan atmosphere" where men and women of all nationalities met and drank and carried on. (1151) The house, though barely described, sounds very much like the house London himself wanted to build; he must have been thinking about it because within a week he would write "House Beautiful." "The latchstring to the large house was always out," says the narrator of "The Wit of Porportuk," repeating a phrase London often used in his letters to potential visitors to his ranch.

Porportuk is the richest Native American in Alaska, "bourgeois," "a money-lender and a usurer." (1151) He lent money, Klakee-Nah spent it, and El-Soo was "as disdainful of money as he." The two good bohemians slowly come into debt to Porportuk, and that is their doom. To repay the debts her father owed Porportuk after Klakee-Nah dies, El-Soo sells herself to the highest bidder, who happens to be the money-lender. Having promised him that she would never marry him, only her beloved Akoon, she runs away on the principle that Porportuk bought her as if she were a dog, and, now, being his dog, she runs away with Atoon. But eventually she is caught, and though Porportuk gives up and hands her to Akoon, he shoots El-Soo through the ankles so that she may never run

away again. It is a premeditated act of cruelty, and the story ends with Porportuk grinning, thinking he has finally found the wit to match that of his foe. He has only demonstrated that capitalists win against bohemians every time and that the winners use an awful kind of violence for their ends. What we as readers had hoped would be the success of an accomplished and powerful young woman author figure turns out to be only a set-up to make El-Soo's fall all the more tragic. Yet the capitalists win only in the economic arena. The poor and oppressed still win in the realm of love, as the story ends with Porportuk and Akoon staring into each other's eyes and he promising never to leave her. These are the hints of the forthcoming *The Iron Heel.*

The publication of "The Wit of Porportuk" is the story of the dark side of the boom in American magazine publishing at the turn of the century, its so-called Golden Age. "The Wit of Porportuk" is a long short story, 9728 words, a "Planchette"-sized effort. At first rejected by *McClure's,* the story was asked for and accepted by, of all people, James Randolph Walker, the son of *Cosmopolitan* editor John Brisbane Walker, who had famously granted London's essay "What Communities Lose under the Competitive System" first prize in his 1899 essay contest and subsequently offered London a job back East at the magazine. James Walker, when he had worked for his father in the *Cosmopolitan* office in 1905, had implored London for short fiction, and when London informed him that all he had available was "Revolution," the Walkers accepted it, yet never published it. So it may have been with some glee mixed with trepidation that London received James Walker's plea to have a story from him a year later. This time Walker *fils* was editor of a new magazine, *The Times Magazine,* and he was decidedly a fan of London's work; in a December 1904 profile in *The Editor* he

boasted (somewhat untruthfully) that "Jack London . . . was a contributor to *The Cosmopolitan* before he was recognized elsewhere."[64] He needed a story from London quickly and so sent a telegram: "Getting out New Magazine Must have short story from you Initial number."[65] London sent him the violent and uncompromising "The Wit of Porportuk," as almost a dare: "It is an Alaskan story [so you're getting what everyone asks me for], and though I have never made a practice of praising my work [not entirely true], I must say that I would rank it among my best half-dozen Alaskan short stories." And then the nonchalant dare: "If you say so, I'll send it along to you." And then he insisted on fifteen cents a word, nearly fifteen hundred dollars.[66] On the same day that F. W. Splint, the editor of *The Smart Set,* offered sixty dollars for "A Wicked Woman," Walker offered eight hundred and asked that London cut the story down.[67] When London balked (surprise!), Walker offered a cool one thousand dollars for a story three times as long as "A Wicked Woman."[68] And then never paid. London wrote over four times to recover his money, but, after the story appeared in December, James Walker explained that he himself was owed money from the owner of *The Times Magazine,* had left the

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[64] Leslie W. Quirk, "Interviews with Editors: James Randolph Walker, of *The Cosmopolitan* and *Twentieth-Century Home,*" *Editor* 20 (Dec. 1904): 10.

[65] James Randolph Walker, telegram to London, 28 July 1906, JL 19842.

[66] London, letter to James R. Walker, 29 July 1906, *Letters,* 2:598.

[67] See James Randolph Walker, letter to London, 14 Aug. 1906, JL 19844.

[68] See James Randolph Walker, telegram to London, 20 Aug. 1906, JL 19850. This is misdated as 1908 in the Huntington collection.

magazine, and gave London the name and address of his lawyer.[69] London even asked Upton Sinclair for advice, who was in Englewood, New Jersey forming the Helicon Home Colony and very much plugged in to the East Coast publishing business. Sinclair told London that he had been promised five hundred dollars for an essay for *The Times Magazine* and was paid only about half. "I am going in to see them tomorrow," wrote Sinclair in January 1907, "and have a definite settlement with them which will probably bring the truth. The magazine is still published; I understand that it is owned by a man named Richardson [the same man who owed Walker money], who used to publish the `International Quarterly'; I believe he has money. Hamilton Holt says he has. Brisbane Walker's son was in it, but got out."[70] Sinclair told him to assign him power of attorney, and he would get London's money for him. London never did, but Sinclair squeezed his payment out of Richardson and then sent London a told-you-so letter. "I am afraid that you are a hopeless business man," he gently chided London,[71] but London, so busy with the *Snark,* his business dealings with magazines to publish his future world-traveling fiction and essays, and his current writing projects, felt he could only write dunning letters, that it wasn't up to him to make the extra effort to get his money. Again, there was only so much he was willing to do to earn his money. Shades of Klakee-Nah.[72]

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[69] See James Randolph Walker, letter to London, 4 Dec. 1906, JL 19846.

[70] Upton Sinclair, letter to London, 2 Jan. 1907, JL 18276.

[71] Upton Sinclair, letter to London, 6 Mar. 1907, JL 18278.

[72] See London, letter to James R. Walker, 15 Dec. 1906, *Letters,* 2:653. London tells Walker that he can't sue *The Times Magazine* because he doesn't know the disposition of

To make the matter worse, James Walker, on the same day he offered a bargain-rate of eight hundred dollars for "The Wit of Porportuk," asked London about the availability of "Revolution."[73] London must have been floored by the man's audacity, for the Walkers had refused to publish the essay because of its politics. James Randolph knew that *Colliers* had taken the essay but had also decided against publication. London told Walker to ask *Colliers* whether they would release it, and then, disregarding any sour taste he may have had left over from dealing with the Walkers in the past, he told James Randolph "if you get around to using it, you have my full consent to disavow all responsibility for it, and belief in the content of it, just as long as you publish it."[74] He didn't. *Collier's,* as I wrote in chapter 15, neither released the manuscript nor published the essay.

When London returned from the South Seas in 1908 and sorted through his outstanding business deals, he decided he would never get satisfaction from *The Times Magazine.* So he enacted a kind of revenge and sold the story again to *Sunset* for three hundred dollars worth of railroad tickets, which he gave part of to his friend Elwyn Hoffman.[75] *The Times Magazine* lasted about a year, probably because Richardson was too stingy to attract authors of London's pay grade, and he had hurt his own reputation by

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the magazine, a false excuse because, as Sinclair told him, he just had to threaten them with legal action in order to get his money, regardless of the standing of the magazine.

[73] See James Randolph Walker, letter to London, 14 Aug. 1906, JL 19845.

[74] London, letter to James Randolph Walker, 21 Aug. 1906, *Letters,* 2:602.

[75] See Charmian London, letter to Elwyn Hoffman, 24 Sept. 1909, box 1, Hoffman Collection, HEH.

never paying Walker the money he was owed. On this anticlimactic and dark note, the Walkers' participation in London's authorial career ended.

Perhaps it is a sign of London's faith in the quality of "The Wit of Porportuk" that he wrote a rough draft of a letter to "managers" who might be interested in dramatizing the story. "`It is absolutely fresh, new, and different,'" he expostulated to himself, in redundant terms. "To tackle it, you require nerve. . . . Got to have good actors. Got to get audience off its feet[.] If it goes, it'll go clean to hell and back again and keep on hitting the high places to kingdom come." If that wasn't enough, he imagined that "managers" would be taken by "the gorgeous and bizarre and primitive and modern coloring in costume and type."[76] Both modern and primitive, beautiful and terrifying, "The Wit of Porportuk" on stage would have transcended its locale to present the evils of capitalism, the strength of love's resistance, and the glories of bohemia.

The Bohemian Hearth

It may still be hard to imagine London as a bohemian, so consider the continuity in his choice of housing from 1902 to the end of his life. One of the qualities of bohemianism is a respect for land and a desire to inhabit it with as little human interference as possible. This is not to disregard urban bohemian enclaves, which could (as much as it was possible) demonstrate a respect and bond with the landscape. Consider various enclaves of late nineteenth-century shacklike houses on Telegraph and Russian Hills, especially a cluster of houses built by Edmund Vischer on Pine Street (all of which burned in 1906). The *San Francisco Chronicle* called it a "`most romantic retreat,'" and it

[76] London, "Dramatize Wit of Porportuk: [note]," JL 613.

housed "a small colony of writers, painters, and diplomats. Beyond the street lay interior courts with lush, unkempt gardens reached by narrow, stepped passages—it was `a veritable wilderness' now tenuously perched at the edge of the expanding commercial center.'" Here and Russian Hill were considered "Bohemian enclave[s]."[77]

Joseph Worcester and Willis Polk had built homes across the street from each other on Russian Hill. Worcester, a Swedenborgian minister, was an amateur architect, heavily influenced by the Arts and Crafts Movement. In fact, the Mission style originated with a chair designed by A. Page Brown for Worcester's San Francisco Swedenborgian Church in 1894; seven years later *House Beautiful* praised the church's chairs.[78]

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[77]Richard Longstreth, *On the Edge of the World: Four Architects in San Francisco at the Turn of the Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 119, 120. See Homer L. Haughey and Connie Kale Johnson, *Jack London Homes Album* (Stockton, Calif.: Heritage Publishing, 1987), 24, which first alerted me to the fact that Worcester was the architect of the cottage.

[78] See Richard Guy Wilson, "`Divine Excellence': The Arts and Crafts Life in California," in *The Arts and Crafts Movement in California: Living the Good Life,* ed. Kenneth R. Trapp [New York: Abbeville Press, 1993], 13. Wilson's essay is important for pinpointing how the movement found such a hospitable home in California, citing visits to the state by Ashbee and Stickley, both of whom were awed by its natural beauty and the vast potential to incorporate it into art and design. See also anon., "A Departure in Church Building—The Second New Jerusalem Church in California: By a Stranger," in *The Craftsman: An Anthology,* ed. Barry Sanders (Santa Barbara: Peregrine Smith, 1978),181-83, with photographs of the altar and a central, enormous fireplace.

Worcester was a major influence on Polk (who designed during his long career the shield for the Sierra Club) and another important San Francisco architect, Ernest Coxhead. Worcester, who had moved to the Bay Area from Massachusetts in 1868, was in turn heavily influenced by Emerson's and Thoreau's concepts of economy and simplicity. He was a strong advocate for "a simple, harmonious relationship between nature and design" and "became a spiritual leader to many of the young artists and intellectuals working in the region."[79] In 1876 he designed and built a cottage "that was perhaps the first dwelling in California to cultivate rustic qualities."[80] Marked by a hip roof above a long porch, the absence of any decoration, and especially its exterior shingles, the house afforded a physically and spiritually expansive view; he could sit on his porch and contemplate nature above the cities of San Francisco and Oakland. More than merely "rustic," this house was probably the first shingle style domicile in the West, a design that was an expression of American rural simplicity and that had strong ties to the Shakers, Gustav Stickley, and Mission design. Twenty-six years later, Jack London and his family rented the house and moved in.

