THE SCIENCE FICTION OF JACK LONDON: SCIENTIFIC THEORIES AND THREE FICTIONAL EXTRAPOLATIONS, THE SEA WOLF (1904), BEFORE ADAM (1906), AND THE IRON HEEL (1908)

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THE IRON HEEL (1908)

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PREFACE

This work, as is often the case, is not the dissertation I intended to write when I first began graduate school. In 1974 I visited Jack London's Beauty Ranch in Glen Ellen, California; I saw the remnants of a fief. As I immersed myself in London's literature, I began to see that much of it is science fiction: political and social extrapolations. To understand London's fiction in its largest sense, one has to go beyond the traditional interpretations of London as a realist or naturalist.

In the process of expanding my approach to London I concurrently began to redefine my ideas of science fiction, shifting my emphasis from the "hard core" sciences to the social sciences. From this perspective, the scientific and pseudoscientific temper on the American scene at the beginning of the twentieth century posed a challenge to existing social and political institutions, and to elucidate London's story of the challenge and his fictional extrapolations is the primary purpose of this work.

It is a great pleasure to acknowledge my indebtedness and my gratitude to my committee: Dr. William Wray, English, Dr. George Jewsberry, History, for their encouragement and valuable suggestions; Dr. Gordon Weaver, English, for his criticism of the text and for his assistance in helping me obtain a grant for travel to the Beauty Ranch in 1975; Dr. Theodore Agnew, History, for many enlightening discussions on modern literature and the history of American social and intellectual thought. Dr. Peter C. Rollins, English, deserves particular acknowledgement for his guidance, criticism, encouragement, persistence, and phone calls since the conception of this project at "dissertation center south." I owe special thanks to Debby, my wife, for her "magical fingers" that typed the manuscript and for her generous diligence, initiative, and indulgence to complete the dissertation and for the kinds of assistance that cannot be specified. I want to thank myself for having completed this enterprise.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Between 1876 and 1916, Jack London wrote fifty-five novels, one hundred eighty-eight short stories, three plays, innumberable scientific and political essays, and ephemera. He recorded the emergence of a new American frontier--Alaska--and the men who tried to tame it. The cry of gold in Alaska promised money, power, influence, and, most importantly, participation in a struggle against all things human and non-human; but London found no gold in Alaska. Instead, he discovered a philosophy of life which he would weave into the more pliant world of fiction and that would help make him America's first millionaire writer.

While London travelled among the various camps and towns, he began to absorb the stories and tales of men who prevailed against the forces of nature. He observed that those who survived did so as a result of their knowledge of Yukon life. To the Northlanders, life was simple. One had a goal and pursued it. Imagination was the key to success. Survival meant that there was a need to simplify one's life. As a result, London began to establish cogent guidelines for his life. His theory of life did not originally develop from an intellectual position, but "because the experience of his early life forced a recognition of naturalistic ethics and values upon him."[1] London's early works focus on the men of the north--the tragedies, the hardships, the courage, and the misery and mystery of life in the Yukon. The brutal fascinated him. Although he was criticized for his vivid portrayal of the vulgar and blatant, London wanted only to tell the story of the stern Alaskan life. Later he said that, "If my stories are fierce, then life is fierce. I think life is strong, not fierce, and I try to make my stories as strong as life is strong."[2] Rugged individualism became London's most dominant theme.

Jack London took three books with him to the Klondike: Milton's Paradise Lost, Darwin's The Origin of Species, and Haeckel's Riddle of the Universe. From Milton's Satan, London drew his rebellious and proud men. Characters like Buck, White Fang, Burning Daylight, Martin Eden, Wolf Larsen, Ernest Everhard, and Darrell Standing are injected with Satan's determination and indomitable will. Like Satan, these characters have striven for dominion over the earth and become forces capable of defying nature itself. Darwin's emphasis on both natural selection and inheritance was adopted by London. Since Darwin studied man's biological evolution, he, and London in literature, focused on the "animal" in man. Success or survival was associated with adaptability, and evolution became identified with perfection. Concurrently, Ernst Haeckel expressed the idea of biogenetic law which states that parallel stages of embryonic growth exist between an individual and the succession of fossil stages in the phylogeny of the species. Once again, emphasis was placed on change and complexity, which meant that there must be some idea or principle by which man can unify the universe. The answer was evolution. Haeckel contended that "the cell consists of matter called protoplasm, composed chiefly of carbon, with an admixture of hydrogen, nitrogen and sulphur. These component parts, properly united, produce the soul and body of the animated world, and suitably nursed become man. With this single argument the mystery of the universe is explained, the Deity annulled and a new era of infinite knowledge ushered in."[3] He employed the Northland as a backdrop for his stories because it was there that man must come to grips with himself, nature, and society. Optimism permeated London's writing.

One of the gaps in London scholarship that this study proposes to fill--the lack of a relatively sophisticated critical analysis and theoretical understanding of London's science fiction--is presently highlighted by a growing academic interest in the subject. Recently, two collections of London's science fiction short stories have appeared: The Alien Worlds of Jack London and The Science Fiction of Jack London: An Anthology. Nonetheless, these works do not answer the question: "What was science to Jack London?" Instead, their purpose is in response to a growing academic awareness of early science fiction stories. Such texts indicate that science fiction is becoming a viable area of study because scholars are demonstrating that novels such as _The Time Machine_, _The Left-Hand of Darkness_, and _A Clockwork Orange_ can withstand the same critical scrutiny as _The Scarlet Letter_, _The Red Badge of Courage_, and _Women in Love_.

Jack London's literature, as is all science fiction, is a literature of ideas. As such, London turned to science--biology, philosophy, and political science--to what they had to say about the future of man, of society, and nature. As a result, he took from each what he wanted and blended them together to create the Jack London philosophy of life. His themes developed from these eclectic and contradictory ideas to form his total scientific vision. London's science fiction is grounded in the scientific theories of Spencer, Darwin, Marx, and Nietzsche, and he extrapolates from them to examine man in the future and how science will affect man and his society.

Unlike many science fiction writers, London does not view or employ science fiction as exclusively scientific and technical ideas which will transform man into a soulless automaton or a senseless machine. Instead, his task and challenge is to define meaning for man, to instill--admittedly didactic--value in the individual, to promote the cooperative arrangement, and to provide a meaningful relationship between man and his ancestors. London tried to synthesize this application and view of science to his own life, to his Beauty Ranch, and to his dreams. As Robert Baltrop notes, London liked the scientific method or approach to any field of endeavor because it forced him to rely upon his intellect rather than his emotions.[4] Scientific ideas offered him a means by which to explore the probable future of mankind.

What is science fiction? Scholars and aficionados cannot agree on what constitutes science fiction as a genre of literature. Some enthusiasts argue that true science fiction embraces only what they call the "hard core" sciences, such as physics, chemistry, biology, and all forms of gadgetry--ray guns, inter-galactic travel, etc. They exclude from the category all works that are grounded in the so-called "soft core" social sciences even though Hugo and Nebula Awards have been presented to authors who have written about the influence of these "soft core" social sciences on man and his world.[5] Since science fiction is a literature of change and the future, the science in science fiction allows for analogical projections "in which cultural tendencies can be isolated and judged."[6] Therefore, the primary interest is not science, but analogical projections through which the writer can explore man's attitudes and developments in new worlds. In other words, science will affect human life.

Although science functions as the ostensible element in science fiction, its function is often confused. In

Robert J. Barthell's essay, "SF: A Literature of Ideas," he assumes that science fiction, because of its name and its history, must be about science.[7] The early history of science fiction was dependent on gadgetry as the device by which the author might extrapolate. Included in this area would be all space travel and ray-gun stories. (i.e., Well's *The Time Machine* and The Flash Gordon stories.) Concurrently, there are those, like Theodore Sturgeon, who define science fiction works as ones in which the "story would not exist if it were not for the scientific element."[8] This excludes much of the work in which the author demonstrates an awareness of knowledge collected through the scientific method and takes into account the effects or possible future effects on human beings caused by scientific fact or alien forces. (i.e., John Wyndham's *The Midwich Cuckoos* and Kate Wilhelm's *Where Late the Sweet Birds Sang*.)

Science fiction writers employ the current state of knowledge at the time they write and extrapolate from these known variables to what seems to be a logical development beyond that state of knowledge. In this manner, science fiction serves as an educative force. As Kingsley Amis writes, it provides the writer with "a fictional mode in which cultural tendencies can be isolated and judged."[9] The distinction made here is that since science fiction is future-oriented, sometimes about little-known parts of the past, the science fiction author employs scientific data or theory as the starting place for his story. From this starting place, the science fiction story can gradually move into the realm of potentiality. For example, Edward Bellamy's Looking Backward (1888) examines the question of what could happen if evolution and technology converted America into a utopia. The depiction of a rational world offered a contrast to the inferno beneath civilization and, by that contrast, gave impetus to reform that had already been started by Henry Georges' single tax program.

At its best, science fiction is capable of articulating a world of brilliance and imagination that create the horrors and marvels of man's scientific advancement. Douglas Menville states that in science fiction "there are not apparent limits to the imagination, except those imposed by physical laws of which we are presently cognizant. If a writer ventures beyond these boundaries . . . he is no longer in the realm of science fiction, but has invaded that of fantasy."[10] The integration of science into a novel or short story helps to measure human relations in the universe. In other words, science functions as the back-drop against which we measure the foreign events and facts presented by science fiction. Science satisfies fiction's insatiable appetite for reality: science represents truth and factual data. Even though science fiction works as "a strategy of narrative presentation," the author "predicates a fantastic state of affairs" because it has a scientific basis.[11] This is, perhaps, the distinguishing characteristic of science fiction from "mainstream" fiction:

the events of science fiction could happen if . . . , while those of "mainstream" fiction could have happened.

The ordering of the different functions of science fiction stories has introduced various reactions as to their purpose. For example, in 333: A Bibliography of the Science-Fantasy Novel, Joseph Crawford provides a definition of science fiction which also includes interest in different types of science fiction.

> We have divided science fiction into three major categories: novels dealing primarily with the physical sciences, with the mental or psychological sciences, and with the sociological sciences. The physical sciences place an emphasis on super-scientific activity. They are responsible for space, time, and dimensional travel, and all efforts beyond man's present knowledge where science is keynoted. The mental or psychological sciences treat homo sapiens, and his successors, in all his mutancies, whether they be supermen or idiots. The sociological sciences investigate future civilization, its development or retardation.[12]

David Ketterer provides a contemporary view of science fiction categorizing, which, he states, depends upon the type of "extrapolizing" the author employs.

> A writer may extrapolate the future consequences of present circumstances, in which case he will probably produce sociological science fiction within the 'utopia'/dystopia range. Secondly, and this is a frequently related category, typified by much of H.G. Wells' work, he may extrapolate the consequences following the modification of an existent condition. Thirdly, the most philosophically oriented science fiction, extrapolating on what we know in the context of our vaster ignorance, comes up with a startling donee, or rationale, that puts humanity in a radically new perspective.[13]

In both cases, science fiction is not about future science.

In fact, science fiction, although it is set in the future, is really grounded in the present since it examines what could happen "if." As Robert Scholes and Eric S. Rabkin have pointed out, "science is not a monolithic entity; it changes through time," but an understanding of what type of science an author employs can lead to a maximum understanding of his science fiction.[14]

All literature strives to defamiliarize or estrange habitual perceptions in order to make the reader see the world anew. During the late nineteenth century, science threatened the romance, as did Realism. Romance stresses the dualistic nature of man and that he is a fallen creature in this dualistic universe. This universe was divided into heaven and earth, God and Satan, eternal and temporal, and soul and body. If man attained salvation from God, he would reject the worldly and temporal because God had cursed them. Man, because he was corrupt, had to struggle with his own desires--good and evil. Accordingly, man appealed to the religious leaders because man could not trust his own impulses or reason.

In the late nineteenth century, however, the scientific method and biological discoveries began to stress that man's nature was good and that the natural man reflected the total man. Auguste Compte presented positivism as the most empirical method of discovering truth. He emphasized the need for total objectivity and accuracy in gathering factual data if one were to comment on man. Then, one could formulate theories from those facts that would examine physical causes. Sociology, according to Compte, was the ultimate science since it sought to unify all human thought and develop the perfect organization or society. Compte offered a new progressive religion which would explain natural laws; therefore, there was no need for either religion or superstition.

Darwin's *Origin of the Species* (1859) synthesized the theories of Montesquiere (*Esprit des Lois*, 1748), which focused on the influence of environment on life, Malthus (*Essay on the Principle of Population*, 1798), which analyzed the over-fecundity of nature, and Wallace who was also developing a theory on man's origins. Darwin used the scientific method to illustrate how natural selection produced new species. His findings challenged the concepts of the immutability of the species and design in the universe while emphasizing the animal nature of man. To many religious leaders and laymen, Darwin's work seemed to undermine religion and man. The scientific community tended to accept Darwin's theory since it offered truth.

Herbert Spencer borrowed Darwin's concept of evolution and extended it to embrace the entire universe. For Spencer, evolution was the cosmic unifying principle because man's development of reflexes and his will parallel the development of the nebular mass forming the Earth and development from lower single cell species to the more complex forms of life. When he applied evolution to society, Spencer found that perfection and happiness lie ahead for mankind because evolution leads to change which leads to adaptation which leads to an improving species. Man will ultimately achieve perfection, and this state can maintain itself indefinitely.

Karl Marx, on the other hand, interpreted "survival of the fittest" and "dissolution" to refer to the class struggle. To him, the middle-class was interfering with the proletariat's economic ability to achieve property and to produce profitably. As a result, the workers have the right to abolish capitalism, mass production, and private ownership in order to assure the survival of the worker. Marx's faith in the proletariat marks a faith in the individual to determine his own future.

Although Nietzsche did not adhere to the scientific method, his goal--human perfection--was the same as Spencer's and Marx's. Nietzsche found that life, as it was, was meaningless and that man's morality is absurd. One needed to rise above and beyond the average man in order to proclaim one's own power and ability. The result is the blond Superman who does not sublimate his animal instincts. Instead, his desire for power becomes the single motivating principle of life. This will to power involves the rejection of human morality which tends to devaluate life and man's ability to achieve total peace with his environment. Nietzsche rejected the dualistic nature of man because it focused on the evil in man. The superman recognizes that life involves a continual overcoming of self and life and that this experience leads to a celebration of oneself which does not necessitate justification since joy is justification itself. The works of these men did not liquidate the dualistic concept of man, but they did affirm faith in man's innate ability to achieve progress and perfection. Now, one could document man's physical, sociological, and psychological growth with facts.

London's interpretation of the scientific theories of his time influenced his literary imagination to make use of those theories and speculation as a basis for fiction. In his reading, London discovered Darwin, Spencer, Marx, and Nietzsche. These men of science proclaimed that society was evolving from its present state of dissolution to a higher and more complex one. London, in turn, believed that man, by means of evolution, would transcend the capitalistic state, and create a coherent adapted society.

London diligently sought a philosophy of life which would give order to his world. As a result, he turned to "what contemporary science had to say about man, society, and nature."[15] Science became the means by which London could ground his literature in the possible, as well as probable. Scientific theories--evolution, positivism, Marxism, and the _Übermensch_--allowed him to project his vision of society into the future. Scientific theories helped London make plausible sense out of a chaotic nature and society.

From Darwin and Spencer, London incorporated two basic biological points which we still accept today. First, to be fit meant that an animal must adapt to its environment. For example, the zebra's coloration has helped this animal blend in with the changing environment and avoid its natural predators. Secondly, people inherit physical characteristics such as a greater brain (learning) capacity and the opposable thumb that have enabled man to actually control, to some extent, as well as adapt to his environment. Richard Hofstadter notes that Americans "opened their minds to Spencer " because "his philosophy was scientific in derivation" and it was a "reassuring theory of progress based upon biology and physics."[16] Although many contemporary readers regard Herbert Spencer's to be pseudoscientific in nature, science is a changing entity and, as such, necessitates that the modern reader be aware of the history of science and not just the modern theories.

In this dissertation I define *übermensch* to be a superman. Although the term *superman* is often interpreted to mean a dictatorship or only one step away from fascism, I believe that London's prescient call is for a type of foreman: one who could direct society into the future. The collective unit, which operates as a democratic society, has the right and the power to overthrow its leader if and when he seeks selfish ends instead of self-abnegation which will benefit mankind.

Jack London's writings have generally been approached as either naturalistic, romantic, or political statements in the rich soil of American literary radicalism. My particular focus is Jack London's science fiction. The concern here is with the scientific and social temper of London and his generation as they developed from historical experience. Both science fiction and Jack London resist precise definition, but there are methods of approaching an historical understanding of their development in society.

I have four aims: to describe Jack London's vision of nature as expressed in his literature and the creation of Beauty Ranch; to explain his vision of society which arose from his experiences and from his social and political readings; to discuss three novels in which his "scientific ideas" find fictional exemplification; to define London's scientific vision of society as a blending of Nietzsche's _übermensch_ and socialism, and to determine how much was inspired by "breaking events" in the intellectual world. The critical strategy I have adopted hopefully involves illuminating consideration of London's scientific constellation of interconnected ideas which are extolled in his fiction.

My approach to London's over-all scientific vision depends upon a detailed examination of the term _science_. There is a need to examine the term as London did and to describe its validity and fruition to his fiction. Finally, it is hoped that an analysis of London's science fiction will not only contribute to an understanding of his other writing, but also contribute to the development of scientific fiction theory.

ENDNOTES

[1] Paul Deane, "Jack London: Mirror of His Time," *Lock Haven Review*, 11 (1969), p. 46.

[2] Jack London as quoted by Irving Stone, *Jack London, Sailor on Horseback: A Biographical Novel* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1938), p. 319.

[3] Ernst Haeckel as quoted by W. S. Lilley, *Fortnightly Review*, 1886, Vol. 39, p. 35.

[4] Robert Baltrop, *Jack London: the Man, the Writer, the Rebel* (London: Pluto Press, 1976), p. 52.

[5] The science fiction community presents two separate awards to writers whose works have been judged the year's finest in the short story and the novel. The Science Fiction Writers of America sponsors the Nebula Award. The Hugo, named for Hugo Gernsback, is awarded to the best short story.

[6] Kingsley Amis, *New Maps of Hell* (NY: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1960), p. 14.

[7] Robert J. Barthell, "SF: A Literature of Ideas," *Extrapolation* 13 (1971), pp. 56-63.

[8] Theodore Sturgeon, *The Science Fiction Novel*, ed. Basil Davenport (Chicago: Advent, 1967), p. 15.

[9] Amis, p. 63.

[10] Douglas Menville, *A Historical and Critical Survey of Science Fiction Film* (NY: Arno Press, 1975), p. 1.

[11] Robert M. Philmus, *Into the Unknown: The Evolution of Science Fiction From Francis Godwin to H. G. Wells* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1970), p. 2.

[12] Joseph H. Crawford, Jr., ed. *333: A Bibliography of the Science-Fantasy Novel* (1953), p. 3.

[13] David Ketterer, *New Worlds For Old* (NY: Doubleday, 1976), p. 16-17.

[14] Robert Scholes and Eric S. Rabkin, Science Fiction: History, Science, Vision (NY: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 113.

[15] Richard Gid Powers, ed. "Introduction" to The Science Fiction of Jack London (Boston: Gregg Press, 1975), p. x.

[16] Richard Hofstadter, Social Darwinism in American Thought (1944; rpt. Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), p. 31.

CHAPTER II

JACK LONDON'S VISION OF NATURE

During the 1880's, America saw the disappearance of the frontier. Families, caught between the grinding poverty of the city and the ruthless confines of financial tycoons, wasted away without a chance. Robert H. Wiebe said later that "as more people clustered into smaller spaces, it became harder to isolate the individual. As more of a previously distant world intruded upon community life, it grew more difficult to untangle what an individual did and what was done to him, even to distinguish the community itself from the society around it."[1] To rural Americans, "the city seemed not merely a new social form or way of life but a strange threat to civilization itself."[2] Many Americans shared the desire of farm people to "leave the country where homes are cheap, the air pure, all men equal, and extreme poverty unknown, and crowd into cities" where they seemed to find "in the noises, the crowds, the excitements, even in the sleepless anxieties of the daily struggle for life, a charm they are powerless to resist."[3] Jack London was among them.

Like other members of the working class, the Londons, in order to obtain jobs and to live closer to their work, lived in the city which was already congested with the poor who had abandoned the quiet and solitude of the rural community for employment in the rapidly increasing tempo of city life. As the adopted son of a migrant worker, London was forced to live among the slum settlements which speckled the San Francisco Bay area. This abrupt, sometimes horrifying transition, led many people to view the city as a symbol of vice or, as Henry James said, a "heaped industrial battlefield."[4] For many, survival meant hard work for paltry wages and a future of unending toil while serving as slaves to machines that destroyed their vitality and left them apathetic. The essence of life was struggle. It was part of the old law of development.

Although cities helped initiate the exchange of ideas and opinions, goals and grievances, the new urban life style often became a source of perplexity and vexation for the homeless and poverty-stricken workers of the ubiquitous alien metropolitan centers. According to Roderick Nash, "the vast size and highly organized structure of the economy and government posed seeming obstacles to the effectiveness of the individual. Instead of the millennium, American civilization appeared to have brought confusion, corruption, and debilitating overabundance."[5] As early as the 1850's, Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson foresaw what was coming and put out a prescient complaint: "cities force growth and make men talkative and entertaining, but they make them artificial."[6] In Jack London's The Valley of the Moon, the protagonists, Billy Roberts, an Oakland teamster, and Saxon, his wife, both come from sturdy American Anglo-Saxon stock. Billy puts the worker's dilemma tersely: "Folks wasn't made to live in cities," and later, Saxon, like London, reasons: "All the natural world was right, and sensible, and beneficient. It was the man-world that was wrong, and mad, and horrible."[7] For Saxon, the city is unnatural since it separates her from the land.

Although cities offered cultural and social stimulation--theaters, museums, and a great variety of social acquaintances--the poor were confronted with the crowding, crime, poverty, impersonality, and corruption of urban life. Robert A. Wood's The City Wilderness (1898) and Upton Sinclair's The Jungle (1906) proclaimed that perhaps "too much civilization, not too little, seemed at the root of the nation's difficulties."[8] As a result, many of the poor, like Saxon, became pessimistic.

> There was no justification for right conduct in the universe, no square deal for her who had earned reward, for the millions who worked like animals, died like animals, and were for a long time forever dead. Like the hosts of more learned thinkers before her, she concluded that the universe was unmoral and without concern for men.
>
> As long as God was, there was always chance for a miracle, for some supernatural intervention, some rewarding with ineffable bliss. With God missing, the world was a trap, She was willing to go into the black grave and remain in its blackness forever, to go into the salt vats and let the young men cut her dead flesh to sausage-meat, if--if only she could get her small meed of happiness first.[9]

Saxon's condemnation of the loss of religious values and the "economic trap" is a composite of London's thought concerning the wretched existence of the poor in the Bay area.

Even the churches' response to slums and poverty was often halting and indecisive. Although religious orders like the Social Gospel movement, which was composed of socially conscious ministers from various denominations, advocated some moderate reforms in wages, housing, and working conditions, the movement was confined to a minority of intellectuals. The fact that many of the newly rich were Baptist and Methodist laymen (John D. Rockefeller was a Baptist elder, Daniel Drew a zealous Methodist) helps explain why their churches did not argue with the status quo. Since the churches and cities did not meet the needs of the people, London believed that the people of the slums were victims of the economic system, not loafers. London developed both a kinship for the exploited working class and a contempt for those who exploited them. His desire to escape from the "work-beast" environment of the capitalist world flourished with a strong obsession to rebel against industrial bondage. Later, a young fisherman's advice to Saxon that "Oakland's a place to start from" becomes her motivation for leaving her miserable existence.[10] London's science fiction offers hope for the working class because they, according to evolution and Marxism, can adapt to a changing environment more easily than the plutocracy.

For London there seemed to be a need to test and prove himself against nature. As a young man he read the Horatio Alger-style life of Garfield, the adventure and fortune stories of Paul du Chaillu, the various expeditions of

Washington Irving on the frontier.[11] He wanted to live life and test his strength against nature. His ancestors had crossed the Appalachians, settled the Midwest, conquered the Rockies, and tamed the West, but, now, he needed a frontier. The city was destroying the individual, as well as the fundamental premises of capitalism: the sacredness of property, the value of opportunity, and the virtue of work. Roderick Nash notes that Americans had always been enthusiastic about the uncivilized frontier because there was a "tendency to associate wilderness with America's frontier past that was believed responsible for many unique and desirable national characteristics. Wilderness also acquired importance as a source of virility, toughness, and savagery--qualities that defined fitness in Darwinian terms."[12] The Western frontier symbolized "an exhilarating region of adventure and comradeship in the open air,"[13] not a particular geographical region.

The most influential writing about the West has been "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" delivered by Frederick Jackson Turner before the American Historical Association in Chicago in 1893. Turner's thesis confirmed the 1890 census: "the frontier has gone, and with its going has closed the first period of American history."[14] However, the West was not something tangible; it was a water-shed of America's "adventure spirit." This meant that man, when he returned to the wilderness, returned to the primitive conditions which had "fostered individualism, independence, and confidence . . . ," and that "the very fact of the wilderness appealed to men as a blank page on which to write a new chapter in the story of man's struggle for a higher society."[15] The symbol for the struggle was war. A German general gave the classical expression to this glorification of struggle:

> War is not merely a necessary element in the life of nations but an indispensable factor of culture, in which a truly civilized nation finds the highest expression of strength and vitality. . . . War gives a biologically just decision, since its decisions rest on the very nature of things. . . . It is not only a biological law, but a moral obligation, and, as such, an indispensable factor in civilization.[16]

When a civilization has defeated another country, the conquerors have the right to establish their own political institutions in an area which they have won by conquest. For many Americans, the West was the essence of life because it involved a struggle between man and his environment, and between man and man, which would lead to that "higher society."

When alone in the wilderness, man must rely upon his "warlike skills, cunning and sheer ferocity" in order to survive.[17] In 1910, William James published his famous essay, "The Moral Equivalent of War," in which he stated that there was a need to maintain "those admirable martial qualities" if only by a "deliberate simulation" of war. This could be accomplished "by a conscription of the whole youthful population to form for a certain number of years a part of the army enlisted against Nature" so that "the military ideals of hardihood and discipline could be wrought into the growing fibre of the people."[18] Many of the intellectuals of the time were beginning to accept the struggles in life as the struggle for life, and the loser's death was the natural goal.

In his Autobiography, Theodore Roosevelt synthesizes the fulfillment of struggle on the frontier: "We knew toil and hardship and hunger and thirst; and we saw men die violent deaths as they worked among the horses and cattle, or fought in evil feuds with one another; but we felt the beat of hardy life in our veins, and ours was the glory of work and the joy of living."[19] Roosevelt turned his back on the ideas and institutions of the "Eastern World," and praised the grim energy and self-dominance of a society freed of organized machinery.

Roosevelt praised the "hardy life" because it would precipitate savage virtues: "hunting big game in the wilderness is . . . a sport for a vigorous and masterful people," and in order for the hunter to succeed in the wilderness, the hunter "must be of sound body and firm of mind, and possess energy, resolution, manliness, self-reliance, and a capacity for self-help" which are characteristics "without which no race can do its life work well."[20] Concurrently, when Sir Robert S. S. Baden-Powell founded the Boy Scouts, he hoped to retain the influence of wilderness in modern civilization because he feared that the industrialized world had resulted in the "degeneracy" of a society which was "strained and broken by the grind of the over-busy world."[21] Jack London also craved adventure in this "over-busy" world, so he initially turned to hoboing and pirating in an attempt to pit himself against the elements and to prove his superior strength and will. Later, London's science fiction would celebrate the individual who rose to eminence by battle.

At the age of sixteen London was captain of his own ship, the Razzle Dazzle, which created in him an appetite for independence and self-reliance. Joan London writes that this experience impressed her father because he was beginning to "shape the pattern of his life as he willed, was no longer a machine tender, catching brief glimpses of life, but a participant."[22] Escape and adventure inspired London to join the oyster pirates on the Oakland waterfront.

> And now, of all this that is squalid, and ridiculous, and bestial, try to think what it meant to me, a youth not yet sixteen burning with the spirit of adventure, fancy-filled with tales of buccaneers and sea-rovers, sacks of cities and conflicts of armed men. . . . It was life raw and naked, wild and free--the only life of that sort which my birth in time and space permitted me to attain. And more than that. It carried promise. It was the beginning. From the sandpit the way led out through the Golden Gate to the vastness of adventure of all the world, where battles would be fought, not for old shirts and over stolen salmon boats, but for high purposes and romantic ends.[23]

However, life as an oyster pirate soon disgusted London because it never satisfied his ambition to earn a living or to create a future.

I was certain I had reached the top. Surely, in

> that direction, one could go no farther. It was time for me to move on. For always, drunk or sober, at the back of my consciousness something whispered that this carousing and bay-adventuring was not all of life. This whisper was my good fortune. I happened to be so made that I could hear it calling, always calling, out and away over the world. It was not canniness on my part. It was curiosity, desire to know, an unrest and a seeking for things wonderful that I seemed somehow to have glimpsed or guessed. What was this life for, I demanded, If this were all? No; there was something more, away and beyond.[24]

Experiences with the sailors and a young hobo gang in West Oakland showed London the "futility of life in such a herd," and restlessness became a basic ingredient of his childhood and his later life.[25]

According to Franklin Walker, "Jack London proclaimed himself a son of the frontier," and that "restlessness, independence, resourcefulness, exaggeration, crudity" were all traits strong in London and strong in his writing.[26] Like Kipling, London became a disciple of the heroic and brave men and women battling against one another and a savage environment.

Concurrently, London adopted Herbert Spencer's survival of the fittest theory, and he used these two doctrines as his principle themes. Like Spencer, London believed that men are made by their environment, while human nature and innate ability become unimportant residual categories. By "survival of the fittest," a biological term, Spencer meant that as a species increases inordinately, there will be a struggle to survive. This, according to Spencer, benefits the human race. Richard Hofstadter writes that "by placing a premium upon skill, intelligence, self-control, and the power to adapt through technological innovation," Spencer's theory of social selection "had stimulated human advancement and selected the best of each generation for survival."[27] Only those which are more intelligent than the average, or which become so under pressure, will succeed. London's science fiction extrapolated from Spencer's doctrine of the "survival of the fittest."

Spencer proposed a theory which drew from Malthus' Principle of Population (1798) to explain why some particular species emerged in terms of particular causal antecedents. For example, if a population tends to out-strip its food-supply, there is a struggle for survival, and those who fail to adapt must therefore die, and "it unavoidably follows that those left behind to continue the race must be those in whom the power of self-preservation is the greatest--must be the select of their generation."[28] In humans, Spencer's doctrine of adaptation makes human perfection "not only possible but inevitable" because "the ultimate development of the ideal man is logically uncertain--as certain as any conclusion in which we place the most implicit faith; for instance that all men will die. . . . Progress, therefore, is not an accident, but a necessity. Instead of civilization being artificial, it is a part of nature; all of a piece with the development of the embryo or the unfolding of a flower."[29]

Charles Darwin believed that his theory indicated some principal, universal mechanism by which the transformation of species can take place, and he stated that history had documented the belief that some races were more fit than others:

> I could show fight on natural selection having done and doing more for the progress of civilization than you seem inclined to admit. Remember what risk the nations of Europe ran, not so many centuries ago of being overwhelmed by the Turks, and how ridiculous such an idea now is! The more civilized so-called Caucasian races have beaten the Turkish hollow in the struggle for existence. Looking to the world at no very distant date, what an endless number of the lower races will have been eliminated by the higher civilized races throughout the world.[30]

Natural selection was considered to be the chief factor in progress, and natural selection operated through the survival of the fittest; therefore, it implied the non-survival of the unfit. Spencer proposed that if evolution were to improve the species, the unfit must perish, and, if acceleration of evolution was good, it became an act of virtue to help the unfit to perish. The unfit were also, by definition, the inferior, and the liquidation of inferior individuals and groups was necessary.

In the process of attaining "human perfection," all species would have endured a "weeding out process of inferior specimens" which "would produce a cumulatively better race of men."[31] If one were unfit, he should be eliminated: "For as those prematurely carried-off must, in the average of cases be those in whom the power of self-preservation is the least, it unavoidably follows that those left behind to continue the race, must be those in whom the power of self-preservation is the greatest--must be the select of their generation."[32] Spencer organized "all knowledge for him /London/, reducing everything to unity, elaborating ultimate realities. . . . There was no caprice, no chance. All was law."[33] London was impressed by Spencer's scientific validation of a law of necessary development, so that all life must conform to this law of nature. In London's "The Law of Life," Koskoosh, an old Indian chief, states that biological law necessitates the elimination of the weak and the old. Death, which awaits all, is defeat.

> All men must die. He did not complain. It was the way of life, and it was just. He had been born close to the earth, close to the earth he had lived, and the law thereof was not new to him. It was the law of all flesh. Nature was not kindly to the flesh. She had no concern for that concrete thing called the individual. Her interest lay in the species, the race. But one task did Nature set in the individual. Did he not perform it, he died. Did he perform it, it was all the same, he died. Nature did not care; there were plenty who were obedient, which lived and always lived. He also was an episode and would pass away. Nature did not care. To life she set one task, gave one law. To perpetuate was the task of life, its law was death.[34]

Although London fixed on the cruelty of Koskoosh's death as representative gerontological practice, in some Indian/ Eskimo cultures, this was the fashion for "caring" for the aged.

By 1897 London's search for money, power, and influence had led him down many roads, but the lure of gold in Alaska changed his life radically. A new frontier had opened. The rich gold discoveries in the Klondike in 1896 fired the imagination of the entire world and attracted herds of "stampeders" in search of quick riches. Mining camps sprang up in the territory, notably at Dawson. Some estimates indicate that no more than 4,000 miners were on the Klondike at any one time, although popular estimates of the numbers in the camps have run as high as 40,000. Over $50,000,000 in gold was mined in the Klondike. The bitter cold and "claim jumpers" were the two greatest factors in driving off many of the original prospectors. The frontier life was rugged, but it offered an unchecked development of the individual. London listened to the stories of struggle and survival, and he revelled in the dreams of adventure and hardship. The lure of gold for this rugged individualist was strong. But London found no gold in the Klondike. While on the ship SS Umatilla, London and Shepard, his brother-in-law, formed a partnership with three other men. As they travelled the snowy trails and passes of Alaska, London discovered a new pleasure in frontier challenges in the grinding experiences of danger and exposure to the elements. He increased his load daily and recalled that the Indians referred to the conquering white man as "Wolf." London liked to think of himself as a wolf, free and proud to run through the wilderness. London's life and fiction would later embody the contradictory elements of the wolf as a loner and as a member of the pack.

London often said that "It was in the Klondike that I found myself. There nobody talks. Everybody thinks. You get your perspective. I got mine."[35] While travelling among the various camps and towns, London absorbed the tales of men and animals that were forced to rely upon their primeval instincts in order to survive. London created Buck, who was first named Jack, the greatest hero of dog stories, from the town of Dawson. Buck's saving agent was his knowledge and spirit, but, more importantly, his adaptability to the law of the "club and fang." For London, this became the saving feature for life in the wilderness and life in civilization: "adapt yourself to the club so that in learning to conform you may be beaten but not broken; learn every trick and device in using your own fangs before your fellows spring upon you and pull you down; and do all this so that in the end you may engineer your escape from both club and fang and be your own master and the master of others."[36] Note how this ethic of "club and fang" seems to advocate active participation in the world; yet, the statement is at the same time pervaded by a sense of repulsion against it.

Of all his experiences in the Klondike, London was most deeply impressed by the land itself. The land was man's enemy, and the struggle for survival was manifested in its simplest terms. According to Richard O'Connor, the struggle of existence "fascinated him" because "here was life stripped down to its barest essentials, the search for daily food and shelter."[37] To endure and survive on the wastelands, under the silent, impersonal force of nature, was a sublime drama. In the Klondike the successful man was tested and hardened: the weak, the racially inferior, the pampered products of a closed society were quickly eliminated by the rigors of Alaskan life. Later, London recalled that "in the wilds men bulked larger as men than when penned in cities, were freer, nobler, more admirable."[38] This admiration for men as men outside the artificial protections and distinctions of society would be an enduring sentiment for London, a sentiment which would outlast any social instincts and ideals.

Charlie Chaplin's The Gold Rush (1925) is an indictment of man's pursuit for gold and how this quest for materialism corrupts human relationships. Charlie, who is not prepared for the hard, cruel life on the white, frozen land, survives rejection by a woman and hunger. Georgia, Charlie's sweetheart, has even become hardened from her cash only dealings with customers at the dance hall. Although Charlie's eating the shoe as if he were at a feast and Big Jim's, Charlie's friend, attempt to eat Charlie because he thinks Charlie is a chicken are comic, The Gold Rush satirizes men who endure hardship to return home and to the easy life. The men are changed. Casual murder, intentional starvation, and distrust result when man substitutes gold for love and friendship.

Jack London, however, catered to frontier fantasies. His stories of rugged individuals battling the silent force of nature appealed to those who sensed that the frontier was closing. The editors for Houghton Mifflin were particularly impressed with London's ability to describe concisely and precisely "a vivid picture of the terrors of cold, darkness and starvation, the pleasures of human companionship in adverse circumstances, and the sterling qualities which the rough battle with nature brings out. The reader is convinced that the author has lived the life himself."[39] Symbolically, the Klondike was a proving ground where men became men. In those stern regions where men have been trained for the rivalry of life in the strenuous conflict with nature, they acquired energy, courage, and integrity. London's preoccupation with primordialism focused on the primitive brute which is close to the surface in every human being, and it did not matter if that individual was in the city, the Yukon, or the boxing ring. In his newspaper account of the "Jeffries-Johnson Fight," London writes that boxing kindles the animal impulse in man: "They want to see fights because of the old red blood of Adam in them that will not down. It is a bit of profoundly significant human phenomena. No sociologist nor ethicist who leaves this fact out can cast a true horoscope of humanity."[40] And later, fighting is a throwback to the animal state for which man atavistically yearns because it

> gives play to our ethical natures. It is no superficial thing, a fad of a moment or a generation. No genius or philosopher devised it and persuaded them to adopt it as their radical sport of sports. It is as deep as our consciousness, and is woven into the fibres of our being. It grew as our language grew. It is an instructive passion of race. And as men to-day thrill to short Saxon words, just so do they thrill to the thud of blows of a prize fight,

> to the onslaught and the repulse and to exhibition of gameness and courage. This is the ape and tiger in us, granted. We can't get away from it. It is the fact, the irrefragable fact. We like fighting--it's our nature. We are realities in a real world, and we must accept the reality of our nature and all its thrillableness if we are to live in accord with the real world, and those who try to get away from these realities, who by ukase will deny their existence, succeed only in living in a world of illusion and misunderstanding.[41]

Once man had tasted fierceness, he would revel in his atavistic desires. Atavism meant that once man was forced to live a primitive existence, he would shed the clothes of civilization and learn to adapt to all conditions.