"We have a big living room, every inch of it, floor & ceiling, finished in redwood. . . . The rest of the house is finished in redwood, too, & is very, very comfortable. . . . A most famous porch, broad & long & cool, a big clump of magnificent pines, flowers & flowers & flowers galore."[81] If a photograph of the enormous fireplace in Worcester's San Francisco home is any evidence, London's hearth dominated the

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[79] Longstreth, *On the Edge of the World,* 111.

[80] Longstreth, *On the Edge of the World,* 112.

[81] London, letter to Johns, 23 Feb. 1902, *Letters,* 1:283.

living room. One interviewer noted the "fireplaces for damp weather, a piano, and great crystal-clear windows, framed in swaying trumpet vines" and "big, cheerful rooms [that] have the sweet, fresh smell of the woodland. The entire interior finish is of redwood, the floors covered with rugs deep and soft as velvet." Typical of an Arts and Crafts interior, "comfortable lounging places and nooks beguile one to the luxurious and continued idleness which is the peculiar seduction of the dreamy Pacific." The interviewer called it "the ideal abode of a poet."[82] One could not wish for a better description of the combination of the Arts and Crafts movement and bohemianism. This is the property with fields of California poppies that the Oakland masses devastated and that London sought to preserve and wrote about in his essay "The Golden Poppy."[83] Despite the conflict with flower pickers, London embraced the natural setting that enabled a bohemian lifestyle equal to that lived in an artist's studio and Coppa's in the Montgomery Block. London could have learned all about Worcester and Polk and Coxhead and the influence of the Arts and Crafts Movement from their friend Ernest Peixotto's wife, Jessica, who was a regular member of the Ruskin Club and a friend of Austin Lewis. A photograph from 1912 shows Ernest Peixotto sitting on a bench with Polk at the Bohemian Grove for the annual High Jinx, which London attended.[84]

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[82] London, interview with Fannie K. Hamilton, *The Reader* 2 (Aug. 1903): 283. By the time this interview appeared, London had broken up with Bessie, and they all had moved out.

[83] See volume 1, pp. 389-90.

[84] See Longstreth, *On the Edge of the World,* 3. Sterling became "good friends" with Ernest Peixotto at the 1907 High Jinx (Sterling, letter to London, 6 Aug. 1907, JL 19061).

"The House Beautiful," composed three years after he moved from Piedmont, is a clear statement of London's bohemian life aesthetics and exhibits the love he had for his shingle-style cottage; "I never loved a habitation so greatly in my life," he wrote,[85] and we can see Worcester's values embodied in the cottage re-created in this new essay, in the building of the *Snark,* and in the Wolf House, completed and then burned in 1913. A celebration of the Arts and Crafts movement, the essay promotes the kind of back-to-the-land movement we recognize as characteristic of sixties bohemia, which had its roots (at least in California) in utopian colonies like Altruria as well as in more bourgeois but still bohemian aesthetic manifestations like the bungalows of Greene and Greene in Pasadena. London was attracted to the Arts and Crafts movement not simply because it accorded with his notions of beauty but also because it was politically sympatico. Supported by the politics of John Ruskin and William Morris, the Arts and Crafts movement united art and socialism. As Oscar Lovell Triggs wrote (in a book published by Chicago's Bohemia Guild of the Industrial Art League), "The primary motive of the arts and crafts movement is, as the name implies, the association of art and labor."[86] More explicitly, he said the movement was "an industrial tendency springing from the economical teachings of Carlyle, Ruskin, and William Morris. . . . Carlyle announced the

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[85] London, letter to Fannie K. Hamilton, 14 Aug. 1903, *Letters,* 1:378.

[86] Oscar Lovell Triggs, *Chapters in the History of the Arts and Crafts Movement* (Chicago: The Bohemia Guild of the Industrial Art League, 1902), 1.

doctrine, Ruskin elaborated the system, and Morris gave the first practical example."[87] Julia Bracken, an artist in the Bohemia Guild, designed and executed three large wall plaques featuring the profiles of Carlyle, Ruskin, and Morris and trenchant quotations: "On the whole we do entirely agree with those old monks. Laborare est orare. Work is worship"; Life without labor is guilt. Labor without art is brutality"; "One day we shall win back art again to our daily labor. Win back art, that is to say, the pleasure of life to the people."[88] The images were Arts and Crafts, the words, socialist. We see the same blending of word and image, art and politics on the May 1902 cover of *The Comrade,* the monthly socialist magazine.[89] Not just London believed that revolutionary socialism could be blended with the Arts and Crafts's aesthetics of architecture and design, even if tamer, Fabian-like politics were present at the birth of the movement. Many socialists thought that the houses of cooperative commonwealths should be indebted to the Arts and Crafts movement.

There are a number of clues in London's work that anticipate the ideas in "The House of Beautiful." As I said, El-Soo and her father live in a house that London was imagining for himself. Second, he and Charmian were building the *Snark,* their new

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[87] Triggs, "Industrial Art," *Jack London Journal,* no. 3 (1996): 13, 17. See also Triggs, "The New Industrialism," *The Craftsman* 1 Oct. 1901); rpt in *The Craftsman: An Anthology,* ed. Barry Sanders (Santa Barbara: Peregrine Smith, 1978), 60-71.

[88] Reproductions of the Morris and Ruskin plaques appear as the frontispiece and on page 24 of Boris, *Art and Labor*. The Carlyle plaque appears as the frontispiece to Triggs, *Chapters in the History of the Arts and Crafts Movement.*

[89] See Boris, *Art and Labor,* 26.

home for what they hoped would be seven or more years. So London had interior design and architecture on his mind when, out of the blue sky that fame had created (not all creatures that fame created were monsters like H. H. Fuller), he received a letter of solicitation from Herbert Stone, the publisher of *House Beautiful*: "I am anxious to run in The House Beautiful magazine four or five articles entitled "`My Castle in Spain.'" He planned to ask Richard Le Gallienne, Edith Wharton, and others. "What I want is a description of your ideal home and its contents and surroundings. Every man plans to have a home of his own at one time or another and every man has ideas as to what that home shall be and mean."[90] As Frank Luther Mott wrote, Stone "had an almost religious devotion to simple beauty, an abhorrence of display and blatancy in modern life, and a special interest in the development of new art forms and the revival of old ones as he found them within the framework of beauty and suitability."[91] *House Beautiful*'s slogan

[90] Herbert S. Stone, letter to London, 6 June 1906, JL 19097.

[91] Frank Luther Mott, "House Beautiful," *A History of American Magazines,* 5 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1930-68), 5:156. Stone probably did not realize it, but he and London also shared a deep dedication to sailing. Stone, now editor of *Yachting,* published *The "America's" Cup Races* (New York: Outing Publishing Co., 1914), a history that London owned. London himself had sailed in a yacht race (as an observer) in Hawai'i in 1907 and was debating whether to cover the America's Cup in 1914 for *Cosmopolitan* before it was cancelled.

was Thoreauvian: "Simplicity, Economy and Appropriateness in the Home."[92] On the cover of the January 1908 issue of *House Beautiful,* we see a close up of a typical Arts and Crafts hearth, flanked by simple Stickly chairs, Arts and Crafts pottery on the mantel, and the Scottish injunction "East, West, Hame's the Best" carved into the lintel above the mantel. This cover is nearly duplicated by *The Bungalow Magazine* issue of October 1909, though its cover shows a husband, wife, child, and cat all seated (except for the cat) on benches before the fire.[93] These are hearths that El-Soo and London would have favored.

Le Gallienne's response to Stone's request was a complicated piece of romanticism describing both figuratively and literally his dream castle. It was in keeping with one of the sources for Stone's serial idea. On the first page of the March 1902 issue of *The House Beautiful,* Stone published a stanza from James Thomson's "The Castle of Indolence" and titled it "A Castle in Spain":

A pleasing land of drowsyhead it was,
Of dreams that wave before the half-shut eye;
And of gay castles in the clouds that pass,

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[92] Quoted in Susan Gatti, "Stone Hearths and Marble Babies: Jack London and the Domestic Ideal," *Jack London Journal* 3 (1996): 44. This excellent essay discusses the ramifications of Arts and Crafts philosophy in London's later novels and his articulation of "`masculine domesticity'" (ibid., 43 n. 1).

[93] See Mott, "House Beautiful," for the reproduction of the cover of *House Beautiful* and Eileen Boris, *Art and Labor: Ruskin, Morris, and the Craftsman Ideal in America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 25.

Forever flushing round a summer sky;

There eke the soft delights that witchingly

Instill a wanton sweetness through the breast,

And the calm pleasures always hover'd nigh;

But whatever smack'd of noyonce or unrest

Was far, far off expell'd from this delicious nest.

Here we find another link between bohemia and the castle-home. At first, in the 1300s the phrase "castle in Spain" simply meant "improbable dreams," or dreams one has about things too impossible to come true. Over the centuries the dream's realization became less and less remote; Henry David Thoreau probably wasn't the first to instruct dreamers to get practical, but his instruction to build foundations under airy castles is indicative of the phrase's shift in meaning.[94] We do not know if London read *Walden,* but London's cover letter to Stone accompanying the manuscript sounds very Thoreauvian: "I have boiled down into it all my thoughts of what a livable house in general should be. In fact, . . . I think I've given the ethics of my house beautiful. There are lots of people, I'll wager, who do not imagine that ethics and architecture are at all related."[95] Thoreau was not one of those people. When he placed a foundation under his castle in the air, like London, he first "considered what a house is," unlike "most men." He inveighed against

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[94] It is hard to see beyond the cliché, but here it is anyway: "If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them" (Henry David Thoreau, *Walden,* ed. William L. Howarth [Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1971], 324).

[95] London, letter to Stone, 22 July 1906, *Letters,* 2:597.

"empty guest chambers for empty guests," against the "morning work" of dusting ("I would rather sit in the open air, for no dust gathers on the grass"), against thoughtless ornamentation ("not that all architectural ornament is to be neglected").[96] Simplicity does not demand that we live in caves, but modern architecture and interior design as conceived by Thoreau's antagonists do nothing to elevate us from our primitive beginnings: "The effect of our art is merely to make this low state comfortable and that higher state to be forgotten." I do not mean to turn Thoreau into a modernist, like London. One can sense the abyss between the two authors when one considers what sort of imaginary beings Thoreau sees in the humanly uninhabited woods: "Such was Caucasus and the rock where Prometheus was bound. Aeschylus had no doubt visited such scenery as this." (64) One senses how close to the Classical Age Thoreau was. But London would more likely than not see Martians and other otherworldly beings. Further, their attitudes toward Native Americans could not have been more different; there is no romance in London's portrayals of First Peoples, while Thoreau, in general, saw Native Americans as part and parcel of the natural world. This isn't a difference grounded in a competition between science and art. It's a difference that shows how far removed London was from Thoreau's major intellectual and cultural influences.

Still, it's as if Thoreau had written *Before Adam* before composing "Shelter": "the civilized man is a more experienced and wiser savage," but, nonetheless, a savage with a tendency to regress, atavistically.[97] The trick is to build a house that advances one's spiritual state. Before we analyze London's essay, consider the future imagined by

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[96] Thoreau, *Walden,* 35,36, 40.

[97] Thoreau, *Walden,* 40.

London through his mouthpiece Anthony Meredith in *The Iron Heel.* Simplicity will rule. In the past, he says, "it was still the custom to fill the living rooms with bric-a-brac. They had not discovered simplicity of living. Such rooms were museums, entailing endless labor to keep clean. The dust-demon was the lord of the household. There were a myriad devices for catching dust, and only a few devices for getting rid of it."[98] Dust is eternal, it seems, and the problem of ridding our homes of it requires both an aesthetic-design solution as well as a political solution. Socialism, not capitalism, advocates simplicity.

Thoreau had solved that problem (he tells us in *Walden* how he built his house, precisely, with lists), and, in the next couple of generations it was solved by Oscar Lovell Triggs, Elbert Hubbard, and others who had combined simplicity, design, beauty, and—unlike Thoreau—community. These were the Machine Age Brook Farmists who combined colony building—even socialist cooperative communities—with a consciousness of art and design. Hubbard, the founder of the Roycrofters community and later, in 1910, a critic of London's revolutionary socialism, would not have been able to see how London's politics allowed for the simple beauty of design that he advocated.

But Oscar Lovell Triggs, Percy Sercombe, Carl Sandburg, and other denizens of "To-Morrowland" (as Charmian called their bohemian enclave in Chicago, riffing on the title of their magazine)[99] were perfectly attuned to the combination of Arts and Crafts aesthetics and American socialist ideology. By the time the Londons arrived in Chicago

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[98] London, *The Iron Heel* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1907), 57 [using Auerbach's edition.]

[99] Charmian and Jack London, letter to Percy Sercombe, Jack London Scrapbooks, vol. 8, n.p.

in 1906 at the end of their tour, Triggs had disappeared from the scene and Sandburg was out of town, but Sercombe drove them around the city and fed them at his "`To-Morrow' house." The continuity of art and politics is reflected in their itinerary, for on the next day London gave "Revolution" at the University of Chicago, and A. M. Simons gave them a tour of the stockyards on the day after that.[100] Upton Sinclair was present in spirit, as *The Jungle* was being talked about everywhere.

So, too, was Walt Whitman, one of the principal guiding lights of To-Morrowland. Within the Arts and Crafts Movement, Thoreau represented the desirable simple, minimalist aesthetic, and Whitman represented the expansive spiritual inner being and a new kind of poetry. According to Amy Lowell, in an essay published in Gustave Stickley's *The Craftsman,* Whitman and Poe were the only "truly American" poets, and she praised Whitman for being "a pagan moralist."[101] When the movement was beginning

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[100] Charmian London, 28-30 Feb., diary, 1906, JL 217. See also Jack London, 28-30 Feb., diary, 1906, JL 597. Did they also discuss Arts and Crafts aesthetics? We don't know, but Simons—thinking in concert with Triggs—published "The Economic Foundation of Art" in Gustav Stickley's first issue of *The Craftsman.* See A. M. Simons, "The Economic Foundation of Art," *The Craftsman* 1 (Oct. 1901); rpt. in *The Craftsman: An Anthology,* ed. Barry Sanders (Santa Barbara: Peregrine Smith, 1978), 18-24.

[101] Amy Lowell, "Is There a National Spirit in `the New Poetry' of America?" *The* Craftsman 25 (Dec. 1913); rpt in *The Craftsman: An Anthology,* ed. Barry Sanders (Santa Barbara: Peregrine Smith, 1978), 317. As Sanders says in his introduction, *The Craftsman* was "the principal journal for the dissemination of the Arts and Crafts philosophy in America" (vii).

in England, Charles Robert Ashbee, "the most successful and the most enigmatic exponent of the ideology of the Arts and Crafts Movement," reprinted Whitman for his Essex House Press. Whitman's "words might almost be said to be the inspirational expression of the ideas which led Ashbee to found the Guild and School of Handicrafts."[102] In Chicago, Triggs, in his history of the movement, quoted Ashbee's *Chapters in Workshop Reconstruction and Citizenship* at length, including this crucial passage: "The Whitmanic love of comrades is [the new citizenship's] modern expression, democracy—as socially, not politically, conceived—its basis." Ashbee, Morris, Triggs, and the rest were not political democrats; they were socialists, and the new citizen would be, too. Thus Whitman's conception of brotherly love was to form the basis for both the new political and the new aesthetic realm; a cooperative commonwealth and the Brotherhood of Man could not exist without a little "Whitmanic love." Ashbee, still quoted by Triggs, concludes, "The thought as to how much of the solidarity of labor and the modern trade-union movement may be due to an unconscious faith in this principle of comradeship is no idle one." (145, 146) And Triggs concludes, "Hence the Arts and Crafts movement, with its principle of co-operative individualism, is brought into harmony with some of the deepest thought tendencies of the times," and he includes *Leaves of Grass* with work by Kropotkin, Tolstoy, Henry George, and others. Capitalism frustrates the creation of art, but the new individual will bond with others in "Whitmanic love," forming guilds and workshops to take the place of the factory, which "is organized to the end of making profits for some owner and director. . . . The wage slavery of the

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[102] Lionel Lambourne, *Utopian Craftsmen: The Arts and Crafts Movement from the Cotswolds to Chicago* (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith, Inc, 1980), 124, 146

factory forbids art; the machine forbids it; competition forbids it."[103] (158) In a denouement that makes perfect sense, Triggs, after being caught making love with a woman not his wife in a room in the Spencer-Whitman Institute on Calumet Avenue in Chicago, was divorced and moved with his new wife—a former student from the University of Chicago—to Saugatuck, Michigan, where he formed the People's Industrial College, a Morris-inspired community of craftsmen. From there, the couple moved to California, where they farmed and won a prize at the Sonoma-Marin County Fair in 1914 for their Shetland pony. At some point they moved to the utopian community in Point

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[103] Triggs, *Chapters in the History of the Arts and Crafts Movement,* 158. Triggs was antimachine—not a requirement to be enrolled in the movement, as London certainly was not antimachine. Frank Lloyd Wright called Triggs and others "`Ruskin and Morris reactionaries'" (quoted in James Williams, "Editor's Introduction: On Art and the Machine," *Jack London Journal* 3 [1996]: 11). However, this may be a bit of the ol' anxiety of influence at work. Donald Leslie Johnson traces the formation of the Taliesen fellowship to Elbert Hubbard's Roycroft School in New York: "One of the more practical influences [on Wright] was Elbert Green Hubbard and his Roycroft Shops and Press. . . . Wright's mother and her sisters visited Roycroft in 1913, Wright many times before 1915. . . . Hubbard had been a founder with his brother-in-law John Larkin of the soap, wholesale, and mail order firm The Larkin Company. The Larkin Building in Buffalo of 1903 was one of Wright's most inspired and prophetic architectural works" (Donald Leslie Johnson, *Frank Lloyd Wright versus America: The 1930s* [Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990], pp. 47, 49). Many thanks to Bruce White for leading me to this valuable book.

Loma, Tingley Colony, a move entirely consistent with his politics and aesthetics. Amazingly, it seems he never ran into the Londons.[104]

Besides making love to women in the Spencer-Whitman Institute—as advertised in Triggs's and Sercombe's *To-Morrow,* it was "a club house and inn where free souls and advanced thinkers may lodge, dine and commune with their kind"[105]—Triggs promoted Whitman in other ways. In the *Conservator,* Horace Traubel's newsletter of all things Whitman and of his legacy, Triggs's endorsement leads the table of contents of the June 1906 issue: "The Conservator is the organ of the most liberal and advanced opinion in America. It is almost the only advocate of freedom and justice as determined by right reason and unaffected by money or position."[106] In 1908, an issue could have begun with the endorsement of Eugene Debs, who was a great admirer of Traubel, the *Conservator, Whitman in Camden,* and "the new crusade" of which Traubel was a part. Traubel sent him each volume of the latter when it appeared and invited Debs to the annual Whitman Fellowship dinner, which Debs attended when his schedule permitted. Debs in turn

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[104] See Claudia J. Keenan, "Edmond, Oscar, Laura—2," *Through the Hourglass: Evoking American History: New Stories about Other Times,* www.throughthehourglass.com/2016/03/edmond-oscar-laura-2.html#comment-form

[105] Advertisement, *To-morrow* (Jan. 1905): i. After Triggs resigned from *To-Morrow* and Sercombe took over, the editorial offices moved to 2238 Calumet, where the Spencer-Whitman Center and the People's Industrial College were also established. Sercombe was secretary for the center, and Grace Moore, associate editor of the magazine, was chair of the center's round table discussion group.

[106] Triggs, endorsement, *The Conservator* 17 (June 1906): 1.

published "Whitman's Optimism and Love" in the July 1908 *Conservator.*[107] Each issue began with a long quotation and the May 1906 issue begins with a paragraph from Joaquin Miller's *Building the City Beautiful,* a book, we saw, that illustrated what sort of city Miller hoped post-earthquake San Francisco would become. It would be a bohemian city: "When all men toil, no man need work hard or beyond his strength. Work, in fact, has become a recreation, a necessity of perfect enjoyment." Here is a foundation stone of London's own bohemian economics.[108] Miller, who cultivated a persona and look akin to

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[107] Debs, letter to Stephen Marion Reynolds, 10 Mar. 1900, *Letters of Eugene V. Debs,* 1:146. See also Debs, letter to Traubel, 16 Nov. 1908, *Letters of Eugene V. Debs,* 1:290. Debs once called Traubel "a grand white soul. He has the integrity of a god," as if he were the conscience of the Socialist Party (Debs, letter William F. Gable, 21 Apr. 1909, *Letters of Eugene V. Debs,* 1:304). In fact, Whitman was also "a continuing source of inspiration for the radical American art" of the leftists Mike Gold and Joseph Freeman who published *New Masses* in the twenties (Robert Shulman, *The Power of Political Art: The 1930s Literary Left* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000], 13). On the other hand, Debs despised Elbert Hubbard, a different sort of socialist advocate for the Arts and Crafts movement. In the same letter, Debs wrote, "I cannot excuse Hubbard for the way he treats Socialism. . . . He favors it just enough to coin its fine sentiments into profit for himself, while at every opportunity he stabs it to the heart. . . . With all his brilliant gifts he is repulsive" (ibid.). Not surprisingly, London and Hubbard had their differences, too.

[108] Joaquin Miller, selection from *Building the City Beautiful, The Conservator* 17 (May 1906): 1.

Whitman, was as much a father figure to Bay Area bohemians as Whitman was to, first, New York City bohemians and then others, like Triggs and Sercombe, nationally.[109] He of course lived within easy reach of London in Piedmont.