The Yukon was the ideal location to study man's return to the wilderness ways of his ancestors. Only the strong could survive, and to survive meant to rely upon one's own mental and physical strength. Nature, a cold, cosmic force, becomes man's primary enemy. Man must adapt or be subdued. In "The White Silence," London unites man's struggle between his environment and his mental-emotional life.

> The afternoon wore on, and with the awe, born of the White Silence, the voiceless travelers bent to their work. Nature has many tricks wherewith she convinces man of his finity--the ceaseless flow of the tides, the fury of the storm, the shock of the earthquake, the long roll of heaven's artillery--but the most tremendous, the most stupefying of all, is the passive phase of the White Silence. All movement ceases, the sky clears, the heavens are as brass; the slightest whisper seems sacrilege, and man becomes timid, affrighted at the sound of his own voice. Sole speck of life journeying across the ghostly wastes of a dead world, he trembles at his audacity, realizes that his is a maggot's life, nothing more. Strange thoughts arise unsummoned, and the mystery of all things strives for utterance.

> And the fear of death, of God, of the universe, comes over him--the hope of the Resurrection and the Life, the yearning for immortality, the vain striving of the imprisoned essence--it is then, if ever, man walks alone with God.[42]

In White Fang, Nature hopes to destroy man. For those men who have attempted to tackle a force greater than them, Nature waits to block their efforts because "it is not the way of the Wild to like movement. Life is an offense to it, for life is movement; and the Wild aims always to destroy movement. Most ferociously and terribly of all does the Wild harry and crush into submission, man--man, who is the most restless of life, ever in revolt against the dictum that all movement must in the end come to the cessation of movement."[43]

London's heroes, whether wolves or dogs or sailors or pugilists, have all approximately the same instincts and the same careers. They rise to eminence by battle, hold their place of glory for a while by the same methods, and, sometimes, are defeated by stronger enemies. Burning Daylight tells the story of a Yukon miner, Elam Harnish, or "Daylight," as he is known to his comrades. He is a Daniel Boone figure who epitomizes London's ideal man. The novel details his exploits in the indifferent cruelty of the wilderness, which has not spoiled his good nature, and his return to civilization where the business world tries to destroy his human instincts. He is physically strong and emotionally healthy, and he maintains an affable attitude toward all. "In the Yukon men gambled their lives for gold, and those that won gold from the ground gambled for it with one another. Nor was Elam Harnish (Burning Daylight) an exception. He was a man's man primarily, and the instinct in him to play the game of life was strong. Environment had determined what form the game should take."[44] This relationship between men and men and between men and environment is of central importance to London. Man must adapt to nature or he will be defeated by it. In "To Build A Fire" nature plays tricks on the unprepared, the unimaginative.

> But all this--the mysterious, far-reaching hairline trail, the absence of sun from the sky, the tremendous cold, and the strangeness and weirdness of it all--made no impression on the man. It was not because he was long used to it. He was a newcomer in the land, a chechaquo, and this was his first winter. The trouble with him was that he was without imagination. He was quick and alert in the things of life, but only in the things, and not in the significance. Fifty degrees below zero meant eighty-odd degrees of frost. Such fact impressed him as being cold and uncomfortable, and that was all. It did not lead him to meditate upon his frailty in general, able only to live within certain narrow limits of heat and cold; and from there on it did not lead him to the conjectural field of immortality and man's place in the universe. Fifty degrees below zero stood for a bite of frost that hurt and that must be guarded against by the use of mittens, ear flaps, warm moccasins, and thick socks. Fifty degrees below zero was to him just precisely fifty degrees below zero. That there should be anything more to it than that was a thought that never entered his head.[45]

The fit are merely those who survive under a particular set of conditions; the unfit are those who do not. Fitness consists of an adaptation to existing conditions, and when the conditions change, a different combination of abilities constitutes fitness.

For London, the struggle for survival permeates all life in the Klondike. His stories are replete with all forms of existence having to rely upon instinct in order to survive. As Burning Daylight and Kama, his Indian companion, carry the mail across the Yukon, London focuses on the similarity between man and beast.

> As for the dogs, they ate but once a day, and then rarely did they receive more than a pound each of dried fish. They were ravenously hungry and at the same time splendidly in condition. Like the wolves, their forbears, their nutritive processes were rigidly economical and perfect. There was no waste. The last least particle of what they consumed was transformed into energy. And Kama and Daylight were like them. Descended themselves from generations that had endured, they, too, endured. Theirs was the simple, elemental economy. A little food equipped them with prodigious energy. Nothing was lost.[46]

At times, however, when the environment has been particularly hostile to those on the trail, London reduces the struggle for survival between man and animal in its simplest terms.

> The dogs had broken the iron rule of their masters and were rushing the grub. He /Malemute Kid/ joined the issue with his rifle reversed, and the hoary game of natural selection was played out with all the ruthlessness of its primeval environment. Rifle and ax went up and down, hit or missed with monotonous regularity; lithe bodies flashed, with wild eyes and dripping fangs; and man and beast fought for supremacy to the bitterest conclusion. Then the beaten brutes crept to the edge of the firelight, licking their wounds, voicing their misery to the stars.[47]

Only the fittest of life survives the attacks of either nature or man.

In "To Build A Fire" London also employs the struggle for survival as a conflict between man and animal; however, the dog is more aware than the man of the need to seek warmth from nature. This knowledge is intuitive. It results from race memory, which surges up when the "natural" laws--laws of instinct--are remembered.

> This man did not know cold. Possibly all the generations of his ancestry had been ignorant of cold, of real cold, of cold one hundred and seven degrees below freezing point. But the dog knew; all its ancestry knew, and it inherited the knowledge. And it knew that it was not good to walk abroad in such fearful cold. It was the time to lie snug in a hole in the snow and wait for a curtain of cloud to be drawn across the face of outer space when this cold came. On the other hand, there was no keen intimacy between the dog and the man. So the dog made no effort to communicate its apprehension to the man. It was not concerned in the welfare of the man; it was for its own sake that it yearned back toward the fire.[48]

For London these laws of instinct operate in civilization as well as in the Yukon.

When London returned from the Klondike, and was beginning to gain recognition as a writer, he wrote of the new breed who could endure all forms of hardship. Like his hero, Burning Daylight, "nothing abashed him, nor was he appalled by the display and culture and power around him. It was another kind of wilderness, that was all; and it was for him to learn the ways of it, the signs and trails and water-holes where good hunting lay, and the bad stretches of field and flood to be avoided."[49] However, Burning Daylight and Jack London both needed to escape the socialist and capitalist exploiters of the city. London discovered his old individualism in a new life in the soil.

In 1905 Jack and Charmian London established their home in Sonoma Valley--The Valley of the Moon. The valley provided the inspiration for London to continue his writing, but it also marked the beginning of a new era in the life of America's most successful author. London was escaping from the degradation of the city, but this time to a placid ranch life rather than the inexorably constricting Klondike. Outside the rustic town of Glen Ellen, California, London turned from the simplicity of the wilds to a cultivated, civilized, orderly nature: the Beauty Ranch. The ranch reveals a nostalgia for the frontier days and a rejuvenated awareness of rural life in an era of industrialization and urbanization. London began to realize, like his heroine Saxon in The Valley of the Moon, "how a mere structure of wood and stone may express the spirit of him who conceives and makes it."[50] The Beauty Ranch is an expression of London's renewed ideas about nature.

In 1910 London began construction of "Wolf House" which was to exemplify his spirit: rusticity and individualism. Wolf House was built on a floating concrete slab large enough to support a forty-story building. This would allow the building to roll with the earthquakes that destroyed many other homes around the Bay area. London used the most natural and largest building materials that his valley had to offer for the construction of his home. Azure slate and red volcanic rocks strengthened by redwoods dressed in their natural state were used as the basic materials for the house. The boulders were brought by draught-horses to the building site which was centrally located on a hilltop among the redwoods, madrones, Douglas firs, toyon, and manzinitas. This would provide an uphill approach to the house, as well as the best view of the ranch where London could survey his holdings and glory in its natural beauty. Many of the redwoods had survived for a thousand years, and London attempted to design a home that would last for an additional thousand. Like his heroine Saxon, London wished to share in the monumental strength and vitality of Sonoma's redwoods.

London's insatiable demands for beauty, social acceptance, and power stemmed from his early childhood years when he had few friends and little control over his own destiny. London would strive to create a balance between the forces of nature and men. The Beauty Ranch was to provide London with all the beauty money could buy. In an interview with a reporter, London said,

> I dream of beautiful horses and fine soil. I dream of the beautiful things I own. . . . And I write for no other purpose than to add to the beauty that now belongs to me. I write a book for no other reason than to add three or four hundred acres to my manifest estate. I write a story with no other purpose than to buy a stallion. To me, my cattle are far more interesting than my profession. I want to be able to go all up and down those beautiful green ridges and always be upon my own land. In order to get to the uplands I had to buy the lowlands.[51]

In John Barleycorn, London wrote of the pleasure he received while riding a prize stallion across his purple valley:

> I ride out over my beautiful ranch. Between my legs is a beautiful horse. The air is wine. The grapes on a score of rolling hills are red with autumn flame. Across Sonoma Mountain wisps of sea fog are stealing. The afternoon sun smoulders in the drowsy sky. I have everything to make me glad I am alive. I am filled with dreams and mysteries. I am all sun and air and sparkle. I am vitalized, organic. I move, I have the power of movement, I command movement of the live thing I bestride. I am possessed with the pomps of being and know proud passions and inspirations. I have ten thousand august connotations. I am a king in the kingdom of senses, and trample the face of the uncomplaining dust. . . .[52]

London's ranch in the "kingdom of senses" was ostensibly a return to physical and spiritual redemption through a return to life on the American soil. In short, London was trying to assume a familiarity with and enthusiasm for life in the open.

With a gnarled root for a bench and the limbs of the redwoods, manzinitas, and Douglas firs for a roof, London would write at a stump table on the grounds of Wake Robin Lodge near the banks of the Wild Water. Sitting at this natural table in a small clearing surrounded by a wild tangle of grasses, shrubs and climbing vines, London worked in communion with nature. Here it was his practice to write at least one thousand words a day. While writing at the stump table with sunlight dappling the forest floor through the hanging branches, London's works and imagination were ostensibly permeated by the natural setting to produce an Edenic effect. In _Valley of the Moon_, Billy and Saxon see the valley as London saw it when he arrived:

> Ahead and toward the right, across sheer ridges of the mountains, separated by deep green canyons and broadening lower down into rolling orchards and vineyards, they caught their first sight of Sonoma Valley and the wild mountains that rimmed its eastern side. To the left they gazed across a golden land of small hills and valleys. Beyond, to the north, the opposing wall of the valley--a range of mountains, the highest of which reared its red and battered ancient crater against a rosy and mellowing sky. From north to southeast, the mountain rim curved in the brightness of the sun, while Saxon and Billy were already in the shadow of evening. He looked at Saxon, noted the ravished ecstasy of her face, and stopped the horses. All the eastern sky was blushing to rose, which descended upon the mountains, touching them with wine and ruby. Sonoma Valley began to fill with a purple flood, laving the mountain bases, rising, inundating, drowning them in its purple. Saxon pointed in silence, indicating that the purple flood was the sunset shadow of Sonoma Mountain. Billy nodded, then chirruped to the mares, and the descent began through a warm and colorful twilight.[53]

London's vivid description of Northern California where the natural environment makes the predominant impact on the senses maintained his attempt to pursue a life style based on a closeness to the soil and a rejection of urban values and problems.

London envisioned an agricultural Eden in his Valley of the Moon. He bought the finest animals on the West Coast and employed the most contemporary scientific techniques for stock breeding and crop development. On the ranch, London wanted his stock to have the best care imaginable. His "Pig-Palace" was a circular stone structure with indoor and outdoor rooms and separate watering troughs for each pig family. His prize short-horn bull was to have been kept in a similar building. London once said that, "I am not raising livestock for the butcher, but for the breeder or anybody that wants the best of thoroughbreds. Of course, the culls will be killed, but my idea is to raise only the stock that can be driven out on foot."[54] Note how this reflects the genetic and racial preoccupations of a eugenicist. Although he prepared well-constructed plans, the swine died of pneumonia, and his short-horn bull broke its neck in its model barn. London was the first to admit his deficiency in farming affairs, but experience taught him to terrace hills and keep the soil moist in order to grow the vineyards that later decorated the mountains. He invested approximately $50,000 in planting a total of 140,000 eucalyptus trees, but they proved to be worthless for timber.

Since the ranch failed to turn a profit, London became more and more of a pessimist in the midst of splendor. Not only was the ranch a financial failure, but he was continually plagued by his own illegitimacy and a growing concern for his mother's sanity. Then after three long years of construction on "Wolf House" and two weeks prior to occupancy, it was destroyed by arson. Though the origin of the fire was never proven, many believe that his socialist comrades in the Bay area were responsible for the fire because they disagreed with London's capitalistic extravagance. London built the ranch for escape and leisure, but it became a struggle just to break even when his scientific experiments failed to make money.

London's greatest disappointment was his failure at fatherhood. Although he had two daughters by his first wife, Bess, London never fathered a son. He maintained the same view toward marriage as he did about the breeding of livestock: "When we scientifically breed our race-horses and our draught-horses, we make for life abundant. And when we come scientifically to breed the human, we shall make for life abundant, for humanity abundant."[55] In a letter to Joan, his eldest daughter, London wrote that his entire life had been overcome with "disgust, and those pages have been turned down forever. It is my weakness, as I have said before. Unless I should accidently meet you on the street, I doubt if I shall ever see you again. If you should be dying, and should ask for me at your bedside, I should surely come; on the other hand, if I were dying I should not care to have you at my bedside. A ruined colt is a ruined colt, and I do not like ruined colts."[56] Since London's first wife, Bess, had denied him the opportunity of "forming" his children, he grew uninterested in their upbringing. He believed that his children had become "ruined colts" because their mother, "who is deaf to all things spiritual, and appreciative, and understanding," instilled "narrow-minded, bourgeois prejudices" in the girls.[57] Therefore, his children were ruined by poor training and, since he could not remove such deleterious traits, he was finished with them.

The tribulations that London experienced eventually punctured his bubble of intensity. He spent an incredible number of hours writing, drinking, playing, talking, and rough-housing with others, but, as his health began to fail, he would periodically withdraw from other members of the ranch and become extremely irritable whenever anyone disagreed with him. He was goaded by the dissatisfactions and disappointments of the ranch and his life. He became more and more of a pessimist in the midst of splendor. In an interview in a socialist publication, London sought cynicism as an answer to his vulnerabilities:

> You may wonder why I am a pessimist; I often wonder myself. Here I have the most precious thing in the world--the love of a woman; I have beautiful children; I have lots of money; I have fame as a writer; I have men working for me; I have a beautiful ranch--and still, I am a pessimist. I look at things dispassionately, scientifically, and everything appears almost hopeless; after long years of labor and development, the people are as bad off as ever. There is a mighty ruling class that intends to hold fast to its possessions. I see years and years of bloodshed. I see the master class hiring armies of murderers to keep the workers in subjection, to beat them back should they attempt to dispossess the capitalists. That's why I am a pessimist. I see things in the light of history and the laws of nature.[58]

Caught in the very vise that he spoke of, London continued to live in retreat.

The ranch seems to parallel London's venture with life because it was one of outward success, inner failure. He loved beauty; he loved the material possessions that money could buy, and he enjoyed the popularity and power of fame as a radical human being who depended upon his own ability to gain success. In Burning Daylight (1910), The

Valley of the Moon (1913), and *The Little Lady of the Big House* (1916), he propagandized for a return to the soil almost to the extent that America be reconverted to the rural paradise of the sturdy yeoman. Within the enclave of his valley, as London dreamed of it, he would be the master of a self-sufficient barony. He would be isolated from the world's clamor, and he could live in close communion with nature where he could mix work with play. Adventure, heroics, race, and social position had been yielded to the call that the land needed to be cultivated.

London's Beauty Ranch and his fiction ostensibly demonstrate an enthusiasm for science. If man uses science to lead him onward into the future, no discontinuity will exist between his past, present, and future. London was aware that his world was becoming increasingly perplexing. As a result, he turned to science because it indicated that progress was inevitable. London's literature provides, therefore, a vision of optimism.

ENDNOTES

[1] Robert H. Wiebe, The Search for Order, 1877-1920 (NY: Hill and Wang, 1967), p. 133.

[2] Richard Hofstadter, The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R. (NY: Vintage, 1955), p. 176.

[3] Richard Hofstadter, William Miller, and Daniel Aaron, The United States: The History of a Republic (Englecliff, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1957), p. 510.

[4] Henry James, The American Scene (1907; rpt. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana Univ. Press, 1968), p. 84.

[5] Roderick Nash, Wilderness and the American Mind. Rev. ed. (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1973), p. 144.

[6] Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Farming," The Complete Essays and Other Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson. ed. Brooks Atkinson (NY: The Modern Library, 1940), p. 758.

[7] Jack London, The Valley of the Moon (1913; rpt. Santa Barbara: Peregrine Smith, Inc., 1975), pp. 89, 254.

[8] Nash, p. 143.

[9] The Valley of the Moon, pp. 255-6.

[10] The Valley of the Moon, p. 267.

[11] Letters From Jack London, ed. King Hendricks and Irving Shepard (NY: Odyssey Press, 1965), p. 86.

[12] Nash, p. 145.

[13] Henry Nash Smith, Virgin Land: The American West as Myth and Symbol (1950; rpt. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1976), p. 52.

[14] Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," The Frontier in American History (NY: Henry Holt & Co., 1920), p. 38.

[15] Frederick Jackson Turner, "Contributions of the West to American Democracy," The Frontier in American History (NY: Henry Holt & Co., 1920), p. 261. Although this quote

comes from another Turner essay, it represents a fulfillment of his ideas on the frontier. Turner synthesized ideas which had their beginnings with James Fenimore Cooper's Leatherstocking novels and with Presidents Jefferson and Jackson.

[16] Friedrich von Bernhardi as quoted in Richard Hofstadter, Social Darwinism in American Thought (1944; rpt. Boston: The Beacon Press, 1960), p. 197.

[17] Smith, p. 82.

[18] William James as quoted in Ralph Barton Perry, The Thought and Character of William James (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1948), pp. 229-30.

[19] Theodore Roosevelt, An Autobiography (NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1923), pp. 93-4.

[20] Nash, pp. 152-3.

[21] Nash, p. 148.

[22] Joan London, Jack London and His Times: An Unconventional Biography (1939; rpt. Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1968), p. 43.

[23] Jack London, John Barleycorn (1913; rpt. NY: Greenwood Press, 1968), p. 107.

[24] John Barleycorn, pp. 113-4.

[25] Joan London, p. 49.

[26] Franklin Walker, Jack London and the Klondike: The Genesis of an American Writer (London: The Bodley Head, 1966), pp. 12-13. Kipling was considered to be the most accomplished writer of his time, and London, in an effort to get into print, literally copied Kipling's dramatic works word-for-word in an attempt to develop his own style. However, London's penchant for Kipling involved more than mere method. London seemed to be especially fond of Kipling's portrayal of the tragedies of Anglo-Indian society, the hardship and courage of the British soldiers, and the misery and mystery of native life. Kipling also spoke of the duties of the superior races towards the lesser breeds. Direct obedience to the law--the law of western civilization--was paramount to Kipling. Against the backdrop of exotic, primitive India, Kipling's masculine characters would enforce order, authority, and discipline in order to guard civilization and maintain the continuity of tradition from the barbarians of the jungle.

[27] Social Darwinism in American Thought, p. 39.

[28] Herbert Spencer, *Principles of Biology* (NY: D. Appleton & Co., 1897), II, p. 500.

[29] *Social Darwinism in American Thought*, p. 40.

[30] Charles Darwin as quoted in Gertrude Himmelfarb, *Darwin and the Darwinian Revolution* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1967), p. 416.