Miller did not compose poetry similar to Whitman's verse, but Charles Warren Stoddard did. He was a staunch admirer of *The Conservator* and peer and friend of Miller, London, and the rest of Bay Area bohemia. He wrote free verse in the manner of Whitman for the *Golden Era* in the late nineteenth century, heavily influenced by *Leaves of Grass* and especially "Calamus." London called him Dad, and in 1906 Stoddard sent him a copy of *The Conservator.* "Traubel is one of the finest—I wish he knew you!" Stoddard told his favorite son. London in turn wrote, "Sure, I know Traubel. I had a copy of `Conservator,' but was glad to get an extra one."[110] From June 1905 till at least February 1907, Traubel published this blurb from London on the back page of his magazine: "I want to thank you at this late day for the reviews you have given me in The Conservator. Leaving out everything else, you have done what not one in a hundred reviewers has done—grasped the innermost meaning of my work." Traubel had reviewed *War of the Classes* favorably without qualification, and London returned the favor by writing a paragraph for *The Conservator* praising Traubel's *Chants Communal:* "It supplies a crying need of the socialist movement," he wrote, concluding, "It is twentieth century thought and it is alive. And for me that is the best I can say of anything, that it is

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[109] See Justin Martin, *Rebel Souls: Walt Whitman and America's First Bohemians* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 2014), 184-85.

[110] London, letter to Charles Warren Stoddard, 13 Oct. 1906, *Missouri Review* 23, no. 2 (2000): 112.

alive."[111] It was published in the same issue as Triggs's blush-inducing review. As for Sercombe, London wrote to him in 1906, "Say, old man, here's what we've got to do:-- We've got to swap autographed copies of our Cave Dwellers stories. If `Chicago Cave Dwellers' is out, shove your fist into it and send it along, and I'll do the same to you with `Before Adam' as soon as it comes out in book form, which will be in February." Exchanging art objects—crafted by bohemian hands—was entirely natural to these socialist men and women.[112]

And then there was the third prominent member of the Chicago bohemian world, Carl Sandburg. Sandburg missed London in Chicago in February, but his profile of the famous author appeared in the April 1906 issue of *To-Morrow.* His essay, like Traubel's review of *War of the Classes,* takes off from *The People of the Abyss* and applauds London's politics. He calls *The Call of the Wild* and *The Sea-Wolf* masterpieces, and then exposes the politics inherent in those two works: "Wolf Larsen is The System incarnate."[113] Decades later and now billed as "the elder statesman of American letters," Sandburg was once asked what he thought of the "beatnik movement." Carl said in his creaky voice, "I think there should be a beatnik movement in every generation. I was a part of a beatnik movement from 1915 to 1925. Some of my work is a challenge to the

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[111] London, letter to Horace Traubel, *The Conservator* 16 (June 1905): 60.

[112] London, letter to Percy Sercombe, Jan.-Mar. 1907 issue of *To-Morrow,* vol. 3, no. 3, in Jack London scrapbooks, vol. 8, n.p.

[113] Charles A. Sandburg, "Jack London: A Common Man," *To-Morrow* 2 (Apr. 1906): 35-39; rpt. *Jack London Newsletter* 5 (Jan. Apr. 1972): 14-18.

beatniks."[114] He has his dates wrong—1905, not 1915, is more like it—but his point is clear. He—and Triggs and Sercombe and Moore and others in Chicago, as well as London and his cohort—were the precursors to the Beats and formed the second generation of American bohemians.

The links among socialist thought, Whitman's ideas of poetry and citizenship, and the Arts and Crafts Movement were manifold, three-dimensional. Traubel was also the editor of *The Artsman* (an Arts and Crafts publication whose motto was The Art That Is Life). He was, as Triggs said, "one of the leading spirits in the Rose Valley Association—a communal crafts-colony near Philadelphia."[115] Rose Valley was in fact an important Arts and Crafts colony, its buildings designed by its founder, William Lightfoot Price, whom Traubel had convinced of the soundness of Henry George's single tax theory. Again socialist economics and aesthetics were conjoined, as we saw, for example, in A. M. Simon's essay for Stickley's *The Craftsman*. Just as the single tax seemed the only right and principled economic system, so too was there a morality to architecture. Sounding a note that is central to London's "House Beautiful" essay, Price wrote, "No idea of false construction is to be gathered from any of the details."[116] Heavily influenced

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[114] Sandburg, interview. For a discussion of Sandburg as a precursor to the beats and then the hippies--that is, as a member of the continuing cycle of American bohemian groups, see my forthcoming work on California bohemianism, *Careless of Themselves: One Hundred Years of California Bohemianism.*

[115] Triggs, letter to Traubel, *The Conservator* 16 (June 1905): 61.

[116] Quoted in George Thomas, *William L. Price: Arts and Crafts to Modern Design* (Princeton Architectural Press: New York, 2000), 106.

by the now-familiar group of Morris, Carlyle, Ruskin, and Whitman, Price believed in simplicity, the bond between landscape and built environment, and the necessity for using local materials. He was even influenced by Japanese aesthetics and used a Japanese print for wallpaper in an old barn—the colony's largest structure—that housed furniture makers, potters, and other craftsmen. Price added a house to the barn for Alice Barber Stephens, the painter and magazine illustrator, and her husband, a specialist in Native American ethnographer. He built a magnificent fireplace on the second floor of the colony's largest building in the shape of a thunderbird, an allusion to Southwestern Native American culture, set a colorful thunderbird in tile on the eastern wall, and shaped the eastern side of the back porch into a thunderbird, architectural elements that acted as a bridge between East and West Coast bohemian artists.[117] When Ashbee made his second tour of the US, he stopped at Rose Valley before going to California. Price reminded him of Frank Lloyd Wright because of his rejection of classicism out of an "impatience of the past." Rose Valley in particular seemed a grand success: "There's room for the scholars as well as the socialists. . . . Price has an entirely healthy and original view of life." The colony impressed him as "a sensible and human Bohemia."[118] Price also created the town plan for the Arden Colony in Delaware, where Upton Sinclair lived for a year and a half.

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[117] I was fortunate enough to tour the colony, guided by E. Morris Potter, chair of the Rose Valley Museum and Historical Society, before the restoration of the lodge—now a museum and guild workshop—was completed. Many thanks to Morris for explaining the source of the thunderbird imagery at the lodge.

[118] Quoted in George Thomas, *William L. Price: Arts and Crafts to Modern Design* (Princeton Architectural Press: New York, 2000), 104.

Sinclair remembered Price as a Friar Tuck figure who had fallen in love with Sinclair's secretary, who was in love with someone else, "a mixup which will happen even in Utopia."[119] It was all happening, as a character in *Almost Famous* famously said about a similar moment in sixties bohemia.

This was the intellectual and cultural cathexis out of which London's "House Beautiful" grew. We remember that Robert Collier, in making his pitch to London to tour and write about the nation, likened him to Whitman. As far as we know, London read, but did not relish, Whitman's poetry. In 1899, he sent Johns a "take-off on Stephen Crane's style, which, in turn, I deem to be a take-off on that of Walt Whitman's. Whiled away a few minutes on it, just for fun."[120] He also included salutary quotations from Morris and Carlyle in the same letter. It sounds as if by parody he was distancing himself from Whitman, admiring Browning, Sterling, and others whom current criticism regard as premodern. But London advocated for Crane's poetry, and perhaps he agreed with Stoddard and Traubel and Triggs about Whitman. At least, however, we can say that he acknowledged those inheritors of Whitman as living according to right principles. That is, London's socialism was larger than just a set of economic paradigms. He meant it as a new, better way of living. It led him to think about the Arts and Crafts movement, or at least ideas that were embraced by that movement and, independently, by socialists. As his friend A. M. Simons wrote, "the chief aim of social workers should be to make society artistic." Art and labor must be united, and labor must be governed by socialist principles

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[119] Quoted in George Thomas, *William L. Price: Arts and Crafts to Modern Design* (Princeton Architectural Press: New York, 2000), 110.

[120] London, letter to Johns, 7 June 1899, *Letters,* 1: 82.

because “Capitalism presents a hostile attitude toward all efforts to restore the conditions of healthful, pleasurable, beautiful workmanship.” In fact, “under these conditions any movement toward the revival of the beautiful, the pleasant, and the good,--in short of the artistic,--which does not connect itself with the great revolutionary movement of the proletariat, has cut itself off from the only hope of realizing its own ideal.” [121] This is why London was so attractive and important to socialists like Simons. He was building an artful life as a proletariat. They all agreed: Art is life.

When Simons showed London around Chicago in early 1906, they must have talked about such foundational concepts and specifically the links between the Arts and Crafts movement and socialism. London may have first come across the phrase “my castle in Spain” and its link to the Arts and Crafts movement in Nixon Waterman’s *A Book of Verses;* Waterman was a friend of London’s aunt and one of the first editors London ever met. The book is beautifully designed with an Arts and Crafts flower-and-thistle cover. His poem “My Castle in Spain” is in the same tenor as Thomson’s:

My Castle in Spain is a place of delight,
Where I joyfully wander at morning and night;
Of all life’s high pleasure the happiest hours
Are those I devote to its fountains and flowers.
Whenever my mind in a reverie swings,

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[121] A. M. Simons, “The Economic Foundation of Art,” *The Craftsman* 1 (Oct. 1901); rpt. in *The Craftsman: An Anthology,* ed. Barry Sanders (Santa Barbara: Peregrine Smith, 1978), 23.

Hope bears me away on her jubilant wings,
To leave me, forgetful of care and pain,
A fortunate prince at my castle in Spain.[122]

London's interest in "delicious nests" and places "forgetful of care and pain" is evident in the stage directions for "A Wicked Woman." The description of the set reads: "The room is remarkable for magnificent stone fireplace at rear center. On either side of fireplace are generous diamond-paned windows. Wide, curtained doorways to right and left. To left, front, table with vase of flowers and chairs. To right, front, grand piano." One of the chairs is a Morris chair. The fireplace is central because it is the material manifestation of the ideals of domesticity, whether masculine or feminine.

Now we are ready to consider London's essay. His conception of the house beautiful includes a direct link between fireplaces and, not just domesticity, but clean, fresh air. "The fireplaces of my house will be many and large. . . . With large fireplaces and generous heat, some windows may be open all the time, and without hardship all the windows can be opened every little while and the rooms flushed with clean pure air." The house will be like a cave, in a way, because (with *Before Adam* still on his mind) "for countless thousands of years my ancestors have lived and died and drawn all their breaths in the open air." There will be "large verandas" and even they will have fireplaces for comfort in the frosty evenings. "I've got only one pair of lungs," he writes playfully, "and

[122] Nixon Waterman, "My Castle in Spain," *A Book of Verses* (Boston and Chicago: Forbes and Co., 1900), 38

I haven't the address of any repair shop." One might almost forget that he was a chain smoker.