[31] Donald Fleming, "Social Darwinism," *Paths of American Thought*. eds. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. and Morton White (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1963), p. 123.

[32] *Principles of Biology*, V. 2, p. 500.

[33] Jack London, *Martin Eden* (1908; rpt. Baltimore: Penguin Bks., 1974), p. 95.

[34] Jack London, "The Law of Life," *Best Short Stories of Jack London* (Garden City, NY: The Sun Dial Press, 1945), p. 152.

[35] Joan London, p. 146.

[36] Joan London, p. 253.

[37] Richard O'Connor, *Jack London: A Biography* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1964), p. 102.

[38] Jack London as quoted in Joan London, p. 149.

[39] Houghton Mifflin editors as quoted in O'Connor, p. 129.

[40] Jack London, "Jeffries-Johnson Fight," *Jack London Reports: War Correspondence, Sports Articles, and Miscellaneous Writings*. eds. King Hendricks and Irving Shepard (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1970), p. 265.

[41] "Jeffries-Johnson Fight," p. 278.

[42] Jack London, "The White Silence," *Best Short Stories of Jack London*, p. 3.

[43] Jack London, *White Fang*. *The Call of the Wild and White Fang* (1903; rpt. NY: Bantam Books, 1977), p. 106.

[44] Jack London, *Burning Daylight* (1910; rpt. NY: Manor Bks., 1973), p. 12.

[45] Jack London, "To Build A Fire," *The Call of the Wild and Selected Stories* (1905; rpt. NY: New American Library, 1960), pp. 142-3.

[46] *Burning Daylight*, p. 45.

[47] "The White Silence," p. 7.

[48] "To Build A Fire," p. 148.

[49] *Burning Daylight*, pp. 127-8.

[50] *The Valley of the Moon*, p. 477.

[51] Joan London, p. 336.

[52] *John Barleycorn*, pp. 310, 313.

[53] *The Valley of the Moon*, p. 480.

[54] Joan London, p. 360.

[55] Jack London, *Kempton-Wace Letters* (1903; rpt. NY: Haskell House, 1968), p. 182.

[56] *Letters From Jack London*, p. 416.

[57] Letters From Jack London, pp. 414, 415.

[58] Joan London, p. 336.

CHAPTER III

JACK LONDON'S VISION OF MAN

In society, as in nature, Jack London presumed that a natural order existed which, when left alone, insured the survival of the fittest. Social Darwinism maintained that any interference with that order would enfeeble society and denigrate nature. Herbert Spencer, Henry Ward Beecher, F. A. P. Barnard, and others, wanted to give the social sciences a scientific basis; therefore, the Social Darwinists presumed that when biology was applied to man, they had comprehensive methodology with which to formulate theories about man. Andrew Carnegie, who was Herbert Spencer's most prominent American disciple and a vocal supporter of Social Darwinism, wrote that "it is to this law that we owe our wonderful material development, which brings improved conditions in its train . . . we cannot evade it; no substitutes for it have been found; and while the law may be sometimes hard for the individual, it is best for the race, because it insures the survival of the fittest in every department."[1] If society were to improve, and, if mankind were to progress properly, then the businessman should be left alone. According to the Social Darwinists, who equated economic prosperity with biological eminence, the successful businessman represented an evolutionary advance over his predecessors.

As a young man, Jack London worked in a cannery, did the work of two men as a stoker, delivered newspapers, and captained his own ship among the oyster pirates in San Francisco Bay. These experiences, plus his later rise to fame, instilled a sense of success within London and impelled him to tackle the most difficult tasks. London interpreted his ability to flourish within and conquer the conditions of his early years in heroic terms. He viewed life as a melee, and the supermacy of the individual or the society involved heroic adventures of life and death. In "Wanted: A New Law of Development," London applied the pseudoscientific derivation of Social Darwinism to society when he wrote "that some should be born to preferment and others to ignominy in order that the race may progress, is cruel and sad; but none the less they are so born. The weeding out of human souls, some for fatness and smiles, some for leanness and tears, is surely a heartless selective process--as heartless as it is natural."[2] Yet London adopted socialism with the disparate philosophies of Herbert Spencer, Benjamin Kidd, and Friedrich Nietzsche. London did not, however, perceive his revelations as being incongruous; instead, his eclecticism and contradictions co-existed because they evolved from some of the world's greatest thinkers.

Although London was a socialist and a Social Darwinist, he believed that the proletariat was incapable of governing itself. According to Joan London, as a boy in Livermore her father remembered "the clearly enunciated precepts of his mother that they were the only 'Americans' in the vicinity and therefore superior to their immigrant Irish and Italian neighbors. . . ."[3] However, the proletariat could rise above economic and social degradation if it had someone to emulate or someone to lead the vanguard: "Man must have better men to measure himself against, else his advance will be nil, or if at all, one-sided and whimsical. The paced rider makes better speed than the unpaced."[4] The destiny of the proletariat was one of conflict and further exploitation by the aristocracy, and London saw himself as the savior of a few who were deserving enough to live in his Eden, the Beauty Ranch. Like Buck in The Call of the Wild, he "ran at the head of the pack . . . leaping gigantic above his fellows, his great throat a-bellow as he sings a song of the younger world, which is the song of the pack."[5] London relished the idea that he was one of nature's elect.

As one of the elect, London envisioned himself as a "wolf." This symbol dominated his thinking. London's strong-willed, strong-minded heroes were extrapolated from his determination to prove his own manliness. His wife, Charmian, wrote that

> George Serling /Sterling/ had affectionately dubbed him "The Wolf," or "The Fierce Wolf," or "The Shaggy Wolf." In the last month of Jack London's life, he gave me an exquisite tiny wrist watch. "And what shall I have engraved on it?" I asked. "Oh, 'Mate from Wolf,' I guess," he replied. And I: "The same as when we exchanged engagement watches?" "Why, yes, if you don't mind," he admitted. "I have sometimes wished you would call me 'Wolf' more often."[6]

Although London's preoccupation with the "Wolf" approaches the ludicrous, Ann Upton suggests London's identification with the image as a means of solving the dichotomy that existed between the individualist and the socialist.

> One London face--the adventurous, virile, combative 'natural' man face, typified by the blond, Anglo-Saxon Nietzschean superman--corresponded to the lone wolf, sufficient against the forces of nature in his universe, taking what he wanted, secure in his superiority. The other face--the friendship-seeking, justice-loving, intellectual product of education and civilization that sought expression in Socialism--was like the wolf when he ran in packs, answering the longing for brotherhood and mutual aid. In the wolf-symbol, then, were the two sides of London's nature united.[7]

Irving Stone's fictionalized biography, Sailor on Horse Back, says that London saw himself as "the conquering Wolf."[8] London preferred the salient characteristics of the individual to self-abnegation, but it was to be an individual who could direct and regulate nature, himself, and the populace.

In his political and social essays, as well as in his fiction, London wanted to document his beliefs with scientific fact. In a letter to Cloudesley Johns, a minor author and socialist friend, London professed to be "an Evolutionist, believing in Natural Selection, half believing Malthus' 'Law of Population,' and a myriad of other factors thrown in, I cannot but hail as unavoidable, the Black and the Brown going down before the White."[9] Later, he names his teachers "Darwin, Huxley, Spencer, and all the school of evolutionists," including Benjamin Kidd--as being the theorists who provided the scientific framework for his stories.[10] The Anglo-Saxons, "the salt of the earth," as London called them, achieved economic success because they were exemplar of Darwin's theory of evolution and Spencer's survival of the fittest.[11]

Herbert Spencer synthesized evolutionary thought which provided a comprehensive, all-encompassing theory for London's fictional extrapolations. Spencer's theory of evolution covered all types of natural processes--the development of species, the evolution of animals, the evolution of the solar system. He synthesized his law of evolution in First Principles (1864) in which he searched for some universal principle to interpret all forms of progress. Since he wanted to demonstrate that progress was inevitable, he tried to show how the Darwinian theory of evolution in nature also worked in the evolution of society. The Darwinian struggle for existence was represented by business competition, "natural selection" became laissez faire, and the "survival of the fittest" was represented by the large corporations swallowing up smaller, weaker companies. If society were to progress, then powerful monopolies must operate spontaneously.

In Wealth of Nations (1776), Adam Smith first proposed the doctrine of laissez faire: if the economic market were unrestrained and the social laws were to work themselves out, progress was inevitable. The market milieu would encourage man, sometimes force him, to invent, innovate, expand, and take risks. However, there was also another pressure behind society, the laws of evolution. Smith conceived of society as an organism where, if each individual pursued his own interests, he would promote that of society more effectively. The natural laws of evolution would propel the ascending spiral of productivity. Although Smith saw an evolution of society, he did not foresee the Industrial Revolution. His society would only develop in terms of quantity: more people, more goods, more wealth, but the quality would remain unchanged. His was a static community.

While Smith foresaw society as a benign organism, Thomas Malthus presented a system in which nature was malevolent and menacing. His Essay on the Principle of Population (1798) proposed that there was a tendency in nature for population to outstrip all possible means of subsistence. If society continued to reproduce in an exponential series, such a series as 2-4-8-16-32-64, humanity would inexorably outstrip available natural resources which increase arithmetically. Since, under normal conditions, population increased faster than food, mankind would endure inevitable suffering. Nothing could rescue mankind. This was the doctrine of despair.

David Ricardo, a close friend of Malthus, outlined a theory of economics which inexorably dimmed the optimism of man. Whereas Smith predicted a simultaneous progression by all members of society, Ricardo saw "progress" as a bitter contest for supremacy in which some were financially secure and others were on the precipice of existence. For Ricardo, the only class that would benefit from the "battle" would be the landlords. They dominated Parliament and, in effect, kept low-priced wheat off the English market. If people did not die of famine in the Malthusian swamp of humanity, the growing population would fight one another to secure an economic foothold in the unregulated growth of industry and the subordination of human to commercial interests.

Ricardo and Malthus changed the viewpoint of their age from optimism to pessimism. Adam Smith's natural, dynamic society was transformed into a brute struggle for existence. No longer would economic laws lead to the inevitable betterment of mankind. Instead, society appeared to be headed into a struggle for progress where the lower class barely survived and the upper classes gloated over their constantly growing spoils.

Herbert Spencer, however, set out to show how the natural order of evolution left more room for the deserving. Spencer's significance lies in the fact that he reinforced ideas that were fairly popular and put them in a scientific format. Americans were most particularly impressed with Spencer. Spencer appealed to Americans with his optimistic presentation of "natural" laws which coincided with the American faith in progress. In Social Statics, Spencer wrote that "so long as society is let alone, its various organs will go on developing in due subordination to each other. If some of them are very imperfect and make no appreciable progress toward efficiency, be sure it is because still more important organs are equally imperfect and because, the amount of vital force pervading society being limited, the rapid growth of these involves cessation of growth elsewhere."[12] In other words, if a part of society cannot improve, then it should be either abandoned to die or be pruned like some rotting limb.

Spencer's highly popular version of laissez faire relied on "Spencerian" sociology and biology. Two closely related doctrines formed the gist of Spencer's laws: the "law of equal freedom" and the "law of conduct and consequence," or of the "survival of the fittest." The law of equal freedom stated that "every man has freedom to all that he wills, provided he infringes not on the equal freedom of any other man."[13] Spencer first declared that this law was an expression of God's will, but he later wrote that there was a biological necessity for it and associated it with his law of conduct and consequence.

The law of conduct and consequence derived from Spencer's belief that the same struggle for existence that was going on among the lower animals was going on among humans. He insisted that if the human species were to be preserved, it, like the other species, would have to allow for the distribution of success according to merit, which was the yardstick used to measure the ability to sustain oneself. By thus associating conduct and consequence, the individual best adapted to his environment would receive the most, and the one least adapted to his environment would prosper the least.

Therefore, both survival of the fittest and progress of society would be guaranteed. In America, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. noted in a Sunday-school address that this was God's will: "The growth of a large business is merely a survival of the fittest. . . . The American Beauty rose can be produced in the splendor and fragrance which brings cheer to its beholder only by sacrificing the early buds which grow up around it. This is not an evil tendency in business. It is merely the working-out of a law of nature and a law of God."[14] Likewise, Andrew Carnegie wrote that, after he read Spencer, "Light came as in a flood and all was clear. Not only had I got rid of theology and the supernatural, but I had found the truth of evolution. 'All is well since all grows better' became my motto, my true source of comfort."[15] Spencer's law of conduct and consequence affirmed that self-concern was transformed into a social good.

Spencer borrowed from Malthus when he wrote that "from the beginning, pressure of population has been the proximate cause of progress."[16] This "pressure" forced one to develop physical and mental fitness in society just as nature had done with the individual. In Social Statics, Spencer wrote that

> Partly by weeding out those of lowest development and partly by subjecting those who remain to the never-ceasing discipline of experience, nature secures the growth of a race who shall both understand the conditions of existence and be able to act upon them. It is impossible in any degree to suspend this discipline by stepping in between ignorance and its consequences, with-

> out, to a corresponding degree, suspending the progress . . . to guard ignorant men against the evils of their ignorance, to divorce a cause and consequence which God has joined together, to render needless the intellect put into us for our guidance--to unhinge what is, in fact, the very mechanism of existence--must necessarily entail nothing by disasters.[17]

If society were left alone, Spencer argued, then mankind would eventually achieve perfection. In First Principles, he wrote triumphantly that "evolution is definable as a change from an incoherent homogeneity to a coherent heterogeneity, accompanying the dissipation of motion and the integration of matter."[18] From this, Spencer deduced that although "the state of homogeneity . . . is one that cannot be maintained," the result of the homogeneous lapsing into the heterogeneous leads to the state of "Equilibration."[19] This state, in society, is the completely adapted state in which "evolution can end only in the establishment of the greatest perfection and the most complete happiness" for mankind.[20] Jack London's science fiction presaged this achievement in the twentieth century.

In 1894 Benjamin Kidd published his Social Evolution which applied Spencer's principle of survival of the fittest to society. According to Kidd, conflict "leads continually onwards and upwards. From this stress of nature has followed the highest result we are capable of conceiving, namely, continual advance towards higher and more perfect forms of life. The law of life has been always the same from the beginning--ceaseless and inevitable struggle and competition, ceaseless and inevitable selection and rejection, ceaseless and inevitable progress."[21] Kidd concluded that "the evolution which man is undergoing is, over and above everything else, a social evolution. There is, therefore, but one test of superiority. It is only the race possessing in the highest degree the qualities contributing to social efficiency that can be recognized as having any claim to superiority."[22] "The Anglo-Saxon" reined superior because he "has exterminated the less developed peoples with which he has come into competitiion even more effectively than other races have done in like case; not necessarily indeed by fierce and cruel wars of extermination, but through the operation of laws less deadly and even more certain in their result. The weaker races disappear before the stronger through the effects of mere contact."[23] As a race, the Anglo-Saxon personified two dominant characteristics which the other races lacked: resiliency and assimilation.

Kidd saw that "throughout history the centre of power has moved gradually but surely to the north into those stern regions where men have been trained for the rivalry of life in the strenuous conflict with nature in which they have acquired energy, courage, integrity, and those characteristic qualities which contribute to raise them to a high state of social efficiency."[24] Kidd's conviction about the importance of environmental conditions in molding the life of a race was also shared by William Z. Ripley's _The Races of Europe_ (1899) and Madison Grant's _The Passing of the Great Race_ (1916). The blond conquerors of the North constituted "the white man par excellance."

Jack London celebrated the fact that he was a member of the powerful Anglo-Saxons: "one of Nature's strong-armed noblemen."[25] During his childhood in California, London saw racial antagonism against Orientals. Later, as a correspondent in the Russo-Japanese War, London warned Americans of "The Yellow Peril," but he also expressed an affirmation of the ethical character of the Anglo-Saxon: "The colossal fact of our history is that we have made the religion of Jesus Christ our religion. No matter how dark in error and deed, ours has been a history of spiritual struggle and endeavor. We are preeminently a religious race, which is another way of saying that we are a right-seeking race."[26] London's fiction also celebrated physical power: "The Anglo-Saxon is a pirate, a land robber and a sea robber. Underneath his thin coating of culture, he is what he was in Morgan's time, in Drake's time, in William's time, in Alfred's time. The blood and the tradition of Hengist and Horsa are in his veins. In battle he is subject to the blood lusts of the Berserkers of old. Plunder and booty fascinate him."[27] London's philosophy of life echoed the Teutonic view of life wherein the world belongs only to the strong. Martin Eden, London's most autobiographical character, exemplifies London's belief in the brutal struggle of the individual.

> Nietzsche was right. The world belongs to the strong--to the strong who are noble as well and who do not wallow in the swine-trough of trade and exchange. The world belongs to the true

> noblemen, to the great blond beasts, to the non-compromisers, to the "yes-sayers." And they will eat you up, you Socialists who are afraid of Socialism, and who think yourselves individualists. Your slave-morality of the meek and lowly will never save you.[28]

And later:

> The old law of development still holds. In the struggle for existence, as I have shown, the strong and the progeny of the strong tend to survive, while the weak and the progeny of the weak are crushed and tend to perish. The result is that the strong and the progeny of the strong tend to survive, and so long as the struggle obtains, the strength of each generation increases. That is development. But you slaves dream of a society where the law of development will be annulled, where no weaklings and inefficients will perish, where every inefficient will have as much as he wants to eat as many times a day as he desires, and where all will marry and have progeny--the weak as well as the strong. Your society of slaves--of, by, and for, slaves--must inevitably weaken and go to pieces, as the life which composes it weakens and goes to pieces. 'Remember, I am enunciating biology, and not sentimental ethics. No state of slaves can stand--'[29]

So inspired is Martin Eden by the struggle for the survival of the fittest that conservative, practical Socialists regard him as an ineffectual visionary enthusiast. While Eden advocates any devious method to maintain economic and political power among the plutocracy, The Iron Heel (1908) conjectured that class war was inevitable.

London's "The Question of the Maximum," a short social essay which examines the future of an over-populated earth, proposes that the struggle for survival "will be a contest for the mastery of the world's commerce and for industrial supremacy."[30] London did not believe that the masses could rule; instead, he foresaw a world where the elect controlled.

Convinced that leaders ultimately make all the difference, a note of prophecy is issued in "The Bones of Kahekili":

> It is because most men are fools, therefore must be taken care of by the few men who are wise. Such is the secret of chiefship. In all the world are chiefs over men. In all the world that has been have there ever been chiefs, who must say to the many fool men: 'Do this; do not do that. Work, and work as we tell you, or your bellies will remain empty and you will perish. Obey the laws we set you or you will be beasts and without place in the world. You would not have been save for the chiefs before you who ordered and regulated for your fathers. No seed of you will come after you, except that we order and regulate for you now. You must be peace-abiding, and decent, and blow your noses . . . you think but one day at a time, while we, your chiefs, think for you all days and far days ahead.[31]

A fantasy began to obsess London: he imagined a superior white man who would someday rule over his less fortunate white brothers. Failing to see how this Nietzschean Übermensch (superman) could fit into the contemporary world, London began to weave this wish into the more pliant world of fiction.

Although London wrote that he was "in the opposite intellectual camp from that of Nietzsche," he went on to say that "no man in my own camp stirs me as does Nietzsche. . . ."[32] London maintained that Nietzsche's moral philosophy was compatible with social Darwinism since it helped to strengthen the hold that Social Darwinism had upon contemporary thought. Nietzsche held that power was the principal means of securing continued existence. Both Nietzschean ethics and Social Darwinism emphasized the value of the superior individual, but they also recognized the value of superior groups. Likewise, Nietzsche extended his ethical standards to master and slave races. Nietzsche appealed to London because he emphasized characteristics which London thought he typified: self-confidence, ruthlessness, and a robustness for life. London's science fiction issued a prescient call for these same qualities in its leaders.