There were to be no fireplaces or verandas on the *Snark* nor "fences, lawns, nor flowers." The reader of "The House Beautiful" cannot be faulted for wondering why not, for the beginning of the essay deploys one of London's favorite rhetorical devices, one that we saw he used to begin *The Call of the Wild.* He withholds the most crucial fact about what he is describing. "Speaking of homes," he says, "I am building one now." If the reader doesn't pause at the clue that should tell him that London is not describing a house but rather a home then he or she will be shocked at the turn in the fourth paragraph: "Oh! I forgot to tell you," he says in his most theatrical fashion, "that this home [not house] I am describing is to be a floating home." His "land house," however, will not be that much different. Like the boat, it will be built according to three principles: it will be lived in; it will combine utility and beauty; and it will combine "construction and decoration." This latter "idea is more important than the building of the house, for without the idea the house so built is certain to be an insult to intelligence and beauty-love." These are Arts and Crafts principles, especially the second one, which echoes Morris: "Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful."[123] No columns that don't support weight.

The materials of the house have to be selected according to similar principles, one of which is Keatsian in its formulation: "A thing must be true, or it is not beautiful." Partly London is thinking of the banality of not using shoddy material, like that which was used for the barn on his property that fell in the earthquake. The earthquake makes a

[123] Quoted in Wilson, "`Divine Excellence,'" 17.

reappearance in this essay. He notes, as many did, that the new city hall in San Francisco fell because "the mortar was not honest." It's significant that he doesn't stay on the material plane but rather ascribes an ethics to rotten materials. The ethical consideration lies in the choices builders make, and if they choose cheap material they are dishonest. But there's more, too. The materials have to fit the idea of the building. A skyscraper "should not bulk on the cityscape like Leviathan; it should rise and soar, light and airy and fairylike." Thus the earthquake was "a punishment for sin; but it was not for sin against God. The people of San Francisco sinned against themselves." As I said before, London's convicts his city for being capitalistic. Architecture, like all art forms, should be based on socialism: "clean, noble, alive."

As he deals with the past, so too he addresses the future, as he warms up for *The Iron Heel.* "I often regret that I was born in this particular period of the world. In the matter of servants, how I wish I were living in the golden future of the world, where there will be no servants—naught but service of love," an echo of Miller's *Building the City Beautiful.* London's expounds on a larger point, one that incorporates a Whitmanesque brotherly love. Just because servants are required by "the rationality and the necessity of the division of labor" doesn't "justify me in lack of consideration for them." Given that "one of the great and selfish objections to chattel slavery was the effect on the masters themselves," it is unethical to demean servants by refusing them decent habitation. "Heaven in the drawing-room and hell in the kitchen" is an antithetical principle to the house beautiful in the time of the brotherhood of man. Furthermore, servants' work will not include cleaning. "It will be no spick and span and polished house." The "philosophy of spick and span" is built on a hierarchy not just of labor but of being. Minorities of both

class and race suffer because of this. “The Korean drone flaunts his clean white clothes, for the same reason that the Chinese flaunts his monstrous finger-nails, and the white man and woman flaunt the spick-and-spanness of their spotless houses.” We can fault London for not taking a more active role in the early civil rights movement, as did his friend William English Walling, who helped found the NAACP. But we can applaud his antiracism and anticlassism in “The House Beautiful.”

Comfort, beauty, and leisure are all qualities he hoped would adhere in his house, especially the laughter and good times that come when guests and hosts are comfortable and aesthetically pleasured. “It will be a house of air and sunshine and laughter”; as Simons had pointed out in his essay for *The Craftsman,* play was a crucial component of the artistic life endorsed by both the Arts and Crafts movement and by revolutionary socialism. London foresaw an eternity of pleasured progeny living in his house, as great a lasting gift as he hoped his writings would be. The essay concludes, “I have a thousand generations in my loins. Laughter that is decadent is not good for these thousand generations.”

Except those aren’t the words that got published. Stone revised the penultimate sentence to read, “I have in me a thousand generations.” “Loins” was too sexy a word for the magazine and for Corra Harris, a novelist and book reviewer for *The Independent.* Her and London’s relationship through print began in 1906 with Harris’s review of London’s work thus far. In an essay entitled “The Walking Delegate Novelist,” she wrote in her Southern way, “Properly speaking, Jack London is a `hobo’ novelist. This is not so bad as it sounds, nor nearly so bad as it used to be.” She goes even further and agrees that he is a “genius,” but a genius with an “elk-nature” and “mental obstreperousness” that

makes him and others of his elk ilk "not novelists at all, but unscrupulous speculators in law and life. They are not simply the sons of their own fathers, but they are often the ramping intellectual posterity of Walt Whitman and of half a dozen other erratic geniuses."[124] Perhaps now that we have tracked how the aesthetics of Whitman and London overlapped we are not surprised that a contemporary reviewer thought to lump the two together, though they still remain, in terms of their literary output, strangers.

Still, perhaps because he saw himself and Whitman in his new essay, he sent her a copy of "The House Beautiful." She was appalled. She was so offended by that word *loins* that she sent him a "written-out apology form" for him to fill out. He attempted in his reply to remain on light and friendly terms, but it seems she was too offended to be pen pals. In 1914, on his way to New York City, where she was living at the time, he wrote her to set up an appointment, "to arrange a truce or loose the dogs of war according to your heart's desire."[125] They met at an Author's Guild dinner. "I was astonished," she said. "He was pale, dressed like a mechanic in his Saturday-afternoon clothes; no magnetism, nothing at all in his manner to suggest that he had thrust his naked fist through the window of his bedroom to get fresher air when he was, you may say, the tiger guest of a certain lion-hunting millionaire—an incident about which London boasted at the time. Maybe he did it, but I am free to say that his fist did not look like that kind of a fist." Or maybe he was making a sly allusion to his essay "The House Beautiful" and its

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[124] Corra Harris, "The Walking Delegate Novelist," *The Independent,* 24 May 1906, pp. 14-15.

[125] London, letter to Harris, 22 Jan. 1914, Corra Harris Collection, University of Georgia Library, Athens, Ga. Many thanks to Melissa Bush for tracking this letter down for me.

glorification of fresh air. In her view, though, he had stepped up, but barely, from being a hobo author to being a mechanic author.[126]

She may have used her offense at the word *loins* to mask her real outrage—that London had dared to condemn white people who maintain their supremacist ideology by keeping African American servants busy at cleaning house. Harris was a voluble segregationist and defended lynching. We do not know if London had read her most infamous essay on the matter—"A Southern Women's View"—but he explicitly disagreed with her about socialism. Her friend and editor Hamilton Holt wrote to London a number of times to persuade him to let him publish the correspondence between the Southerner and the Westerner. In 1907 he wrote to London, saying, "I have seldom come across such an electric controversy in my life, and it is too good to remain unpublished."[127] But London said no. So Holt tried again two years later: "By the way, I wonder if the last two or three years have not cooled you and Mrs. Harris off enough so that your will both re-edit the correspondence on Socialism. It was the best bit of controversy I have ever happened to know on which both sides came out victorious. Why

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[126] Corra Harris, *My Book and Heart* (Houghton Mifflin Co.: Boston, 1924), 216-17. Her most general claim was that "London became at once a more sensational figure than any character he portrayed in his stories, which were remarkably good stories before he became so self-conscious that he stifled his own genius" (216). She was of the Alfred Kazin-Earle Labor school, which pictures London's life as the greatest story he ever wrote. Sigh.

[127] Hamilton Holt, letter to London, 28 Mar. 1907, JL 7570.

won't you change your mind and let it be printed?"[128] And, again, London said no. Though London was "universal" enough to make up with her, she was not.[129] In her memoir, she again likened him to a primitive beast, recalling the time when "Jack London charged, pawing and bellowing, into the arena of American fiction." In a separate 1906 review she had called *White Fang* his best work,[130] but in 1914 she thought she saw that "London had shot his bolt as a writer and was on the downward slide of his idiosyncrasies."[131] Most likely he was drunk at the dinner, the worst thing he could have done in her eyes. She did not separate manners and the quality of one's fiction. Her principle for reviewing books was homespun: "My method was to discuss a novel as one would discuss a certain set of people one met at dinner the evening before and never expected to meet again; I mean as ruthlessly and as freely as that. I may have mentioned the author's literary style, but this was not the main thing. The main thing with me was what kind of men and women he produced. If they were not proper persons, I dealt as severely with them as we do with a brother in the church on trial for misconduct." Harris was "Holt's personal discovery" and "expressed the magazine's views on marriage, ethics, and morality."[132] Needless to say, Harris was one righteous church lady from the

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[128] Holt, letter to London, 9 Nov. 1909, JL 7571.

[129] London, letter to Harris, 17 Sept. 1906, *Letters,* 2:606.

[130] See Harris, "The Rise and Fall of Popular Novels during 1906," *The Independent,* 7 Mar. 1907, 546.

[131] Harris, *My Book and Heart,* 216.

[132] Warren F. Kuehl, *Hamilton Holt: Journalist, Internationalist, Educator* (Gainsville, Fla.: University of Florida Press, 1960, 22.

South, the wife of a Methodist preacher, and momma don't allow no alcohol in her house, especially at the dinner table.[133]

London had intimated in his essay that in seven years or so he would build his house beautiful, and he did just that. Designed by Albert Farr, whose work drew "directly from recent English arts-and-crafts examples,"[134] Wolf House was comprised of five local materials: "redwood trees, a deep chocolate-maroon volcanic rock, blue slate, boulders and concrete," as George Wharton James described it. The boulders were dynamited out of the ground and then hauled into place, not chiseled or otherwise worked upon. The redwood logs kept their bark. Thoreau would have been proud. "We certainly leave the handsomest paint and clapboards behind in the woods, when we strip off the bark and poison ourselves with white-lead in the towns," he wrote in *Maine Woods.* London himself could have written the next words: "For beauty, give me trees with the fur on."[135]

In keeping with the ideals of the Arts and Crafts Movement, James noted that the centerpiece, an immense living room with a large fireplace, "will give [the house] a

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[133] Some of the material in the previous two paragraphs first appeared in James Williams, "Editor's Introduction: On Jack London's "The House Beautiful," *Jack London Journal* 2 (1996): 35-36.

[134] Longstreth, *On the Edge of the World,* 308.

[135] Thoreau, *The Maine Woods,* ed. Joseph J. Moldenhauer (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1972), 125.

cheerful, homelike, though vast and medieval appearance."[136] London could well have remembered the medieval Arts and Crafts designs in glass and stone that he saw in Mandel Hall at the University of Chicago, among other places. As Stickley once wrote, "the Middle Ages [were the] golden period of the arts and crafts." With all the workmen on site at the Beauty Ranch—the carpenters, the stone masons, the carters, and so on—it's as if he had re-created, on a small scale and solely for the purpose of building his house, several of the craft guilds from the Middle Ages and duplicated in America in the twentieth century at places like Rose Valley and Roycroft, New York.