Nietzsche teaches in Thus Spoke Zarathustra that man is a rope stretched between the animals and the Supermen. Man becomes, therefore, a bridge between the defective members of society and the perfect specimens.

> I teach you the Superman. Man is something that should be overcome. What have you done to overcome him?
>
> All creatures hitherto have created something beyond themselves: and do you want to be the ebb of this great tide, and return to the animals rather than overcome man?
>
> What is the ape to men? A laughing-stock or a painful embarrassment. And just so shall man be to the Superman: a laughing-stock or a painful embarrassment.
>
> You have made your way from worm to man, and much in you is still worm. Once you were apes, and even now man is more of an ape than any ape--
>
> The Superman is the meaning of the earth. Let your will say: The Superman shall be the meaning of the earth!
>
> Man is a rope, fastened between animal and Superman--a rope over an abyss.
>
> A dangerous going-across, a dangerous wayfaring, a dangerous looking-back, a dangerous shuddering and staying-still.
>
> What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not a goal: what can be loved in man is that he is a going-across and a down-going.
>
> I love him who lives for knowledge and who wants knowledge that one day the Superman may live. And thus he wills his own downfall.[33]

The Superman is able to achieve in himself what nations once achieved when they raised themselves above the herd:

"Can you furnish yourself with your own good and evil and hang up your own will above yourself as a law? Can you be judge of yourself and avenger of your law? . . . you yourself will always be the worst enemy you can encounter; you yourself lie in wait for yourself in caves and forests."[34] Although all creatures desire power, man is the only creature capable of desiring power over himself.

According to Nietzsche, the superman should exhort people to action--to war. War itself is beneficial, and that rivalry is the instrument of progress.

> You should be such men as are always looking for an enemy--for your enemy. And with some of you there is hate at first sight.
> You should seek your enemy, you should wage your war--a war for your opinions. And if your opinion is defeated, your honesty should still triumph over that!
> You should love peace as a means to new wars. And the short peace more than the long.
> I do not exhort you to work but to battle. I do not exhort you to peace, but to victory. May your work be a battle, may your peace be a victory!
> You say it is the good cause that hallows even war? I tell you: it is the good war that hallows every cause.[35]

Nietzsche's superman is hard on himself, as well as towards others. Life is viewed as being in a perpetual evolving state in which it is self-surpassing.

The overblown, exclamatory tone of Nietzsche's writing intoxicated London with man's unlimited possibility. Joan London notes that her father was so "enchanted by the philosopher's vocabulary and slogans that he noted little else. 'The blonde beasts,' 'the glad perishers,' 'the Superman,' 'Live dangerously!'. . . . "[36] London seemed particularly attracted to Nietzsche's "Will to Power" which held that power was the chief means of securing continued existence. Power, therefore, is what all men desire. Like Nietzsche, London believed that power can be achieved from chaos since only the weak fear it while the powerful organize it.

London's fiction is replete with the tales of men and women who thrive in a hostile nature from which they gain their domination over the weaker members of society. In _A Daughter of the Snows_, Frona Welse, the heroine, returns to the Klondike and to her father. While travelling across the Yukon wastes, she meets a frail man who has collapsed in the snow and is in tears because his comrades have left him. After Frona discovers that the man is weak of both spirit and body, she tells him:

> "My friend," and Frona knew she was speaking for the race, "you are strong as they. You can work just as hard as they; pack as much. But you are weak of heart. This is no place for the weak of heart. You cannot work like a horse because you will not. Therefore the country has no use for you. The north wants strong men,--strong of soul, not body. The body does not count. So go back to the States. We do not want you here. If you come you will die. . . . "[37]

The Anglo-Saxons are strong of soul. One of Frona's more acrimonious remarks about the ability of the Anglo-Saxon's survival is that "we /Anglo-Saxons/ are not God's people, but Nature's chosen people, we Angles, and Saxons, and Normans, and Vikings, and the earth is our heritage. Let us arise and go forth."[38] Teutonic superiority is a direct result of adaptability.

> "We are a race of doers and fighters, of globe-encirclers and zone-conquerors. We toil and struggle, and stand by the toil and struggle no matter how hopeless it may be. While we are persistent and resistant, we are so made that we fit ourselves to the most diverse conditions. Will the Indian, the Negro, or the Mongol ever conquer the Teuton? Surely not! The Indian has persistence without variability; if he does not modify he dies, if he does try to modify he dies anyway. The Negro has adaptability, but he is servile and must be led. As for the Chinese, they are permanent. All that the other races are not, the Anglo-Saxon, or Teuton if you please, is. All that the other races have not, the Teuton has. What race is to rise up and overwhelm us?"[39]

Although London, like Frona, did not believe that all white men could and would adjust to a hostile environment, the Teutonic race seemed to have the greatest potential. Therefore, this innate ability to adapt would become the fountain head of the white man's power.

One's adaptability depends upon one's closeness to nature, the primitive life. Vance Corliss, the protagonist in _A Daughter of the Snows_, is unaware that his greatest virtue is a combination of his physical prowess, his adaptability and his refusal to be moulded by his ancestors.

> Some atavism had been at work in the making of him, and he had reverted to that ancestor who sturdily uplifted. But so far this portion of his heritage had lain dormant. He had simply remained adjusted to a stable environment. There had been no call upon the adaptability which was his. But whensoever the call came, being so constituted, it was manifest that he should adapt, should adjust himself to the unwonted pressure of new conditions. The maxim of the rolling stone may be all true; but notwithstanding, in the scheme of life, the inability to become fixed is an excellence par excellence. Though he did not know it, this inability was Vance Corliss's most splendid possession.[40]

Later, in "An Odyssey of the North," London stresses the white man's heritage of physical prowess and lusty adventure as an integral part of atavism.

> . . . in the making of Axel Gunderson the gods had remembered their old-time cunning and cast him after the manner of men who were born when the world was young. Full seven feet he towered in his picturesque costume which marked a king of Eldorado. His chest, neck, and limbs were those of a giant. To bear his three hundred pounds of bone and muscle, his snowshoes were greater by a generous yard than those of other men. Rough-hewn, with rugged brow and massive jaw and unflinching eyes of palest blue, his face told the tale of one who knew but the law of might. Of the yellow of ripe corn silk, his frost-encrusted hair swept like day across the night and fell far down his coat of bearskin. A vague tradition of the sea seemed to cling about him as he swung down the narrow trail in advance of the dogs; and he brought the butt of his dog whip against Malemute Kid's door as a Norse sea rover, on southern foray, might thunder for admittance at the castle gate.[41]

London's Superman dominates ordinary individuals because he is often cruel, savage, and predatory. Although the Superman contains much of the barbarian in him, he is still the most humane of people.

London's fiction maintains that the Superman is a sustained celebration of physical and mental power. For man is nothing but an animal, and life is a brawl, and nature is totally indifferent.

> Chained in the circle of his own imaginings, man is only too keen to forget his origin and to shame that flesh of his that bleeds like all flesh and that is good to eat. Civilization has spread a veneer over the surface of the soft-shelled animal known as man. . . . The raw animal crouching within him is like the earthquake monster pent in the crust of the earth. . . . he stands undisguised, a brute like any other brute. Starve him, let him miss six meals, and see gape through

> the veneer the hungry man of the animal beneath. Get between him and the female of his kind upon whom his mating instinct is bent, and see his eyes blaze like an angry cat's, hear in his throat the scream of wild stallions, and watch his fists clench like an orang-outan's. Maybe he will beat his chest. Touch his silly vanity, which he exalts into 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.[42]

It is with this philosophy that London justifies the tortures, beatings, and deaths that the Supermen inflict upon animals and humans. The "raw animal" and the compassionate qualities in man should coalesce to form the ideal Superman.

Supermen, which specifically meant Anglo-Saxon to London, were to unite and direct the struggle for socialism. In "Wanted: A New Law of Development," London asked, "Why should there be one empty belly in all the world when the work of ten men can feed a hundred? What if my brother be not as strong as I? He has not sinned. Wherefore should he suffer--he and his sinless little ones? Away with the old law. There is food and shelter for all, therefore let all receive food and shelter."[43] Socialism is the gospel of the poor, and socialism offers faith in man. Selfism, which is "the prize-fighting apes and tigers will die all in good time in the course of natural evolution . . . ," because the time of the group has come.[44] And later, Daylight observes that comradeship is the answer to an honest society.

> Comradeship was different. There was no slavery about it; and though he /Daylight/, a strong man

> beyond strength's seeming, gave far more than he received, he gave not something due but in royal largess, his gifts of toil or heroic effort falling generously from his hands. To pack for days over the gale-swept passes or across the mosquito-ridden marshes, and to pack double the weight his comrade packed, did not involve unfairness or compulsion. Each did his best. That was the business essence of it. Some men were stronger than others--true; but so long as each man did his best it was fair exchange, the business spirit observed, and the square deal obtained.[45]

The struggle for existence, which strengthens the strong and destroys the weak, creates a finer breed of man, but the most triumphant expression of individualism is group individualism. This is the crux of London's science fiction.

Similarly, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels wrote "WORKINGMEN OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!"[46] In an age of Social Darwinism, the combination of the ideas of struggle, of evolution, and of progress, were irresistible to Marxists. The Communist Manifesto of 1848 established that

> the whole history of mankind (since the dissolution of primitive tribal society, holding land in common ownership) has been a history of class struggles, contests, between exploiting and exploited, ruling and oppressed classes; that the history of these class struggles forms a series of evolutions in which nowadays, a stage has been reached where the exploited and oppressed class--the proletariat--cannot attain its emancipation from the sway of the exploiting and ruling class--the bourgeoisie--without, at the same time, and once and for all, emancipating society at the large from all exploitation, oppression, class distinctions, and class struggles.[47]

Consequently, Marx and Engels established the pattern for all subsequent Marxist polemics: the Marxist evolution is right because it is in the future; the Social Darwinist is wrong because he is in the past. History, like Nature, is cruel and hard. Marx and Engels wanted, during the conflict and after, the proletariat to maintain "to the fullest extent possible work against the bourgeois measures of pacification, and compel the democrats to carry into action their present terroristic phrases. They must work to prevent the immediate revolutionary excitement from being promptly suppressed after the victory. They must keep it going as long as possible."[48] Marx and Engels thought that the state would disappear in the higher phase of the communist state, but the communist society would initially evolve as a dictatorship of the working class. The Iron Heel expounds this very point.

Jack London also believed that the new society would be ruled by the workers and that it was only "a question of might. Whichever class is to win, will win by virtue of superior strength."[49] Life among the oyster pirates and cannery workers had taught him that

> In the face of its enormous wealth, capitalistic society forfeits its right to existence when it permits widespread, bestial poverty. The philosophy of the survival of the fittest does not soothe the class-conscious worker when he learns through his class literature that among the Italian pants-finishers of Chicago the average weekly wage is $1.31 and the average number of weeks employed in the year is 27.85 . . . 'When one man, fifty years old, who has worked all his life, is compelled to beg a little money to bury his dead baby, and another man, fifty years old, can give ten million dollars to enable his daughter to live in luxury and bolster up a decaying foreign aristocracy, do you see nothing amiss?'[50]

Historically, the class struggle was a conflict between two distinct forces: capitalism and socialism. With the former, the poor would not have the opportunity to improve; with the latter, society and its members were bound to benefit because the life-and-death struggle for food and shelter would be omitted.

While living in the Klondike, London observed how men could live together and share their wealth. Whenever one prospector discovered gold, he would invite others to share in his wealth by buying drinks for them. The natives and whites lived together peacefully as all struggled with the cold, bitter Yukon. A social conscience began to develop within London. Why did civilized men not share the same tenets? Later, London's novels would contrast the life-styles of civilization and the frontier. In 1900, London wrote that the frontier and its customs were doomed.

> The new Klondike, the Klondike of the future, will present remarkable contrasts with the Klondike of the past. Natural obstacles will be cleared away or surmounted, primitive methods abandoned, and the hardships of toil and travel reduced to the smallest minimum. Exploration and transportation will be systematized. There will be no waste energy, no harum-scarum carrying of industry. The frontiersman will yield to the laborer, the prospector to the mining engineer, the dog-driver to the engine-driver, the trader and speculator to the steady-going modern man of business; for these are the men in whose hands the destiny of the Klondike will be intrusted.[51]

Although the past Klondike would eventually yield to the future Klondike, London's evolutionary vision of man interlaced the divers strengths of socialism and individualism.

Although London read only The Communist Manifesto, he felt that the old laws of individualism would give way to the socialist revolutionists. In "Revolution," London writes that he was initially attracted to socialist literature because it was "a myriad times more imposing, scientific, and scholarly than the literature of any previous revolution."[52] Later, in "What Life Means to Me," London writes of the hope in people that the revolutionists offered.

> Here I found, also, warm faith in the human, glowing idealism, sweetness of unselfishness, renunciation, and martyrdom--all the splendid, stinging things of the spirit. Here life was clean, noble, and alive. Here life rehabilitated itself, became wonderful and glorious; and I was glad to be alive. I was in touch with great souls who exalted flesh and spirit over dollars and cents, and to whom the thin wail of the starved slum child meant more than the pomp and circumstance of commercial expansion and world empire. All about me were nobleness of purpose and heroism of effort, and my days and nights were sunshine and starshine, all fire and dew, with before my eyes, ever burning and blazing, the Holy Grail, Christ's own Grail, the warm human, long-suffering and maltreated, but to be rescued and saved at the last.[53]

London's avowed aim was to up-root and destroy all capitalistic institutions because commercialism threatened the very social evolution of society. Whereas capitalism focused on the destruction of modern society, socialism offered ferment, escape, and brotherhood.

Socialism, like capitalism, however, was based upon "the inequality of man and that socialism deals with what is, not with what ought to be. . . . "[54] In a letter to the Central Labor Council in Alameda County, London wrote that the future strength of society "lies in comradeship and brotherhood, not in a throat-cutting struggle where every man's hand is against every man. The growth cannot be stopped."[55] According to London, socialism is irresistible because the "Socialist preaches that through the economic process the ripening of the capitalistic society and the coming of the new cooperative society" is inexorable.[56] Since industrial centralization was both inevitable and progressive, business growth and consolidation would produce more industrial workers and tend to eliminate the entrepreneur; therefore, the ranks of the proletariat would increase and the backdrop for the revolution was ready. Secondly, since the class struggle forced "classes and the capitalist class exploits the working class, the proletariat, the Socialist sets to work to capture the political machinery, so that he may make illegal the capitalist's ownership of the means of production, and make legal his own ownership of the means of production."[57] Therefore, the class struggle had created both a superior and an inferior class, and the only outlet was for the inferior class to revolt and to escape the power of the capitalists.

London's social vision was continually impeded by the socialists as well as his own eclectic nature. The Beauty Ranch, beneath the purple shadow of Sonoma Mountain, was to shelter the best radical minds that America had to offer. London's conception of socialism could now be practiced. London would be the Superman, the one to dictate the boundaries of the future revolution because he possessed the greatest intellectual and physical stamina. Here, London could direct the revolution by having the world come to him, instead of him going to the world.

London hired thirty workmen to begin construction on his $80,000 mansion. His attitude toward his workmen varied. Although London was paternalistic towards his workers, he could not completely embrace the working class as members of the brotherhood of man because he believed so strongly in "his race as the salt of the earth. I am a scientific socialist. There will always be leaders, and no man can lead without fighting for his position."[58] This ethic made sense, for it reflected London's own rise to the top of the authorial heap because the miserable proletariat were incapable of governing themselves, and London would serve as their administrator. Joan London writes that her father would eat and drink with his workmen, but, then, when he was out of their earshot, he would call them his 'inefficient Italians'."[59] Although London provided the workers with an acre of land and a home for their families, he generally viewed all members of the lower-class with contempt.

London's attitude toward the radical minds he harbored in his valley differed from that toward the workmen. With the resident philosophers, London could argue politics, wrestle, box, or play poker. Though he spent great amounts of money to support the dependents, he said that he received more pleasure from their talks and physical bouts than it cost him. He even mailed circulars to friends and foes alike informing them of the life he had established on the ranch. All were invited.

> Our life here is something as follows: We rise early, and work in the forenoon. Therefore, we do not see our guests until afternoons and evenings. You may breakfast from 7 till 9, and then we all get together for dinner at 12:30. You will find this is a good place to work, if you have work to do. Or, if you prefer to play, there are horses, saddles, and rigs. In the summer we have a swimming pool.[60]

London relished the idea that the Wolf House would be the center for the revolution and the world's intellectual playground on the West Coast, and he would be the leader. He hoped to build his new dynasty in Glen Ellen. The value of London's society was that the members were allowed to participate in the group effort, and the individual, London, would lead the group in the proper direction. He was the one with the money, power, and influence, and his goal for the group was to produce food and shelter for all on his ranch.

London was goaded by the dissatisfaction and disappointments of the ranch and his life. The socialists were asking him to help them in their struggle, young writers were asking him for advice, and he was becoming more bitter about the people's refusal to fight for themselves. In an interview in a socialist publication, London sought cynicism as an answer to his vulnerabilities:

> You may wonder why I am a pessimist; I often wonder myself. Here I have the most precious thing in the world--the love of a woman; I have beautiful children; I have lots of money; I have fame as a writer; I have men working for me; I have a beautiful ranch--and still, I am a pessimist. I look at things dispassionately, scientifically, and everything appears almost hopeless; after long years of labor

> and development, the people are as bad off as ever. There is a mighty ruling class that intends to hold fast to its possessions. I see years and years of bloodshed. I see the master hiring class hiring armies of murderers to keep the workers in subjection, to beat them back should they attempt to dispossess the capitalists. That's why I am a pessimist. I see things in the light of history and the laws of nature.[61]

Caught in the very vise that he spoke of, London spent the remainder of his life in continual retreat. Every city and worker he met reminded him of the battle he fought.

In his resignation letter to the Socialist Party, dated March 1916, London summarized his belief in the necessity for action, mental and physical.

> I am resigning from the Socialist Party because of its lack of fire and fight, and its loss of emphasis on the class struggle.
>
> I was originally a member of the old, revolutionary, up-on-its-hind-legs, fighting, Socialist Labor Party. Since then, and to the present time, I have been a fighting member of the Socialist party. My fighting record in the Cause is not, even at this late date, already entirely forgotten. Trained in the class struggle, as taught and practised by the Socialist Labor Party, my own highest judgement concurring, I believed that the working class, by fighting, by never fusing, by never making terms with the enemy, could emancipate itself. Since the whole trend of socialism in the United States of recent years has been one of peaceableness and compromise, I find that my mind refuses further sanction of my remaining a party member. Hence my resignation.
>
> Please include my comrade wife, Charmian K. London's resignation with mine.
>
> My final word is that liberty, freedom and independence, are royal things that cannot be presented to, nor thrust upon, races or classes. If races and classes cannot rise up and by their own strength of brain and brawn wrest from the world liberty, freedom and independence, they never, in time, can come to these royal possessions--and if such royal things are kindly presented to them by superior individuals, on silver platters, they will know not what to do with them, will fail to make use of them, and will be what they have

> always been in the past--inferior races and inferior classes.[62]

Martin Eden, one of London's most autobiographical novels, exemplifies London's lack of faith in the individual. In an open letter to the Reverend Charles Brown, London wrote that Martin Eden's death resulted from his "being a consistent Individualist, being unaware of the collective human need, there remained nothing for which to live and fight. Martin Eden failed and died; in my parable, not because of his lack of faith in God, but because of his lack of faith in man. Martin Eden failed because he did not even get to man. He got only as far as himself, and the rest of humanity did not count."[63] Martin Eden is Jack London in his later years. By retreating to the ranch, London demonstrated that he had become disillusioned with the working-class and their apathetic attitude. Although his vision of a utopia led by a Superman was never realized, London's fiction exemplified how his future society should be directed and the direction it should be going.

London belongs to a long tradition of utopian writers who--frustrated by the intractableness of reality--create exemplar societies for the satisfaction of an inner, imaginative need. For example, Butler's Erewhon (1872), Huxley's Brave New World (1932), Orwell's 1984 (1949), and even Karl Marx's Das Kapital (1867) began to predict a dismal future for mankind unless man escaped his enslavement to technology. London's science fiction predicted that evolution would create a race of superpeople.

ENDNOTES

[1] Andrew Carnegie, *The Gospel of Wealth and Other Timely Essays*. Edward C. Kirkland, ed. (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1962), p. 16.

[2] Jack London, "Wanted: A New Law of Development," *War of the Classes* (1905; rpt. NY: Regent Press, 1912), p.222.

[3] Joan London, *Jack London and His Times: An Unconventional Biography* (1939; rpt. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969), p. 23.

[4] Jack London, *Letters From Jack London*. King Hendricks and Irving Shepard, eds. (NY: Odyssey, 1965), p. 99.

[5] Jack London, *The Call of the Wild and White Fang* (1905; rpt. NY: Bantam Books, 1977), p. 101.

[6] Charmian London, *The Book of Jack London* (NY: Macmillan, 1921), II, p. 72.

[7] Ann Upton, "The Wolf in London's Mirror," *Jack London Newsletter*, 6 (Sept.-Dec., 1973), p. 113.

[8] Irving Stone, *Sailor On Horse Back* (Garden City, Cambridge, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1938), p. 201. Although Charmian London authorized Irving Stone to write the definitive Jack London biography in the mid-1930's, Stone's fictionalized work is no longer considered valid. For a complete discussion of London biographies, see Clarice Stasz, "The Social Construction of Biography: The Case of Jack London" *Modern Fiction Studies* (Spring, 1976), pp. 51-71.

[9] *Letters From Jack London*, p. 27.

[10] *Letters From Jack London*, p. 327.

[11] *Letters From Jack London*, p. 74.

[12] Herbert Spencer, *Social Statics* (1864; rpt. NY: Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 1954), p. 349.

[13] *Social Statics*, p. 95.

[14] John D. Rockefeller, Jr. as quoted by William J. Ghent, *Our Benevolent Feudalism* (NY: Macmillan, 1902), p. 29.

[15] Andrew Carnegie, *Autobiography of Andrew Carnegie* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1902), p. 339.

[16] Herbert Spencer, *Principles of Biology*, II (NY: D. Appleton & Co., 1897), p. 506.

[17] *Social Statics*, p. 338.

[18] Herbert Spencer, *First Principles*, 4th ed. (NY: J. A. Hill & Co., 1904), p. 312.

[19] *First Principles*, p. 349.

[20] *First Principles*, p. 341.

[21] Benjamin Kidd, *Social Evolution* (1894; rpt. NY: Macmillan, 1900), p. 41.

[22] *Social Evolution*, p. 49.

[23] *Social Evolution*, p. 61.

[24] *Social Evolution*, p. 68.

[25] Charles Child Walcutt, *American Literary Naturalism, A Divided Stream* (1956; rpt. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1977), p. 91.

[26] Jack London, "The Yellow Peril," *Jack London Reports*. King Hendricks and Irving Shepard, eds. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1970), p. 349.

[27] Jack London, "The Somnambulist," *Revolution and Other Essays* (NY: Macmillan, 1910), p. 39.

[28] Jack London, *Martin Eden* (1908; rpt. Baltimore: Penguin, 1974), p. 273.

[29] *Martin Eden*, p. 279.

[30] Jack London, "The Question of the Maximum," *War of the Classes*, p. 153.

[31] Jack London, "The Bones of Kahekili," *Stories of Hawaii*, ed. A. Grove Day (1918; rpt. NY: Appleton-Century, 1965), pp. 147-148.

[32] *Letters From Jack London*, p. 361.

[33] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale (1896; rpt. Baltimore: Penguin, 1971), pp. 41-42.

[34] Nietzsche, pp. 89, 90.

[35] Nietzsche, p. 74.

[36] Joan London, p. 209.

[37] Jack London, _A Daughter of the Snows_ (NY: Grosset & Dunlap, 1902), p. 38.

[38] _A Daughter of the Snow_, p. 84.

[39] _A Daughter of the Snow_, p. 83.

[40] _A Daughter of the Snow_, p. 76.

[41] Jack London, "An Odyssey of the North," _The Call of the Wild and Selected Stories_ (1905; rpt. NY: New American Library, 1960), p. 110.

[42] "The Somnambulists," pp. 41-43.

[43] "Wanted: A New Law of Development," p. 225.

[44] "The Somnambulists," p. 53.

[45] Jack London, _Burning Daylight_ (1910; rpt. NY: Manor Books, 1973), p. 17.

[46] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, _Manifesto of the Communist Party_, _Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy_. Lewis S. Feuer, ed. (1848; rpt. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959), p. 41.

[47] Friedrich Engels, "Address to the Central Authority of the Communist League, 1850, p. 187.

[48] Marx and Engels, p. 21.

[49] Jack London, "The Class Struggle," _War of the Classes_, p. 48.

[50] "Wanted: A New Law of Development," pp. 254-256.

[51] Jack London, "The Economics of the Klondike," _Review of Reviews_, January, 1900, p. 41.

[52] Jack London, "Revolution," _Jack London, American Rebel_. Philip S. Foner, ed. (NY: The Citadel Press, 1947), p. 489.

[53] Jack London, "What Life Means to Me," _Jack London, American Rebel_, p. 396.

[54] Jack London, "Introduction" to _War of the Classes_, p. xvi.

[55] Letters From Jack London, p. 481.

[56] "Wanted: A New Law of Development," p. 254.

[57] "Wanted: A New Law of Development," p. 256.

[58] Letters From Jack London, p. 74.

[59] Joan London, p. 333.

[60] Pamphlet published by Jack London Bookstore, 1967.

[61] Jack London as quoted by Joan London, p. 336.

[62] Letters From Jack London, p. 467.

[63] Letters From Jack London, p. 306.

CHAPTER IV

THE SEA WOLF: SUPERMEN AND A NEW SOCIETY

By 1904 Jack London was one of America's best-known writers. Novels and short story collections like *Children of the Frost* (1902), *The Son of the Wolf* (1903), *The Call of the Wild* (1903), and social writings like *The People of the Abyss* (1903) helped bring London's name to the forefront of the American reading public. London's literary reputation was further enhanced when he published *The Sea Wolf* in November, 1904. The novel was an immediate success; advanced sales soared over 40,000 before the novel was even off the press. It made the best-seller list, and critics praised the novel for its portrayal of the conflict between good and evil. Since the novel was so successful, Bosworth, Inc., who was working on four major film productions, bought the copyright to *The Sea Wolf* in 1913 to make a seven reel, two hour performance. So elated was Jack London of this august honor that he noted that the film had "just completed its opening weeks in San Francisco and Los Angeles. They are going right on playing it through the second week. It has played beyond capacity, and has broken all film records of success in these two cities in which it has been tried out. The last night of the first week in San Francisco the film was played until one o'clock in the morning."[1]

Much to London's dismay, however, people remembered brutal, hyperbolic Wolf Larsen, the antagonist, not Humphrey Van Weyden, the effete narrator.

In a letter addressed to George Sterling, London's closest friend, Ambrose Bierce wrote that he had a pluralistic reaction to the novel.

> My opinion of it? Certainly--or a part of it. It is a most disagreeable book, as a whole. London has a pretty bad style and no sense of proportion. The story is a perfect welter of disagreeable incidents. Two or three (of the kind) would have sufficed to show the character of the man Larsen; and his own self-revealings by word of mouth would have "done the rest." Many of these incidents, too, are impossible--such as that of a man mounting a ladder with a dozen other men--more or less--hanging to his leg, and the hero's work of re-rigging a wreck and getting it off a beach where it had stuck for weeks, and so forth. The "love" element, with its absurd suppressions and impossible proprieties, is awful. I confess to an overwhelming contempt for both sexless lovers.
>
> Now as to its merits. It is a rattling good story in one way; something is "going on" all the time--not always what one would wish, but something. One does not go to sleep over the book. But the great thing--and it is among the greatest things--is the tremendous creation, Wolf Larsen. If that is not a permanent addition to literature, it is at least a permanent figure in the memory of the reader. You "can't lose" Wolf Larsen. He will be with you to the end. So it really does not matter how London has hammered him into you. You may quarrel with the methods, but the result is almost incomparable. The hewing out and setting up of such a figure is enough for a man to do in one life-time. I have hardly words to impart my good judgement of that work.[2]

Recently, Earle Labor noted that The Sea Wolf has all the elements for a great novel--"vitality," "timeless motif of initiation," "the ship as microcosm," and the "sea as symbolic for death and rebirth."[3] The Sea Wolf is, perhaps, the best novel London wrote.

Most readers and critics conclude that The Sea Wolf is either an attack or a defense of individualism. Botanist Conway Zirkle, on the other hand, proposes that London pursued the ideas of evolution and society to their logical conclusions: "the well-integrated group was stronger than any individual could ever be" and "the social virtues, altruism co-operation--even self-sacrifice--were justified biologically."[3] Evolution, Marxism, and the Nietzschean übermensch are compatible, according to London, because each philosophy conduces to the total strength and survival of the group. The magnificent Wolf Larsen, a member of the meritocracy--meaning that he struggled for and won his rights as captain of The Ghost--illustrates the failure of individualism when too much strength begins to threaten society. Conversely, the refined Humphrey Van Weyden evolves to become a firm and resolute advocate of collectivism. The Sea Wolf documents London's scientific philosophy that the perpetuation of the species is contingent upon man's ability to blend the civilized and the animal worlds. When this proper mixture is achieved, man has attained the state of "equilibration."

Eleven years after publication of The Sea Wolf, London wrote to Mary Austin that the reading public had misinterpreted the novel: it was written as an attack on individualism and "Nietzsche and his super-man idea."[4] Nonetheless, the London novel, like London the man, continued to vacillate between glorifying the individual and the socialist. No matter how hard London tried to write a novel with a singular message, he was misunderstood. For example, a reviewer once told him that The Call of the Wild could be read as a human allegory, and a surprised Jack London replied "'I plead guilty,' he admitted, 'but I was unsconscious of it at the time. I did not mean to do it'."[5] One finds it difficult to accept London's condemnation of Wolf Larsen, especially since London, as well as his fictional characters, celebrated physical and intellectual strength. Wolf Larsen is a Superman, a man of action, but he is imperfect and, therefore, doomed.

Maxwell Geismar views The Sea Wolf as "the study of a cruel and to a large degree corrupt 'natural man'."[6] Like White Fang, Wolf Larsen is the unerring "mechanism of a primitive fighting beast."[7] The omnipresence of "physical prowess and virility, the adulation of the masculine body" is symptomatic of the typical London hero who derives pleasure from physical contests, especially when the battle involves death.[8] Violence accompanies a mode of perception, an emergent system of meaning and value. Wolf Larsen's materialistic philosophy of life reflects not only his view of the world, but his justification for tormenting his crew: "'I believe that life is a minute, an hour, a year, or a hundred years, but that in the end will cease to move. The big eat the little that they may continue to move, the strong eat the weak that they may retain their strength. The lucky eat the most and move the longest, that is all'."[9] Like

Malthus and Spencer, Larsen insists upon fitness of mental and physical character. Death, on the other hand, awaits those who are victims of their own stupidity or weak viscera. Ironically, Wolf Larsen's death results from his inability to adapt--"to retain his strength"--because his view of life is too contradictory.

In a 1914 letter to Ralph Kasper, a socialist and close friend, London echoes Wolf Larsen's philosophy:

> I have always inclined toward Haeckel's position. In fact, "incline" is too weak a word. I am a hopeless materialist. I see the soul as nothing else but the sum of the activities of the organism. I believe that when I am dead, I am dead. I believe that with my death I am just as much obliterated as the last mosquito you and I smashed.[10]

London's philosophy, like Larsen's reflects his preoccupation with evolution. Success is dependent upon an individual's breeding. If he is a pure breed who has acquired physical and intellectual strength from his ancestors, his chances of survival are enhanced.

The Sea Wolf seems to have been drawn from the back pages of Jack London's life. At the age of seventeen, London signed on for a seven month voyage aboard the sealing schooner _Sophia Sutherland_. Although the captain was not a Wolf Larsen, London listened to the sailors' stories of vengeful, sadistic captains who habitually tormented their crews. The men aboard the _Sophia Sutherland_ were liken to those on Wolf Larsen's _Ghost_. London, who escaped the fish patrol as an oyster pirate and endured the long, grueling march with Coxey's army, learned how to adapt. When he returned home, Floria, his mother, persuaded him to write a short story for the San Francisco Morning Call; his "Story of a Typhoon off the Coast of Japan" won first prize for the best descriptive story. London would later proclaim himself to be "an acknowledged and successful writer of sea-matter" who drew from his divers reservoir of experiences to write one of the greatest sea novels.[11]

Wolf Larsen is a projection of Jack London. Their philosophy of life echoes their incessant struggle for survival and their eventual rise to success. Their lives were replete with "infinite ambition and infinite loneliness, receiving neither help nor sympathy," and, as a result, what each accomplished was done "all for myself--navigation, mathematics, science, literature, and what not" (p. 70). They became rugged individualists since throughout their lives they were able to endure and last because of their ability to adapt during adversity.

Just as London's Klondike demanded toughness, savagery, and imagination from the men who tried to conquer the frontier, the ocean also defined success by man's ability to adapt to his environment. In The Sea Wolf, London portrays the sea as a silent, deliberate force which creates terror among the unprepared: "It was the cruelty of the sea, its relentlessness and awfulness . . . Life had become cheap and tawdry, a beastly and inarticulate thing, a soulless stirring of the ooze and slime" (p. 25). Although the sea should drive men to seek companionship under such stern conditions, the crew has become callous to the resonant cries of the unprepared. Wolf Larsen is especially subdued by indifference.

> I /Humphrey/ remarked the total lack of viciousness, or wickedness or sinfulness in his face. It was the face, I am convinced, of a man who did no wrong. And by this I do not wish to be misunderstood. What I mean is that it was the face of a man who either did nothing contrary to the dictates of his conscience, or who had no conscience. I am inclined to the latter way of accounting for it. He was a magnificent atavism, a man so purely primitive that he was of the type that came into the world before the development of moral nature. He was not immoral, but merely unmoral. (p. 68)

As an atavism, Wolf Larsen sheds the clothes of civilization. He fails to attain a feeling of comradeship and brotherhood because he is unwilling to blend his own desires with those who are weaker than he.

Although Wolf Larsen is never called a Superman in the novel, he is described as a man with tremendous physical and intellectual strength. "My first impression, or feel of the man . . . was of his strength," says Humphrey.

> And yet, while he was of massive build, with broad shoulders and deep chest, I could not characterize his strength as massive. It was what might be termed a sinewy, knotty strength, of the kind we ascribe to lean and wiry men, but which, in him, because of his heavy build, partook more of the enlarged gorilla order. What I am striving to express is this strength itself, more as a thing apart from his physical semblance. It was a strength we are wont to associate with things primitive, with wild animals, and the creatures we imagine our tree-dwelling prototypes to have been--a strength savage, ferocious, alive in itself, the essence of life in that it is the potency of motion, the elemental stuff itself out of which the many forms of life have been molded. . . . " (p. 13)

Humphrey quickly discovers that Larsen reacts physically to all crises. For example, after Wolf tells the cabin-boy that he will be a boat-puller and the boy refuses Wolf's orders, Larsen springs "six feet across the deck" and drives his fist into the young man's stomach (p. 20-21). Humphrey is sickened by Larsen's brutality, but he learns that Larsen enjoys forcing men into submission.

When Humphrey, the new cabin-boy, goes into Wolf's state-room to make the bed, he is surprised to see the names of "Shakespeare, Tennyson, Poe, and DeQuincey. There were scientific works, too, among which were represented men such as Tyndall, Proctor, and Darwin. Astronomy and physics were represented, and I /Humphrey/ remarked Bullfinch's 'Age of Fable,' Shaw's 'History of English and American Literature,' and Johnson's 'Natural History' in two large volumes. Then there were a number of grammars . . . " (p. 33-34). Later, Humphrey discovers that Wolf, who has read Spencer, has confined his reading to the survival of the fittest: "Might is right, and that is all there is to it. Weakness is wrong. Which is a very poor way of saying that it is good for oneself to be strong, and evil for oneself to be weak--or better yet, it is pleasurable to be strong, because of the profits; painful to be weak, because of the penalties" (p. 55). Like Nietzsche's Zarathustra, Larsen is a "man utterly without what the world calls morals" (p.57). Wolf Larsen is the ideal Superman, but, according to London's vision of society, the individualist must be a group leader who strives for unity and peace in a collective society. To be a true Superman, he needs to become altruistic. Instead, Larsen delights in the fact that his crew hates him.

When Humphrey questions Wolf about altruism, Larsen replies that "'I do wrong always when I consider the interests of others'" (p. 55). Larsen does not understand that "altruism was imperative to his [Spencer's] ideal of highest conduct. Wolf Larsen, evidently, had sifted the great philosopher's teachings, rejecting and selecting according to his needs and desires" (p. 56). Jack London, like Wolf Larsen, has been accused of adopting only those aspects of contradictory philosophies which pleased him. Larsen refuses to perform acts which will benefit "'at the same time the man, his children, and his race'" (p. 56). Larsen replies that he

> 'Couldn't see the necessity for it, nor the common sense. I cut out the race and the children. I would sacrifice nothing for them. It's just so much slush and sentiment, and you must see it yourself, at least for one who does not believe in eternal life. With immortality before me, altruism would be a paying business proposition. I might elevate my soul to all kinds of altitudes. But with nothing eternal before me but death, given for a brief spell this yeasty crawling and squirming which is called life, why, it would be immoral for me to perform any act that was a sacrifice. Any sacrifice that makes me lose one crawl or squirm is foolish,--and not only foolish, for it is a wrong against myself and a wicked thing. I must not lose one crawl or squirm if I am to get the most out of the ferment. Nor will eternal movelessness that is coming to me be made easier or harder by the sacrifices or selfishnesses of the time when I was yeasty and acrawls.' (p. 56-57)

Wolf Larsen has nothing to live for but himself.

After several soliloquies, Humphrey decides that Larsen is "the perfect type of the primitive man" but "an anachronism in this culminating century of civilization. He is certainly an individualist of the most pronounced type. Not only that, but he is lonely. His tremendous virility and mental strength wall him apart" from his crew (p. 52). He seems resolved only to inflict violence on others. As a result, he suffers a slow mental and physical deterioration. His first mistake is in thinking about life--philosophizing. Like Nietzsche's Zarathustra, Larsen lives life too intensely without valuing the tender and aesthetic elements of human existence. Secondly, Larsen sees life as a struggle for survival, but he fails to realize that mankind and he stand a better chance of survival if they battle the stolid and indifferent universe collectively.

Humphrey, on the other hand, is jerked from his world of snobbery--civilization--into a society of ruthlessness and brutality. He is traveling in fog across San Francisco Bay on _The Martinez_ when it is rammed and sunk. Humphrey is washed out to sea by an ebb tide and rescued by Wolf Larsen. While he is "floating, apparently, in the midst of a grey primordial vastness" (p. 7), Humphrey is transported into a type of twilight zone. The world of the _Ghost_ is quite unfamiliar to him. He has never worked for a living; instead, as Wolf so tersely puts it, Humphrey has stood "'on dead men's legs. You've never had any of your own. You couldn't walk alone between two sunrises and hustle the meat for your belly for three meals'" (p. 18). Later, Humphrey receives further ridicule from Larsen when he is nicknamed "Hump . . . I was known by no other name, until the term became a part of my thought processes and I identified it with myself, thought of myself as Hump, as though Hump were I and had always been I" (p. 27). With this note of sarcasm, Van Weyden is fully immersed into an unfamiliar world where his social prestige and position are of no value. He either must adapt to his new environment or die.