If the *Snark* was a house, then his house was a ship. Some think of the Wolf House as a rich man's house, perched on a domineering position on a hillside, commanding a wide view—for possible imperialist takeover. That must be the conclusion you come to if you take Wolf House as the exhibition of an outsized ego, a selfish undertaking compensating for all his perceived sacrifices on behalf of the Cause. Yet James wrote that the house was actually nearly invisible to the public. He overheard a visitor exclaim, "What fools they are! building such a glorious house where none can see

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[136] Quoted in Haughey and Johnson, *Jack London Homes Album,* 36-37. Richard Guy Wilson agrees that the Wolf House was "a prime example of Arts and Crafts domestic architecture," but because Wilson relies on (and misrepresents) early biographers that London was a racist alcoholic who glorified both the Nietzschean superman and the super primitive dog, Wilson asserts that London's embrace of "the Arts and Crafts celebration of nature" revealed the potential for "a primitivism," "the ultimate darkness" within the movement. It's a deeply confused, thankfully brief analysis (Wilson, "`Divine Excellence,'" 25).

it!"[137] If we follow this rhetorical exchange between ship and house, and if we keep in mind how the house's natural and local building materials made it seem as if it grew organically from the hillside, and that it was backed by a large redwood grove as if it were masts, then the Wolf House becomes the equivalent of the highest point on a ship, a sailing ship, and the highest point is the top most sail called the skysail. Jack's writing desk would be at the equivalent height to the eagle's nest. Skysail Jack was the name London gave to a companion of 'Frisco Kid in "And 'Frisco Kid Came Back." London sometimes went by Sailor Jack on the road, and the two names—Skysail Jack and Sailor Jack—seem interchangeable and nomenclature for an author. Skysail Jack does the cooking in the 'Frisco Kid story at the hobo camp, the epitome of male domesticity. Skysail Jack was the name of the hobo he chased across Canada in 1894—the ghost that is his imagination, as we will see in chapter 20.

The interchange between house and boat continues with the very next piece of writing, the foreword to *The Cruise of the* Snark. Given that the boat's completion was still in doubt, it may seem a gratuitous choice of essay topic to write. Yet the house and boat essays are really cut from the same cloth, metaphorically designed by William Morris. For London sailed an Arts and Crafts boat to the South Seas. When he described the *Snark* in "The House Beautiful," he made it clear that his house would follow from the principles he adhered to in building the boat. London strove for Thoreauvian simplicity, but not Thoreauvian economy in his designs for both, and, as a side note, in his written style as well. The *Snark* would be simple, but expensive. He had many needs—a large engine, a bathroom, a large cockpit, a "dynamo," "a storage battery," even

[137] Quoted in Haughey and Johnson, *Jack London Homes Album,* 37.

an ice machine, and, especially, a crew. In the span of six sentences London goes from writing "There will be no crew" to "Of course there will be a cook and a cabin-boy." This is not Thoreauvian economy. Thoreau would have tried to manage to do it all himself. But servants enable a division of labor, and a division of labor allows for bohemian comfort. "Why should we stew over a stove, wash dishes, and set the table?" London asks. Jack and Charmian's work—sailing the ship, fishing for food—was their pleasure. The others would get their chance at comfort, as soon as they finished putting the dishes away. Still, as with Triggs and others, London sincerely wanted his crew bonded in Whitmanesque comradeship, not, say, in Melvillian democratic citizenship. Whitman was the founder of the spirituality that sustained the Arts and Crafts Movement. That influence, Jack and Charmian hoped, would continue with their voyage. They wanted to be "alerted," as Millard had said about his earthquake experience.

To write a foreword to a book that doesn't yet exist is not such a fanciful undertaking. But to write a foreword for a book to be based on an expedition that may or may not happen, now that's a risky and impatient project. In July 1906 London had no guarantee that the boat would actually be completed.[138] His editor at *Cosmopolitan,* Bailey Millard, now back in New York, who was apprised with everyone else in the

[138] The story of the delays and cost overruns in building the *Snark* has been hashed and rehashed by every biographer, no single account better than the other. Unfortunately, they all seem to use this story as evidence of London's egotism, or decline as a writer, or ill health, or poor judgment, or some other negative quality that proves the inevitability of his death.

country about the progress of the boat's construction, was surprised to receive it.[139] But the foreword is all about London's impetuous nature. How wonderful would it be to sail around the world: that is how the essay begins, as Charmian, Jack, and Roscoe swim in the ranch's lake. "Let us do it." But domestic affairs come first, he says, at least initially. He has a house to build, even though he had just told his national audience that he was building a boat first, then a house. He wrote an essay about a house that is actually a boat. And then he writes an essay about a boat trip that can't be taken because he needs to build a house. It's as if he can't decide which to do first, so he combines the two so that he can do both simultaneously. Their interchangeability signals their indebtedness to the same aesthetic principles.

The first paragraph contains at least two falsehoods, though London's audience would not have been aware of them, only future biographers. First, the idea of the trip came to Jack and Charmian before they ever discussed it with Roscoe; Charmian, who read Joshua Slocum's book before Jack, most likely triggered the idea, perhaps as far back as late 1901, early 1902.[140] We know for certain that he was thinking of a long

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[139] "As for the article on the starting out of "The Snark," I take it that this is one of the series to be covered by the advance which we made to you. You will be duly credited for the article" (Millard, letter to London, 27 Aug. 1906, JL15385).

[140] Susan Nuernberg, in her research for a biography of Charmian, speculates that it is entirely possible Charmian and Jack discussed Slocum's book when she returned from a trip to Maine and New York in 1901; she attended the Pan-American exhibition in Buffalo and saw Slocum's boat displayed there. As yet Nuernberg has no concrete evidence, but it seems likely to me, and more than likely that Charmian gave Slocum's

South Pacific sea voyage in February 1903 when he told Brett that he would take the money from *The Saturday Evening Post*'s serialization of *The Call of the Wild,* engage cabin passage in a sailing vessel for the South Seas, take a typewriter, plenty of paper and ink, and the plot for my sea story along, and thus get the sea atmosphere on which I have during the last several years gone stale."[141] Interestingly, the book's cover features an anchor on which two sea horses are intertwined; a sea horse might be envisioned as the peaceable side of a coin on which the other side is a sea wolf. The cover, then, may have been a source for the title of Jack's sea story. In any case, Jack's plan outlined to Brett does not follow Slocum's book, though it dovetails with it. In fact, a month later he bought a boat and named it after Slocum's: *The Spray.*

Second, London says they came up with the name *Snark* "because we could not think of any other name." Actually, their first choice was *Gull,* which was then abandoned despite George Sterling's plea that they do not choose such an ill-fated name as *Snark.* London says there was nothing "subtle and occult in the name," disavowing a spiritualist or ghostly aura surrounding the boat. Despite his protestations the name is weird. Lewis Carroll's poem is about a ship and its crew that hunts something that does not exist. London's essay is about a ship and its crew that is not supposed to exist. They

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book to Jack. Jack may have already owned an 1894 edition of Slocum's first book, *Voyage of the* Liberade (1890), which is in his library at the Huntington.

[141] London, letter to Brett, 12 Feb. 1903, *Letters,* 343. Here is another clear statement of how going to sea was inextricably linked to writing novels.

become the ghosts that others hunt.[142] The Snark turns out to be a Boojum after all, another portmanteau word signifying nothing; a ghost signifies something that no longer exists, a person who has died. In their Arts and Crafts boat, named after an imaginary entity that Carroll consulted Ruskin about, the *Snark* crew enact a Victorian ghost story. As the poem says, if you meet the Snark or Boojum you will disappear—"softly and suddenly vanish away"—like a ghost. Boo!---jum. Deny it all he could, he might as well have been sailing a ship called *The Ghost.*

London feels compelled to say why they are undertaking the trip. For him, this question demands an exactitude that no other question—where are they going? when will they be back? how on earth will they survive?—demands. And yet he dismisses the question outright as a matter of egotism. Not his, but that of the questioners. Egotism is a failure of imagination, according to London. It is an inability to imagine others' "desires, likes, and dislikes," and so one uses one's own thoughts as the measure of what is normal, sane, productive. In any case, egotism is different from London's famous statement of why he did go: "`I Like.'" *Like* explains ambition, addiction, and religious extremes. It is "the line of least resistance." It is desire, motivation, and the object of philosophy. It is a "set of values." It is, finally, who we are, which requires no explanation after all. Like Lewis Carroll's Bellman—who said, "They think I am crazy," though the "utter inanity" of his "words . . . proved his insanity"—London's words fail to

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[142] In a playful letter to the editor of the *West Coast Lumberman,* a member of a "secret" society comprised of lumbermen called Hoo-Hoo, London said that "all hands wanted to be Bojum and Jabberwock." The society borrowed names from Carroll's poems for the titles of their officers. See London, letter to Frank B. Cole, [? Jan. 1907], *Letters,* 1:666.

prove his sanity. As with *Before Adam, Created He Them,* and even the effects of the earthquake, soundness of mind is a principal concern in the foreword. We are not insane, asserts London, before he headed off into the ocean without a navigator or working engine or a watertight ship.

He once told the managing editor of *Success Magazine,* when the latter had counseled taking a clipper ship instead of a small boat, "But gee—think of it—achievement! Think of going around the world yourself, taking yourself around the world,--doing it with your own hands and head. I think that's the biggest thing of all that can be said in favor of the small boat."[143] Anybody can sail on a clipper ship. Anybody can be the tourist. Tourism is not an accomplishment, it's imperialistic dilettantism. "The thing I like most of all," he writes in the foreword, "is personal achievement." What he achieves "must be concrete." Writing books is concrete, but writing "the great American novel" is not. Who is to say, after all, whether *The Sea-Wolf* placed London in the pantheon of America's greatest writers, that he had lived up to the expectations of his publisher George Brett? He isn't denigrating the act of writing. He is denigrating the act of criticism, which is egotism. He writes because it represents his "set of values." He has a "water-fight" because that is a bohemian act as well. And he would rather be a water-fighting, kite-flying author than write something that all critics would herald as the Great American Novel. He will write what he wants, when he wants, and not be held to conventional or critical examination.

In a touching moment of self-examination and self-revelation, London admits "that I do like a small audience." It must be comprised of those he loves and in turn who

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[143] London, letter to Robert Mackay, 11 Mar. 1907, *Letters,* 2:677.

love him. In an absolutely honest and startling pronouncement, he says, “When I then accomplish personal achievement, I have a feeling that I am justifying their love for me.” His greatest fear is not being unloved but in failing and disappointing those who love him. If he fails, he would end up outside his family, community, his brotherhood. It is an immature conception of love, and more than anything else articulates his famous boyishness.

He knows when he writes well and when he does not. He does not need critics and reviewers. But he does need love and community in order to achieve the things that make him happy. At the same time, he is perfectly happy accomplishing something that only he is aware of. “The delight of the achievement itself . . . does not depend upon witnesses.” It is the ultimate satisfaction to know that he has adjusted “to environment.” This is the very definition of “success.” Success is not a matter of material gain or public recognition. To write is to live. To write is to succeed. Not to write is to fail. To fail is to die, and, again, writing is a life or death matter. “Life that lives is life successful, and success is the breath of its nostrils.” Success, in fact, is the breath or spirit emanating from the living being. To write is to live is to have the spirit.

He could have stayed home, but “he was not made that way.” He needed the ultimate challenge. He needed to be “alerted.” He says, humbly, “I am so made.” He has no choice, just as others have no choice in staying home and not sailing around the world. It is enough for them to adjust to their immediate circumstances again and again, day after day. But London needs the novel environment, the “big moments of living.” “Being alive, I want to see,” he says. Vision, writing, success, and community are all bound up together in this voyage. One cannot happen without the other.