Larsen assigns Van Weyden to the lowly position of cabin-boy. Although Humphrey detests the senseless violence on board the ship, he is also in constant awe of Wolf Larsen's tremendous virility and intelligence. He sees Larsen as a man of action. All time seems to echo through Larsen: "I /Larsen/ know truth, divine good from evil, right from wrong. My vision is clear and far" (p. 51). Humphrey, on the other hand, does not have a vision. He is "a scholar and a dilettante" who had lived "a placid, uneventful sedentary existence all my days--the life of a scholar and a recluse on an assured and comfortable income. Violent life and athletic sports had never appealed to me" (p. 29). Humphrey yearns for a source by which he can transcend his his new level of existence.

Humphrey is forced to help Cooky, but, as Larsen already knows, Van Weyden discovers that he must protect himself. He learns the law of the "club and fang."

> He /Cooky/ even ventured to raise his fist to me, but I was becoming animal-like myself, and I snarled in his face so terribly that it must have frightened him back. It is no pleasant picture I can conjure up of myself, Humphrey Van Weyden, in that noisome ship's galley,

> crouched in a corner over my task, my face raised to the face of the creature about to strike me, my lips lifted and snarling like a dog's, my eyes gleaming with fear and helplessness and the courage that comes of fear and helplessness. I do not like the picture. It reminds me too strongly of a rat in a trap. I do not care to think of it; but it was effective, for the threatened blow did not descend. (p. 60)

Larsen immediately promotes Humphrey to first mate, because Van Weyden responds like a cornered animal to Cooky's threat. However, Humphrey questions his own action because he reacted without thinking first. He is beginning to acquiesce to the "raw animal" within him.

Later, Van Weyden realizes that he can never be the decadently over-civilized man he once was. Wolf Larsen changed him: "He had opened up for me the world of the real, of which I had known practically nothing and from which I had always shrunk. I had learned to look more closely at life as it was lived, to recognize that there were such things as facts in the world, to emerge from the realm of mind and idea and to place certain values on the concrete and objective phases of existence" (p.108). Humphrey's feelings and actions are a result of revived racial memory which replace his old, decayed civilized habits. He can now meet new challenges. When he is stranded on an unhabited seal island, his atavistic instincts begin to surface. "I shall never forget, in that moment, how instantly conscious I became of my manhood. The primitive deeps of my nature stirred. I felt masculine, the protector of the weak, the fighting male . . . the youth of the race seemed burgeoning in me, over-civilized man that I was, and I lived for myself the old hunting days and forest nights of my remote and forgotten ancestry" (p. 201). Wolf Larsen transformed Van Weyden into a man. He awakened the savage resourcefulness of Humphrey's past. Wolf succeeds by showing Humphrey the artificiality of civilization.

Van Weyden is also stirred to action when Maud Brewster, a famous poetess, is brought on board the Ghost. Again, Larsen ridicules Humphrey in front of Maud: "'Look at him now. True, he is not what you would term muscular, but still he has muscles, which is more than he had when he came aboard. Also, he has legs to stand on. You would not think so to look at him, but he was quite unable to stand alone at first'" (p. 133). Later on, Humphrey's transformation is nearly complete when he begins to feel the need to protect another person.

> The coming of Maud Brewster into my life seemed to have transformed me. After all, I thought, it is better and finer to love than to be loved, if it makes something in life so worth while that one is not loath to die for it. I forget my own life in the love of another life; and yet, such is the paradox, I never wanted so much to live as right now when I place the least value on my own life. I never had so much reason for living, was my concluding thought; and after that, until I dozed, I contented myself with trying to pierce the darkness to where I knew Maud crouched low in the sternsheets, watchful of the foaming sea and ready to call me on an instant's notice. (p. 185)

And later, when clubbing the seals, Humphrey begins to feel "masculine, the protector of the weak, the fighting male. And, best of all, I felt myself the protector of my loved one . . . and that the strength in me had quieted her and given her confidence, filled me with an exultant joy" (p. 201). Like Humphrey, Maud adapts herself to the primitive environment and, when Larsen attacks Humphrey, she comes to his aid fighting like an animal.

For London, a help-mate was an important factor for man because she reinforced man's belief in himself. In The Sea Wolf, Maud Brewster represents London's view of woman integrated with man:

> All my [Humphrey's] handiwork was strong, none of it beautiful; but I knew that it would work, and I felt myself a man of power as I looked at it.
> "I did it! I did it! With my own hands I did it!" I wanted to cry aloud.
> But Maud and I had a way of voicing each other's thoughts, and she said, as we prepared to hoist the mainsail:
> "To think, Humphrey, you did it all with your own hands!"
> "But there were two other hands," I answered. "Two small hands, and don't say that was a phrase, also, of your father."
> She laughed and shook her head, and held her hands up for inspection.
> "I can never get them clean again," she wailed, "nor soften the weather-beat."
> "Then dirt and weather-beat shall be your guerdon of honor," I said, holding them in mine; and, spite of my resolutions, I would have kissed the two dear hands had she not swiftly withdrawn them.
> Our comradeship was becoming tremulous. I had mastered my love long and well, but now it was mastering me. Willfully had it disobeyed and won my eyes to speech, and now it was winning my tongue--ay, and my lips, for they were mad this moment to kiss the two small hands which had toiled so faithfully and hard. And I, too, was mad. There was a cry in my being like bugles calling me to her. And there was a wind blowing upon me which I could not resist, swaying the very body of me till I leaned toward her, all unconscious that I leaned. And she knew it. She could not but know it as she swiftly drew away her hands, and yet could not forbear one quick, search-

> ing look before she turned away her eyes. (p. 246-247)

As "mate-woman," Maud exerts little influence over him, but she is praised for being noble and willing to produce off-spring. In the Kempton-Wace Letters, London celebrates the mate-woman: "You bid me tell her what she is to me. Which is to bid me tell her what she already knows, to tell her that she is the Mother Woman; that of all women she is dearest to me: that of all the walks of life, that one is pleasantest wherein I may walk with her. . . . "[12] With Maud, Humphrey can return to San Francisco with his new found strength and a good woman.

In 1905 London offered his own interpretation of The Sea Wolf:

> I want to make a tale so plain that he who runs may read, and then there is the underlying psychological motif. In "The Sea Wolf" there was, of course, the superficial descriptive story, while the underlying tendency was to prove that the superman cannot be successful in modern life. The superman is anti-social in his tendencies, and in these days of our complex society and sociology he cannot be successful in his hostile aloofness. Hence the unpopularity of the financial superman like Rockefeller; he acts like an irritant in the social body.[13]

As Henry Child Walcutt notes, Wolf Larsen is not "destroyed by social forces," he is "destroyed by something from within him. . . . "[14] Wolf dies because "'he had too great strength'" , and Humphrey and Maud live because they can cope in both a civilized and primitive society. Now, they can not only perpetuate the species, but they know higher values; that survival of the species depends upon altruism. Men must cooperate and employ their imaginations when confronting an indifferent, cruel universe; otherwise, man is doomed to failure. In order to thrive, not merely survive, mankind must pool its resources if it is to control its destiny.

London's Martin Eden would again examine the conflict of the individual in modern society. Martin Eden, like Wolf Larsen, dies because of his excessive vitality. However, Before Adam, London's prehistoric novel, depicts hope for man when he learns that the strength of all men can be achieved when the members of society are allowed to participate in the group effort.

ENDNOTES

[1] *Letters From Jack London*, King Hendricks and Irving Shepard, eds. (NY: Odyssey Press, 1965), p. 41.

[2] Earle Labor, *Jack London* (NY: Twayne, 1974), p. 94.

[3] Conway Zirkle, *Evolution, Marxian Biology, and the Social Scene* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1959), p. 331.

[4] *Letters From Jack London*, pp. 463-464.

[5] Joan London, *Jack London and His Times* (1939; rpt. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1968), p. 252.

[6] Maxwell Geismar, *Rebels and Ancestors: The American Novel, 1890-1915* (NY: Hill & Wang, 1963), p. 153.

[7] Geismar, p. 153.

[8] Geismar, p. 179.

[9] Jack London, *The Sea Wolf* (1904; rpt. NY: Bantam Books, 1964), p. 35. All further references to *The Sea Wolf* will be noted parenthetically within the text.

[10] *Letters From Jack London*, p. 425.

[11] *Letters From Jack London*, p. 196.

[12] Jack London, *The Kempton-Wace Letters* (1903; rpt. NY: Haskell House, 1968), pp. 240-241.

[13] Charmian London, *The Book of Jack London* (NY: Century, 1921), II, p. 57.

[14] Charles Child Walcutt, *American Literary Naturalism, A Divided Stream* (1956; rpt. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1977), p. 53.

CHAPTER V

BEFORE ADAM: A CASE FOR EVOLUTIONARY RACISM

In 1906, Jack London wrote to S. S. McClure that he was completing "a short-long story" and that it was "the most primitive thing ever written, and I think I am doing it in a lively and interesting fashion."[1] Although McClure refused to print Before Adam, George Brett of MacMillan Company published the novel, and it sold approximately 66,000 copies the first year. London accurately predicted the novel's appeal and acceptance, for even Loren Eiseley noted in 1962 that "no writer has since produced so moving and vivid a picture of man's primordial past as has Jack London."[2] Before Adam derived from London's fascination for prehistory and evolution, and, as a product of his interest in race, primitivism, and atavism.

Although he was sued by Stanley Waterloo, author of The Story of Ab, on charges of plagiarism--the charges were later dropped--London stated that he wrote Before Adam "as a reply to yours [Waterloo's], because yours was unscientific. You crammed the evolution of a thousand generations into one generation--something at which I revolted from the first time I read your story."[3] Later, in a letter to C. F. Lowrie, a socialist comrade, London wrote that Before Adam's purpose was twofold: to show "the mistakes and lost off-shoots in the process of biologic evolution; and that in a single generation the only device primitive man, in my story, invented was the carrying of water and berries in gourds."[4] London not only demonstrates the excessive slowness of social evolution, but he also illustrates how the human race, because it is part of the animal world, will continue to advance and develop toward perfection.

London's fascination for prehistory and evolution was not unique. With the dawn of the twentieth century and scientific speculation concerning man's development, especially his mental capacity, writers became interested in the transition of modern man from apes. Besides Waterloo's The Story of Ab (1897), James De Mille's A Strange Manuscript Found in a Copper Cylinder (1888) tells the story of the English sailor Thomas More who, when washed into an antipodal society, must survive against prehistoric beasts. More's manuscript is eventually discovered by other sailors who verify the creatures described and conduct a scientific analysis on the manuscript to determine whether or not it was papyrus. The analysis and the identification of dinosaurs are meant to employ scientific data to determine that the "lost race" that More discovers is composed of Shem's children, who were somehow left there by the Ark.

H. Rider Haggard's "She Who Must Be Obeyed" (1887) and Jules Verne's A Journey to the Center of the Earth (1872) were the two most prominant writings to use the "lost race" motif. Haggard's short story detailed the romance of a young naval lieutenant and a priestess of a lost city against an exotic, primitive setting. Ayesha, the priestess, is the beautiful temptress who can never be possessed. Verne's novel, on the other hand, presents a story of wild, marvelous romances and adventures of the men of modern science. The Illustrated Review praised Verne for utilizing "scientific information through the book."[5] These stories, and others, depict the diversity of man's scientific imagination and interest in discovering "lost races" and man's evolution.

By 1912 Edgar Rice Burroughs, the most popular of the prehistoric writers, had published his first story in All-Story, a pulp magazine. The Tarzan of the Apes series, At the Earth's Core (1914), and The Land that Time Forgot (1918) which is considered to be his best work, have passed the hundred million mark in sales. Although literary critics often refuse to speak about Burroughs' work, at least without embarrassment, he was to become the king of formulas: sex is titillating but never consummated, and violence is glamorized. Tarzan's creation was not necessarily one of great ingenuity, but he represents an ideal evolutionary adaptation. Born to an upper-class family, he is the lone survivor of a plane crash in Africa. There, he is nursed by the animals until he is able to live on his own. Tarzan is a perfect example of primordialism:

a primitive brute exists beneath the surface of this child born to cultured parents. His powerful body and alert brain prove to be too much for Tarzan's enemies in the jungle. Burrough's characters and fiction are successful because they achieve a balance between the amazing subject matter and a powerful presentation. His stories are not philosophical, but they have tremendous durability because Burroughs tells a tale.

Jack London is generally remembered for being an arresting story teller and a writer whose works emit the same vitality for living that London sought in life. Before Adam is not only one of London's best propaganda stories, but it vividly portrays the life of man's ancestors. The story is set in prehistoric times in an age when men were in the process of changing from tree life to life on the ground. Employing the three major stages of human evolution as presented by the nineteenth century Darwinists, London traces man's development from the arboreal stage, as represented by the Tree People, to the semi-terrestrial stage, which is the "missing link" stage, to the Fire People who have the shape of men. Big-Tooth, the narrator, whose parents are Tree People, joins a group of Cave People, the Folk, who do not understand the meaning of group unity or cooperation. Red-Eye, who is an atavism to apes and the discordant element in the horde, terrorizes the tribe by running "rough-shod over all our customs."[6] No individual dares to challenge Red-Eye because of his great size and strength. The tribe consists of individual families each hostile and afraid of the other families, and each fending for itself. Eventually, the horde learns the value of group cooperation after surviving the separate attacks of Sabor-Tooth, a tiger, a band of Fire People, and Red-Eye; however, the tribe is inevitably destroyed by the progressive units of Fire People who also band together in a united effort to increase their territory.

London's work does not demean our ancestors. His novel is intended to explore man's transition, through the narrator, as man develops love for a single woman, tames fire, invents weapons and the canoe, and becomes aware of the need for a brotherhood of man. The grim, harsh world of the jungle serves as the backdrop for man's early years when he is thought to have lived in a free, happy Eden; however, he is taunted by reptiles as he walks; surrounded by lakes, rivers, and swamps which are inhabited by unknown beasts, early man must live in continual fear of being hunted by other men or being eaten by larger beasts.

Man's line of descent and the destruction of a society, retreat before stronger breeds, are a natural part of the evolutionary scheme. Mankind's "first organized societies," said Benjamin Kidd in his widely published Social Evolution,

> must have been developed like any other advantage, under the sternest of natural selection. In the flux and change of life the members of those groups of men which in favorable conditions first showed any tendency to social organisation, became possessed of a great advantage over their fellows, and these societies grew up simply because

> they possessed elements of strength which led to the disappearance before them of other groups of men with which they came into competition.[7]

Later, Theodore Roosevelt, in "The Strenuous Life" (1899), warned that society's evolution involved the survival of the fittest.

> The timid man, the lazy man, the man who distrusts his country, the over-civilized man, who has lost the great fighting, masterful virtues, the ignorant man, and the man of dull mind, whose soul is incapable of feeling the mighty lift that thrills 'stern men with empires in their brains'--all of these, of course, shrink from seeing the nation undertake its new duties. . . .
>
> I preach to you, then, my countrymen, that our country calls not for the life of ease but for the life of strenuous endeavor. The twentieth century looms before us big with the fate of many nations. If we stand idly by, if we seek merely swollen, slothful ease and ignoble peace, if we shrink from the hard contests where men must win at hazard of their lives and at the risk of all they hold dear, then the bolder and stronger peoples will pass us by, and will win for themselves the domination of the world.[8]

Rev. Josiah Strong's _Our Country: Its Possible Future and Its Present Crisis_ (1885), Theodore Roosevelt's _The Winning of the West_ (1889), James K. Hosmer's _Short History of Anglo-Saxon Freedom_ (1890), and John W. Burgess' _Political Science and Comparative Constitutional Law_ (1890) were inspired by the drama of racial expansion and how nations, like individuals, follow the law of progress which is the law of evolution.

In "The Human Drift," London wrote that race and territorial expansion were a result of man's "hunger-need . . . to get something to eat, to get more to eat than he can get at home"; therefore, "all his [man's] days, down all the past, have been spent in killing. And from the fear-stricken, jungle-lurking, cave haunting creature of long ago, he won the empery over the whole animal world because he developed into the most terrible and awful killer of all the animals. He found himself crowded. He killed to make room, and as he made room ever he increased and found himself crowded, and ever he went on killing to make room."[9] If society is weak, then it will fall to the prodigious killer; if society is decadent, then it will deteriorate and be swept away by those who are more prepared for battle. Anglo-Saxon expansion included the gifts of liberty and Christianity. Although Mexico and the Philipines would be the first countries to receive these blessings, eventual subjugation was grounded in Spencer: elimination of the unfit. Racial superiority, therefore, was necessary to avoid the decay of society and to spread the gospel. London, like Roosevelt, believed that the Anglo-Saxon race was Nature's chosen race, and they wanted the entire race to participate in their dream.

Before Adam, like The Call of the Wild, White Fang, "The Yellow Peril," and numerous other writings, reflects London's eclectic and contradictory social philosophy. London's stories, like some by Rudyard Kipling, are "based upon his special knowledge of the remote areas of the world and the lives of men who fought for survival against other men and their environment in order to perpetuate their race."[10] According to Richard O'Connor, Before Adam's prehistoric setting was just "one more facet of his [London's] escapism, once expressed by running away to sea, to hoboing, to the Klondike."[11] In The Call of the Wild, Buck's return to the "luring and compelling" call is a result of "racial memory," or what Maxwell Geismar labels as the return "of memory as inherited habit, that was at the start, through long aeons, a very conscious and alert process of behavior. . . ."[12] Or, as the title implies, Buck's return "to the wilderness ways of his ancestors is complete with fireside dreams of cave life and long-armed hairy men."[13] Nonetheless, Buck "instinctively" returns to the call of his ancestors and to lead the pack against the Yeehats. As leader of the pack, Buck functions as London's initial literary application of the *Übermensch* figure working with society.

London's brand of socialism involved the application of natural selection to society. He wrote that socialism, like racism and individualism, was intended for only the elect.

> Socialism is not an ideal system, devised by man for the happiness of all life; nor for the happiness of all men; but it is devised for the happiness of certain kindred races. It is devised so as to give more strength to these certain kindred favored races so that they may survive and inherit the earth to the extinction of the lesser, weaker races. The very men who advocated socialism may tell you of the brotherhood of all men, and I know they are simply instruments, working blindly for the betterment of these certain kindred races, and working detriment to the inferior races they would call brothers. It is the law; they do not know it, perhaps; but that does not change the logic of events.[14]

Later, London vehemently stated that he was "a White Man first, and a socialist second," and maintained that the Anglo-Saxon would eventually triumph over other races because "God abhors a mongrel. . . . Consult the entire history of the human world in all ages past, and you will find that the world has ever belonged to the pure breed and has never belonged to the mongrel."[15] London viewed eugenics as a means of securing societal inheritance of physical and moral strength.

The premise for Before Adam is based on what August Weismann, a nineteenth century German biologist, termed "germ-plasm" which carried "the memories of the whole evolution of the race" (p. 20). Richard Hofstadter says that according to Weismann's germ-plasm theory, "social evolution must be drawn along stricter Darwinian lines; if there was to be any progress at all it must come from a sever reliance upon natural selection."[16] London's focus in Before Adam is on anthropoids since "animals are unequal this allows for the appearance of forms with finer adjustment to the environment, and the transmission of such superiority to succeeding generations brings about progress."[17] London believed that the scientific selective breeding techniques practiced by stock breeders should be applied to humans because "the future human world belongs eugenics, and will be determined by the practice of eugenics," and the same "stolid, practical-headed judgement of a stock breeder should apply with equal force to the breeding of humans. Humans breed in ways quite similar to those of animals; and if humans misbreed, the results are misbreeds."[18] Note how London's genetic and racial preoccupation corresponds to his credence that socialism "is devised for the happiness of certain kindred races."