So far the essay is surprisingly similar to confessional literature like *John Barleycorn.* It is in this sense a warm-up for the book he would write after *The Iron Heel: The Road.* He is not exposing his fears and psychological structure because he thinks there is an audience for it. He expects the same from any adventurer. If you don't know why you are putting yourself in danger, if you don't know why you are leaving your home and loved ones and community, then you are truly insane. He is telling his audience through the mode of confession that he is worthy of the trip, and if he convinces them of this basic truth, then they will follow his every step. For the trip is no less an engagement by a mere mortal--"fallible and frail, a bit of pulsating, jelly-like life"—with Death. Jack London may seem like a great man, one of the most famous authors of all time, but in reality he is just "a little animal called a man—a bit of vitalized matter, one hundred and sixty-five pounds of meat and blood, nerve, sinew, bones, and brain." And the trip will take this bit of organic flotsam into the giant maw of "great natural forces—colossal menaces, Titans of destruction, unsentimental, unethical, mathematical monsters that have less concern for me than I have for the grain of sand I crush under my foot." Death can take many forms: "cyclones and tornadoes, lightning flashes and cloud bursts, tide rips and tidal waves, undertows and waterspouts, great whirls and sucks and eddies, earthquakes and volcanoes, surfs that thunder on rock-ribbed coasts and seas that leap aboard the largest crafts that float, crushing humans to pulp or licking them off into the sea to death." In his notes for the foreword—which he called his "first article"—he wanted, first of all, to explain this psychology: "psychology of the trip. The smallness of man—his monley origin, etc. the earthquakes and shooting stars striking earth." He then refers himself to Meyer's *The End of the World* and its discussion of comets hitting earth.

"What I have seen of the sea and the elements—pictures of colossal sea disturbances caused by earthquake, etc. Work in unbelief in immortality. And then the challenge of my soul to the wild forces—we'll do it. What if we die? etc. Also with my own hands I did it!" . . . Work in my worship of personal achievement. Rather be champion prize fighter of world, than president of the U.S. . . . Two of the proudest achievements of my life—not "Call of the Wild" etc., but the stone water-trough on ranch and the time I steered the Sophie Sutherland in typhoon."[144] To flaunt death seems insane, but he has now examined his soul and his mind and found himself intact and stable. It is egotism on the part of others if they judge otherwise.

The essay closes with a litany of mechanical problems that frustrate an easy construction of the *Snark.* There's the engine, the rigging, the lighting, and so on. All these demand complicated answers. But none rivals the matter of navigating, and his audience must be appalled that the ship is sailing off into the Pacific without either the captain or the owner knowing how to navigate. In his notes, London imagined a bit of dialogue to accompany the disquisition of this problem: "Neither knows navigation. `I'm rushed to death [!], Roscoe. You learn this summer and teach me after we start." In the published version, London solves the problem by saying they'll learn on the way, but "there's one unfortunate and perplexing phase of the voyage" that apparently London cannot solve. That is, he and Roscoe disagree about "cosmology." Roscoe believes the earth is concave, like a bowl, and the sky and universe are in the middle. He learned this from the writings of Cyrus Teed, who founded a system of beliefs called Koreshanity and

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[144] London, "[The Inconceivable and Monstrous:] [notes]," JL 786. The folder's title is a cataloging error.

established utopian colonies first in New York, then in Chicago and San Francisco, and finally in Florida. Perhaps Roscoe had been a member of the San Francisco colony. In any case, it is a mildly amusing belief system, and London uses it to end the essay on a light and humorous note, so necessary for rhetorical balance after the confessional mode and the litany of death-dealing natural forces. Unbeknownst to his readership, however, he wrote to his good friend the librarian, Fred Bamford, to find out if there was scientific evidence to dispute Teed's hollow sphere theory.[145] Bamford apparently supplied the necessary counterarguments. London did not actually believe Eames could be right, but he needed to convince Roscoe that he, London, was right. As it turned out, it was he, not Roscoe, who learned how to navigate, in a way proving that his "cosmology" was correct. It turns out, despite his words, that London was sane after all. Only Captain Roscoe was crazy.

As he wrote the foreword, "House Beautiful," "The Wit of Porportuk," "A Wicked Woman," "Created He Them," "The Somnambulists," his reports on the earthquake and on the Haywood-Moyer-Pettibone kidnapping, "My Best Story and Why I Wrote It," and *Before Adam,* the composition of *The Iron Heel* composted in his mind. Before he began it, though, he needed to return to the short story. Thus, he wrote "Finis" and "Just Meat."

"Finis" was published under the title "Morganson's Finish" in *Success Magazine.* The story begins with an end, the end of a Klondiker's food as he sits in his camp, but also a beginning. "It was the last of Morganson's bacon. He had begun with sopping his biscuit in the grease on the bottom of the frying-pan, and he had finished with polishing

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[145] See London, letter to Bamford, 22 Apr. 1906, *Letters,* 2:571.

the pan with the biscuit."[146] It's a clever rhetorical trick because it foreshadows his new decision. He is nearly out of food, he's without dogs, and he's ill with scurvy. We don't learn the exact nature of his decision until much later in the story, but the initial rhetorical trick is repeated as a withholding of the decision. Because of his condition, we sympathize. And then we learn that we are sympathizing with a murderer.

He is also haunted. We learn that "his pale blue eyes were troubled. There was that in them that showed the haunting imminence of something terrible." It is the dawning of his knowledge of his impending death. Alive, he is haunted by the ghosts in the white silence. Yes, we are indeed in the heart of Ghostland. Later, when the scurvy had progressed horribly, he looked in a pocket mirror and scared himself. "That vision of himself haunted him day and night." Not only is he now a ghost of himself, but the ghost that haunts the land is in turn haunted by itself. Still later, when he returns to the town of Minto, the bartender says he thought he was dead. "`You've been dead for more 'n two months, now,'" as if Morganson is there, but not there. This is the awful fate of the dying in Ghostland. Not only that, but the main action takes place on that day so fraught with terrible meaning for London, Christmas.

Dead as a ghost, Morganson lies to the bartender, fabricating an entire story of his life for the last two months, thus exposing himself as a false author figure, a kind of a ghost of a real author. By now we strongly suspect he wants to kill someone on the trail; life has been unfair to him, we have learned. He wants revenge against Chance, against

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[146] London, "Finis: [short story]," JL 672. See the later discussion of the story to explain why I am quoting from the manuscript, not the published version. A future edition of London's work will include the full, unedited version of the story.

Life. As London wrote in his notes to the story, "Beginning of second movement Morganson has his mind made up. Fixed resolve, though show not its nature."[147] London hides Morganson's motivation because it's imperative that we initially identify with and sympathize with this ghost-false author-murderer. Part of the message of the story is that an individual such as Morganson must learn to adjust to the environment or else die. It could be us. We all need to learn this lesson. Or, in political terms, if we are as frustrated and angry with the capitalist system as London was, we still need to be reminded that a single assassin cannot accomplish the downfall of wealthy capitalists like the Swede and John Thompson; anarchism is not the answer. We recall the money these two successful miners have and how it becomes a horrible fixation for Morganson: "a vision of life before him . . . took the form of a roll of hundred-dollar bills." Adjustment in socialist terms means uniting with others in order to effect the equal distribution of wealth. At the end, in a passage that echoes the earlier story "When God Laughs," he discovers "the lies and frauds of life." As he dies he finds relief; death is a "sweet sleep." Life had told him before that death was something to fear, but "death did not hurt." And this is the final indictment of the false author-ghost. Life lies, yes, but only to perpetuate itself. The lies are necessary for those who want to live. Only the morally corrupt wish to die and accept its realism for the final truth.

London had trouble placing this story. Both Casper Whitney of *Outing* and Perriton Maxwell of *Cosmopolitan* rejected it because it was too long; as Maxwell wrote, "I am forced to return your splendid story `Finis' for the reason that it cannot be divided into a two-part story with sustained interest and it is much too long to go in a single

[147] London, "Finis: [notes for short story]," JL 671.

number of the magazine."[148] Finally, after four more rejections, he turned to an outlet with which he already had a contract. Robert MacKay had just become managing editor of *Success Magazine* at time when the magazine had risen to the top ranks in circulation and advertising income. It had shifted its main focus from the lives of famous and powerful men and how they attained "success" to fiction and muckraking. The magazine had been founded by Orison Swett Marden, one of the most prominent New Thought advocates in the US and author of *Pushing to the Front.* He also wrote books entitled *Kill Worry and Live Longer, He Can Who Thinks He Can,* and *Be Good to Yourself.* It's hard to imagine that such a man would have accepted a story of a Klondiker who succeeds in murdering two men because he is so single-mindedly good to himself, but choices in the world of fiction manuscripts fell to his new editor, a task Marden must have felt himself unsuited for. MacKay was obviously intent on competing with first-rank fiction magazines, so he sought out and signed London in November 1906 to a contract to publish two five-thousand-word stories at fifteen cents a word or $750 each.[149] The

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[148] Perriton Maxwell, letter to London, 27 Oct. 1906, JL 15220. Two and a half weeks later, a different editor or assistant editor sent a standard rejection letter. See *Cosmopolitan*, letter to London, 14 Nov. 1906, JL 5190. This duplication could have only fueled London's already bubbling ire at Maxwell and the magazine over rate of pay and the proper way to count words in anticipation of London's contributions to the magazine during the *Snark* voyage.

[149] See Robert MacKay, letter to London, 17 Nov. 1906, JL 14348: It was a short-and-sweet letter: "I should like very much to arrange with you for some short stories for 1907, and trust that you are in a position to send something our way." At the bottom of the

contract emphasized two conditions: first, that the length be five thousand words, more or less, and, second, that "I hope you will give us some good, strong stories, something like `The Love of Life.' . . . . Do not think that our magazine is not capable of being sufficiently broad in its policy to present such a story."[150] No fear about that second condition. London of course would send what he wanted.

Imagine MacKay's surprise and/or consternation in February 1907 when London sent him the 9465-word "Finis." London's cover letter expresses worry—but not much worry—about two matters. First, he confessed that "`Finis' is not a story of success." Nonetheless, he considered it one of his "very best." Following MacKay's lead, he compared it to "Love of Life" with one significant difference: "`Love of Life' was the song of success, while this is a song of failure." No kidding. But he also told MacKay that other magazines did not take it because it *was* about failure, implying that MacKay had a chance to publish one of Jack London's finest stories because other magazines were too hesitant and pusillanimous. Clearly, he was testing MacKay's assertion that their editorial policy was broad enough to accept a story about willful murder and bloody death in the snow. To Mackay's credit, he lived up to his promise in that regard. In fact, when he received the story and cover letter, he told London, "I am not opposed to a story of failure, for in failure we often find the best elements of success. . . . We are publishing a big, strong fighting machine, broadminded and purposeful. Ours in not modeled for the

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letter, London wrote, "Offer to do short stories after first several months of 1907.—15 cents. Ask for an advance."

[150] Robert McKay, letter to London, 27 Dec. 1906, JL 14350.

Sunday school, but for the active men and women of the moment."[151] When he advertised the story, he used the connection to "Love of Life" to sell it but argued in the copy that their story was "more powerful, more vivid, more realistic."[152] Still, no one missed the irony that a story about death appeared in a magazine about success.

Second, because the story was double the length of what they had discussed, London offered it for $750, "a straight cut of 50% in the price." He knew that money was not so much the issue; Mackay earlier had exclaimed that fifteen cents was higher than he had expected but that he was "game."[153] But the story's length could be a problem, so he was willing to accept approximately eight cents a word even though he had just bragged

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[151] Robert MacKay, letter to London, 5 Mar. 1907, JL 14351. To further cement his bona fides with London, he recounted a story of sailing in the South Seas in tune with London's talk of his impending trip: "When I was down I the South Sea Islands, I did a good deal of deep-sea traveling in this manner. At one time, about 200 miles from the Gilbert Islands we lay for five days in the doldrums. The little boat was about twenty feet long and the two Kanakas wer too lazy to lift an oar, and there we stayed with nothing over us but the burning sky and nothing beneath us but water and sharks. It would have been splendid exercise to have plumped overboard and had a swim, but the hungry sharks were too plentiful" (MacKay, letter to London, 16 Mar. 1907, JL 14353). Mackay, London, and Ernest Untermann (as we shall see in the next chapter) all should have gotten together over beers and recounted their South Sea adventures.

[152] See advertisement for "Morganson's Finish," *Success Magazine* (Apr. 1907): 300.

[153] MacKay, letter to London, 3 Dec. 1906, JL 14349.

to *Cosmopolitan* that he was getting fifteen cents a word from *Success Magazine.*[154] He did not offer MacKay the opportunity to cut the story down to five thousand words, but MacKay had to fit the story to his space, which he did after he accepted the story, though telling London only that he wanted to change the title to "Morganson's Finish."[155] Many of the cuts are inelegant at best, disruptive at worst. For example, the second sentence in the original manuscript about polishing the pan with the biscuit, which I quoted above, was cut, rendering the final sentence of the second paragraph nonsensical: "The thin lips were thinner than they were made to be, and they seemed to hunger towards the polished frying-pan." A later cut that eliminates Morganson looking at his gums after he drinks a glass of whisky makes the bartender's guess that he has scurvy seem like a magician's trick. In the third sentence in the manuscript, which was deleted in the published version, London wrote, "Not that Morganson was a gourmand, but that the lead days into which he had fallen had reduced his pleasures to the simple and animal-like." Charmian, in the typescript, changed "gourmand" to "glutton," a change, incidentally, that contradicts the meaning of the sentence. No matter. What is important is that Charmian and Jack were so attentive to that sentence that they were concerned about changing one of its words to get it right. It makes no sense, then, that they would abandon that care in page proof and

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[154] See London, letter to the editorial department of *Cosmopolitan,* 12 Feb. 1907, *Letters,* 2:671.

[155] See MacKay, telegram to London, 11 Mar. 1907, JL 14352. London of course agreed to the title change, but later he would regret it: "I must say that I cannot congratulate you upon the change. I still stick to the belief that `Finis' is the better title" (London, letter to MacKay, 28 Mar. 1907, *Letters,* 2680).

simply delete the majority of that paragraph. There are many deleted sentences and whole paragraphs, and the pattern of excision indicates a cutting in order to keep down the word count for a better fit for the magazine trade and not an artistic imperative to make the story better.[156]

MacKay, it turns out, was much too sanguine about his readers' tastes and the compatibility of his own editorial policy with that of his boss, Orison Marden. When London sent him a brand-new story from Hawaii, MacKay turned it down. "Forgive me for sending back this excellent story," he wrote. "But it is, we fear, altogether too grewsome. The fact of the matter is, `Morganson's Finish' gave our readers a shock from which they do not seem to recover as readily as I had anticipated, judging from the letters that are swarming to the office. Haven't you something else less grewsome,--something in which death does not play a part?"[157] He even offered to market the story for London, but London, always reasonable, sent him a tamer story—"That Spot"—and asked his agent, Paul Reynolds to find a home for the story MacKay and his boss so feared, "To Build a Fire." Cowardly and conventional, they missed out on the opportunity to publish one of the quintessential short stories of twentieth-century America. Success, indeed.

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[156] One may reasonably wonder why London, as was his want, did not publish the original version in the book collection. Between the time he wrote this story in 1906 and its publication in book form in September 1916, too much had happened, especially the intervening *Snark* voyage during which Ninetta Eames was in charge of his writerly business. He simply had forgotten and unintentionally allowed the magazine version to stand as the copytext for Macmillan when they published *The Turtles of Tasman*.

[157] Robert Mackay, letter to London, 21 June 1907, JL 14355.

In what may have been his final act at *Cosmopolitan* Bailey Millard accepted "Just Meat," London's final story before he composed *The Iron Heel.* London completed "Just Meat" on 18 August, and nine days later London received the acceptance.[158] And then Perriton Maxwell took over as editor; Maxwell, we remember from volume one, was to solicit a national message of unity from London in 1916. No one told London about the change in editors, a lack of communication that carried into November when the exasperated author—pissed off over several related issues, including the exclusivity of his work about the *Snark;* payment for photographs taken during the voyage; and the calculation of word count and payment for "Just Meat"—asked, "First of all, I want to know who *is* the editor of *Cosmopolitan.*" Maxwell, diplomatically, cleared up all the matters for him, only to be stymied a week later when an angry London complained about the intrusive copyediting performed on "Just Meat." "I don't like the way you have taken liberties with my copy." Without foreknowledge of what would happen to "Finis," he continued, "No one man in a million, including office-boys, is to be found in the magazine offices, who is able properly to revise by elimination the work of a professional author." The letter is London at his angriest: "Just think of it. Wading into my exposition and cutting out the premises or proofs or anything else just to suit your length of an article, or the space, rather, that you see fit to give such article. Who in the dickens are you, any of you, to think that you can better my work!" He concluded with the warning that he would cease sending them material if they did not agree to leave his manuscripts alone.[159]

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[158] See Millard, letter to London, 27 Aug. 1906, JL15385.

[159] London, letter to the editor, *Cosmopolitan,* 24 Nov. 1906, *Letters,* 2:639-40.

Three months later, he wrote to Robert MacKay of *Success Magazine* that if they published *The Iron Heel* he gave his "full permission,---a free fist-----in which case, if "Success" does run THE IRON HEEL, I'll leave the blue-penciling to you, with an earnest plea not to ruin me entirely." The immediate concern was how to deal with the novel's footnotes, which MacKay hoped he could run in the text proper somehow. London agreed to that plan, recognizing that "they would certainly be awkward in the large pages of a magazine." They could be placed in parentheses or in italics, he says, and then leaves it up to MacKay—if he decided to accepted it for serialization (he didn't).[160] But the real issue is how London viewed editorial interference. On the one hand, he objected to "blue-penciling" when it entailed the willy-nilly excision of text or the nonsensical substitution of one word for another; in the case of "Just Meat," he objected to the copyeditor's substitution of "crimp" for "kibosh" in the sentence, "I put the kibosh on his time." A copyeditor had also cut portions of the foreword to *The Cruise of the* Snark.[161] But those changes were different from the kind he felt he was allowing in the potential case of *The Iron Heel.* Further, by March 1907 London instinctively felt no one would serialize *The Iron Heel* and so tried to make it as easy as possible for MacKay to publish it. He understood the needs of magazines, but he could not stomach what seemed to him irrational changes or changes made simply to fit material into limited space.

London wrote "Just Meat" to add another story to the collection *When God Laughs,* stories of chance and impersonal forces that make a mockery of human action in

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[160] London, letter to MacKay, 11 Mar. 1907, *Letters,* 2:677. Unfortunately, MacKay's name is misspelled in *Letters* as "McKay."

[161] London, letter to the editor, *Cosmopolitan,* 24 Nov. 1906, *Letters,* 2:639.

the Southland. The situation may seem a radical departure from all that London had written so far: two professional burglars rob a private residence of diamonds, and then suspecting each other of duplicity, poison each other and watch the other as both die, "grewsomely," as Robert MacKay might have said. Yet, in his notes for the story, London connects it to "The Story of Jees Uck" and uses the description in that story for his description of death by strychnine in this one, blurring, like the story "When God Laughs," the line between Northland and Southland and thus making it in yet another way a suitable piece for *When God Laughs*.[162] It's a theatrical piece, preoccupied with the moment, a dive into present conditions, a break with his concerns for the eternity of the past and of the future. As with nearly all of his theatrical short stories, it provided a relief from the intensity of an absorptive tale like "Finis."

So readily snapped up by *Cosmopolitan* because it was perfectly hewn for a magazine, it carries an important political message: the denizens south of the slot who think they can create economic equality through crime simply mimic the more powerful, more successful white-color criminals who hide behind trusts and other manifestations of the competitive system. There's a hint of the political when Jim realizes he has been poisoned and he rebels against it: "This was revolution within himself, this was anarchy." (1198) The body politic, says London, is diseased and only its death can bring rebirth. But the hint is clearer when Matt explains capitalism to Jim, "`I guess there's just as many thieves among honest men as there is among thieves,'" without realizing the contradiction he employs nor the fact that the man he had killed to get the jewels had just robbed his own partner. "`You read about such things in the papers, Jim. Pardners is

[162] See London, "Just Meat: [notes for short story]," JL 829.

always knifin' each other.'" (1191). Unlike the sane London who used his riches to build a morally upstanding, honest house and boat, these two criminals are brought to the edge of insanity by their wealth. "But in [the diamonds Jim's] swift imagination visioned the joys of life they would buy, and all the desires and appetites of his diseased mind and sickly flesh were tickled by the promise they extended. He builded wondrous, orgy-haunted castles out of their brilliant fires, and was appalled at what he builded. Then it was that he giggled. It was all too impossible to be real." In his sly way, London secretly connects this story to his recently completed essay "House Beautiful" and the foreword to the *Snark.* The diamonds are real, but these two possess a fevered, impoverished imagination, not the imagination of an author. The burglars' illusions are heartbreaking, so London's story tells us. Upon examining the diamonds for the first time, Jim exclaims, "'Wake me up! I'm dreamin'! . . . We're rich men Matt—we'll be regular swells.'"[163] Just as they stole as capitalists steal, they realize that they will kill just as plutocrats "is always knifin' each other.'" They are wolves, intellectually inferior to Wolf Larsen but equal to his rapaciousness. But they are, as they realize at the end, "just meat" in their own eyes and in the eyes of society. Only a complete reformation of American economics will truly help the poor.

From John Brisbane Walker's acceptance of "What Communities Lose by the Competitive System" to Millard and Maxwell's acceptance of "Just Meat," *Cosmopolitan* had been instrumental in providing London with a national platform for his socialism. They would do more. They had already accepted London's offer to publish material from his *Snark* trip, and the acceptance of this story seems part of a larger strategy. With the

[163] London, "Just Meat," 1190.

magazine on the (meat) hook for *Snark* articles and then, quite soon, for the serialization of *The Road*—arrangements that we will get to in the next chapter—Maxwell, Millard, and the other editorial workers at the magazine were laying the ground work for a relationship with London that would become steadier and steadier until it became exclusive in the final years of London's career. They were building a trust between author and publisher that would rival that between London and George Brett.