In Before Adam the modern narrator recounts his dreams of prehistory when men were in the process of becoming man. The linkage between the modern narrator and Big-Tooth, the ancestor, is that they are both "freaks" of heredity because in his "falling dreams he never strikes bottom. To strike bottom would be destruction. Those of our arboreal ancestors who struck bottom died forthwith. True, the shock of their fall was communicated to their cerebral cells, but they died immediately, before they could have any progeny. You and I are descended from those that did not strike bottom" (14-15). Just as the young narrator ascribes his dreaming to atavism, so London emphasized that the descendants of the fittest will continue to produce a favored race. Although, as Richard Gid Powers points out, Before Adam "dramatizes evolutionary superiority," London maintains that the Anglo-Saxon race remains superior because it adapts to the environment better than the other races.[19] In a letter to Cloudesley Johns, London explained his position on white supremacy as the result of his being "an Evolutionist, believing in Natural Selection. . . ."[20] Later in a statement echoing Benjamin Kidd, London stated that the Anglo-Saxons "are a right-seeking race" because they are steeped in tradition, especially religious traditions.[21]

Although the modern narrator initially fears the "horror of his dreaming" (p. 3), he discovers later, while in college, that evolution provides the explanation for the "disassociation of personality" which he experiences. His world is one of "instinctual emotion and, in its purest expression, of complete animal identification was the one in which he moved so easily and so instinctively himself."[27] According to the scientific material available to London and his understanding of it, the narrator's "disassociation of personality" was a return to the atavistic self which allows him to trace society's development. The narrator's atavistic self is a fine example of the Darwinian unconscious. Charles Child Walcutt defines atavism as being "a condition in which one's primitive self, with its assumed strength and ferocity, is close to the civilized surface. Its presence argues greater adaptability in its possessor. . . ."[23] For Big-Tooth and the Folk, imitation is not only a learning experience, but a means of survival. When the more progressive members of the Folk move from trees to caves, the rest of the horde follows. When the older Folk "chatter and scold" the Sabor-Tooth and wild boar, the younger ones do so because they are "imitating their mother's cries" (p. 31). The Folk's adaptability and development represent only the second stage in the chain of human evolution: progress from tree-life to life on the ground. When the Folk are under attack by superior forces they can intuit a need for group effort, but their past success in staying alive has been a combination of cunning, cowardice, and agility to avoid conflict, not a planned effort.

Red-Eye functions as an antisocial irritant *übermensch* figure. Red-Eye, "a monster, the abysmal brute" (p. 209) is non-moral. Whenever he tires of a particular mate, he kills her and takes another female as his new mate. If she is "married," he kills her husband. Sure that "no single man, by himself, can defeat or kill Red-Eye" (p. 112), the Folk offer a mere verbal mutiny, but, since they are, by heredity, cowardly and physically incapable of expressing and understanding abstract thought, they become inarticulate beasts who can only "scold and chatter" while their fellow tribesmen are killed whenever they try to defend their loved ones or property.

> We were very angry, insanely, vociferously angry. Beating our chests, bristling, and gnashing our teeth, we gathered together in our rage. We felt the prod of gregarious instinct, the drawing together as though for united action, the impulse toward cooperation. In dim ways this need for united action was impressed upon us. But there was no way to express it. (p. 151)

This statement, like London's ethic of club and fang, advocates active participation in the world; yet, both statements are at the same time pervaded by a sense of repulsion from it. Although the Cave People "feel" a need for united action, fear, which accelerates the Cave People's growth for involvement or action against their assailant, controls them.

The Folk are either killed or driven off their land by the Fire People who symbolize the next biological link between the Folk and modern man. The modern narrator's description of the Fire People, as seen through the eyes of Big-Tooth, illustrates London's conception of the evolutionary tree and how human evolutionary stages overlapped.

> They were less stooped than we, less springy in their movements. Their backbones and hips and knee-joints seemed more rigid. Their arms were not so long as ours either, and I did not notice that they ever balanced themselves when they walked, by touching the ground on either side with their hands. Also, their muscles were more rounded and symmetrical than ours, and their faces were more pleasing. Their nose orifices opened downward; likewise the bridges of their noses were more developed, did not look so squat nor crushed as ours. Their lips were less flabby and pendent, and their eye-teeth did not look so much like fangs. However, they were quite thin-hipped as we, and did not weigh much more. Take it all in all, they were less different from us than were we from the Tree People. Certainly, all three kinds were related, and not so remotely related at that. (pp. 162-163)

The Fire People are able to defeat the Folk because they are more physically adroit and because they are dominated by a greater fear: hunger. Although they had a smaller population, the Fire People were still crowded, and London is demonstrating how Malthus' "Law of Population" applied to man's subsistance even when he was in the hunter stage of development. Driven by their fear of hunger-pangs, of being hunted, and of being eaten, the Fire People must either find new food supplies, take over someone else's food, or be killed in the process. During their search for new food sources, the Fire People developed advanced weapons for war: bows and arrows. In "The Human Drift," London points out that as soon as man's "evolution permitted, he made himself better devices for killing than the old natural ones of fang and claw. . . . . Nations that faltered, that waxed prosperous in fat valleys and rich river deltas, were swept away by the drifts of stronger men who were nourished on the hardships of deserts and mountains and who were more capable with the sword."[29] According to the "survival of the fittest" doctrine, the Fire People adapt to their changing needs and develop towards a higher complexity.

Most importantly, the Fire People create a means of verbal communication. Whereas the Folk can only "cause sound" (p. 196) and must depend on pantomime to illustrate thought, since the simplest abstractions are beyond their understanding, the Fire People employ "their cries and yells" as part of their planned assault. When the Fire People decide to increase the boundaries of their territory, they do so as if "it must have been a deliberately executed plan" (p. 224), while the Folk each "fought and acted for himself. . . . " (p. 217). The Fire People exemplify London's conception of societal progression.

A wizened old hunter, who directs the seige on the Folk, the Fire People, who are "logical and consecutive," functions as the übermensch figure for the Fire People (p. 95). They "obeyed him, and went here and there at his commands" (p. 219), and, as a result, the Folk are easily defeated. For London, the übermensch figure symbolizes a supreme individual who, by his intellectual and physical ability raised himself above the average man, would lead the struggle to gain more territory for the social group. In his essay "Wanted: A New Law of Development," London writes that the übermensch figure can abolish the "ancient law of development. Why should there be one empty belly in all the world, when the work of ten men can feed a hundred: What if my brother be not so strong as I? He has not sinned. Wherefore should he hunger--he and his sinless little ones: Away with the old law. There is food and shelter for all, therefore let all receive food and shelter."[25] Before Adam gains credibility as a tale of man's beginnings because it depicts the struggle for survival among the developing human species when man, who was thought to be a peace-loving animal, employed his atavism and need for brotherhood to maintain existence.

Traditionally, the übermensch figure tended to embody the individual more than brotherhood, but London interpreted übermensch to describe an individual who could direct and control nature, himself, and the populace. In this way his society was to work as a unit exerting its force as a protective, collective, and subsistive coterie placing emphasis on survival. In The Strength of the Strong (1914), London writes of the future strength of the pack: "In that day we will be so strong that all the wild animals will flee before us and perish. And nothing will withstand us, for the strength of each man will be the strength of all men in the world."[26] The value of London's society was that the members were allowed to participate in the group effort, and the individual, the _Übermensch_ figure, would lead the group in the proper direction.

London's interest in evolution, race, and socialism stemmed from his conviction that the eternal conflict between capitalism with its oppression of the people and Socialism which proposed to free the people would result in the emergence of a stronger, more coherent society. London's conception of socialism was a new "breed": a blend of Marxian and Nietzschean doctrines; however, the two contradictory theories were easily reconciled because the new social institutions will benefit the general mass of people who are led by leaders because "there will always be leaders. . . ."[27] Andrew Carnegie's _Gospel of Wealth_ also embodied this same paradox. Although London emphasized that the strong and weak would unite in the struggle to "wrest from the world liberty, freedom, and independence,"[28] he always believed that the earth belonged to the superior white race. His later novels would explore the future when the world was dominated by oligarchs, but, the people would still be involved in the struggle for freedom and their leader would continue to be the _Übermensch_.

ENDNOTES

[1] Jack London, Letters From Jack London. King Hendricks and Irving Shepard, eds. (NY: Odyssey, 1965), p. 204.

[2] Loren C. Eiseley, "Jack London, Evolutionist," Epilogue to Before Adam (1906; rpt. NY: Macmillan, 1962), p. 147.

[3] Letters From Jack London, p. 229.

[4] Letters From Jack London, p. 332.

[5] The Illustrated Review, 16 December 1872, pp. 373-374.

[6] Jack London, Before Adam (1906; rpt. NY: Macmillan, 1915), p. 20. All further references to Before Adam will be noted parenthetically within the text.

[7] Benjamin Kidd, Social Evolution. Rev. ed. (NY: Macmillan, 1900), p. 45.

[8] Theodore Roosevelt, "The Strenuous Life," American Ideals, The Strenuous Life, Realizable Ideals, XIII (NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926), pp. 323, 331.

[9] Jack London, "The Human Drift," The Human Drift (NY: Macmillan, 1917), pp. 2, 5.

[10] Richard O'Connor, Jack London: A Biography (Boston: Little, Brown, 1964), p. 246.

[11] O'Connor, p. 252.

[12] Maxwell Geismar, Rebels and Ancestors: The American Novel, 1890-1915 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1953), p. 196.

[13] Peter J. Schmitt, Back to Nature: The Arcadian Myth in Urban America (NY: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 128.

[14] Jack London as quoted by Joan London, Jack London and His Times: An Unconventional Biography (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1968), p. 146.

[15] Jack London as quoted by Charmian London, The Book of Jack London, I (NY: Century, 1921), pp. 297-298.

[16] Richard Hofstadter, Social Darwinism in American Thought (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1945), p. 80.

[17] Hofstadter, p. 44.

[18] *Letters From Jack London*, p. 398.

[19] Richard Gid Powers, ed. "Introduction" to *The Science Fiction of Jack London* (Boston: The Gregg Press Science Fiction Series, 1975), p. xv.

[20] *Letters From Jack London*, p. 27.

[21] Jack London as quoted by Joan London, pp. 212-213.

[22] Charles Child Walcutt, *American Naturalism, A Divided Stream* (1956; rpt. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1977), p. 95.

[23] Walcutt, p. 91.

[24] "The Human Drift," pp. 4-5.

[25] Jack London, "Wanted: A New Law of Development," *War of the Classes* (1905; rpt. NY: Macmillan, 1912), p. 225.

[26] Jack London, *The Strength of the Strong*, E. Haldeman-Julius, ed. (Girard, KA: Haldeman-Julius Co., 1914), p. 23.

[27] *Letters From Jack London*, p. 35.

[28] *Letters From Jack London*, p. 467.

CHAPTER VI

THE IRON HEEL: A COOPERATIVE SUPERMAN

Jack London began writing The Iron Heel during the spring of 1906. The preceding year, he ran on the Socialist platform for mayor of Oakland, but lost, and he began a highly touted lecture tour for the Intercollegiate Socialist Party. At Harvard, students crowded into the gallery and the doorways to hear the man whose Klondike stories spouted blood. The students listened quietly and attentively while he told of his breed of Socialism which, like his fiction, foretold a "bloody war--the war of one class in society against other classes. It is a destructive Socialism. He glories in it."[1] Later, while speaking at Yale University, London told the students that the Socialists wanted a society of active, aroused minds.

> We do not desire merely to make converts, to have our young men of the universities all become Socialists. We do not expect that, but want them to raise their voices for or against. If they cannot fight for us, we want them to fight against us--of course, sincerely fight against us, believing that right conduct lies in combating Socialism because Socialism is a great growing force. But what we do not want is that which obtains today and has obtained in the past of the university, a mere deadness and unconcern and ignorance so far as Socialism is concerned. Fight for us or against us. Raise your voices one way or the other; be alive! That is the idea upon which we are working.[2]

In New Haven, The Register's review cited London's performance and doctrines as "a sight for gods and men."[3] London believed that success sprang from strength. He wanted people, especially college students, to be either advocates of Socialism or worthy opponents. In any case, he was calling for revolution.

Although London's lecture series focused on pleas for political activism, he returned home to the comforts and sensual pleasures of his Beauty Ranch to begin construction of his sailboat, the Snark. Two years passed during which London shunned political involvement. He visited Hawaii, Tahiti, and the Marquesas. Then, on January 16, 1908, London wrote to his publisher, George Brett of Macmillan Company, that The Iron Heel should be published immediately because now is the right "psychological moment for it to appear, and that, what of the panic, the general trade depression, and the general situation in the United States for the past year, that the public is just ripe to boost The Iron Heel along in sales."[4] London's letter to Brett is paradoxical. On the one hand, London seems to have intentionally delayed publication of The Iron Heel until the proper collision of socio-economic interests was right. London was hoping that the phlegmatic proletariat, with enough encouragement, was now restless and angry enough to overthrow the economic monopolies and the government. On the other hand, London's concern is for money which he needed to maintain his self-indulging trips abroad and to buy more prize-winning animals for his Beauty Ranch. Contradictions, inaccurate interpretations, and philosophical diversity have plagued Jack London's novels, as well as his life.

The Iron Heel is Jack London's apocalyptic vision of a socialist utopia. This revolutionary, utopian fiction has proven to be an enduring, influential work. It has been translated and published widely; The Iron Heel is still the most popular novel by an American in Russia. Joan London writes that few of her father's works were "so intensely personal as The Iron Heel. His best knowledge of the class struggle and the socialist movement, his best speeches and essays he gave to Everhard /the hero/, as well as the achievements of other men."[5] When The Iron Heel was first published, critics, including the Socialists, either used caution about the novel's controversial ending or they simply ignored it. Socialists like Eugene Debs, Mary Marcy, and Anatole France admired the novel for its depiction of the rise of a Socialist state. In 1937, Leon Trotsky praised London and the novel for "the audacity and independence of its historical foresight. . . . " because

> /London/ saw incomparably more clearly and farther than all the social democratic leaders of that time taken together. But Jack London bears comparison in this domain not only with the reformists. One can say with assurance that in 1907 not one of the revolutionary Marxists, not excluding Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg, imagined so fully the ominous perspective of the alliance between finance capital and labor aristocracy. . . . In reading it one does not believe his own eyes: it is precisely the picture of fascism, of its economy,

> of its governmental technique, its political psychology![6]

By 1937, however, The Iron Heel was all too prophetic.

John Spargo, critic for the International Socialist Review, acknowledged London's "literary skill . . . in this ingenious and stirring romance. He has written nothing more powerful than this book. Nonetheless, the picture he gives is well calculated, it seems to me, to repel many whose addition to our forces is sorely needed; it gives a new impetus to the old and generally discarded cataclysmic theory; it tends to weaken the political Socialist movement by discrediting the ballot and to encourage the chimerical and reactionary notion of physical force."[7] This reaction did not surprise London. Later, in his resignation letter from the Socialist Party, he would criticise them for their "lack of fire and fight."[8]

More recently, George Orwell, who was himself quite a writer about fascism as well as an admirer of Jack London, praises London's depiction of the rulers' mentality in The Iron Heel: "It's one of the best statements of the outlook of a ruling class--of the outlook that a ruling class must have if it's to survive--that has ever been written."[9] More recently, Maxwell Geismar calls The Iron Heel "a textbook in the technics of social repression and the modes of class stratification through the conscious use of terrorism and a psychology of fear . . . " and states that the novel "was a key work--perhaps a classic work--of American radicalism."[10] Kenneth Lynn states that since London wrote about the future he can be placed "in the tradition of such American reform writers as Edward Bellamy and Ignatius Donnelly, who, previous to London, had discovered that the future could be employed as a way of attacking problems in the present."[11] London's own concern was to broadcast "some very excellent propaganda" and to detail the strategy of the ruling class even when the people were in opposition.[12]

The Iron Heel follows a long list of utopian/dystopian novels. Included in this tradition are such classics as Erasmus's Colloquia, More's Utopia (1516), Rabelais' Gargantua, Swift's Gulliver's Travels (1726), and Edward Bellamy's Looking Backward (1888); the latter was read by London, but, since its focus was machines, which created wealth for the citizenry, not revolution, London did not regard Looking Backward very highly. The utopian tradition has sought to predict realizable ideas. The word utopia conjures up images of man living in perfect harmony in a social order where everyone will be integrated into the whole and enjoy total freedom. However, the opposite is true of utopias. According to Robert C. Elliott, once this essence of utopia has been achieved--the surmounting of fragmentation--"human freedom is destroyed" because it is the condition of "man /who/ lives in a fragmented world to dream of an integrated world."[13] London has two aims: to employ the dystopian novel as a means of criticizing the existing order, and to create a blueprint of his ideal social structure.

The Iron Heel employs Edward Bellamy's device of looking forward by looking backward. Anthony Meredith, an historical authority in "419 B.O.M.," discovers a manuscript written by Avis Everhard which details the life of Ernest Everhard, the prominent leader of the proletariat.[14] He lead a mass revolt against the oppressive establishment called the Oligarchy or the Iron Heel, a term which Everhard coined when he envisioned that the workers "will be crushed under the iron heel of a despotism that has blackened the pages of the history of man. That will be a good name for that despotism, the Iron Heel" (p. 88). Ernest's belief in a future socialist utopia is grounded in fact, what he calls the inevitable forces of social evolution. Meredith edits and footnotes the manuscript when Ernest's Brotherhood of Man or the utopia has finally become reality. Nonetheless, Everhard's account of the Oligarchy, and the catastrophic defeat of the proletariat is more of a dystopian than utopian vision. Ernest, according to a footnote on the first page, was eventually captured and secretly executed in the spring of 1932 A.D.; never saw his utopian vision realized. His followers were so ably prepared for revolution that they were able to carry out the plans for the Second Revolt without delay.

In The Iron Heel, London extrapolates from what he called a "pseudo-scientific standpoint": social evolution.[15] Meredith, looking backward, holds that man's social and political evolution from "primitive communism, chattel slavery, serve slavery, and wage slavery" are "necessary stepping stones" to the future success of revolutionary socialism (xi-xii). The Oligarchy, however, is not part of the evolutionary social scheme. "It is a step aside, or a step backward" (xii). He continues:

> Black as Feudalism was, yet the coming of it was inevitable. What else than Feudalism could have followed upon the breakdown of that great centralized governmental machine known as the Roman Empire? Not so, however, with the Iron Heel. In the orderly procedure of social evolution there was no place for it. It was not necessary, and it was not inevitable. It must always remain the great curiosity of history. . . .
>
> Capitalism was adjudged by the sociologists of the time to be the culmination of bourgeois rule, the ripened fruit of the bourgeois revolution. And we of to-day can applaud that judgement. Following upon Capitalism, it was held, even by such intellectual and antagonistic giants as Herbert Spencer, that Socialism would come. Out of the decay of self-seeking capitalism, it was held, would arise that flower of the ages, the Brotherhood of Man. Instead of which, appalling alike to us who look back and to those that lived at the time, capitalism, rotten-ripe, sent forth that monstrous offshoot, the Oligarchy. (xii-xiii)

The Oligarchy is able to assume power because the proletariat and the middle-class merchants refuse to fight for what is rightfully theirs.

The Oligarchy represents the old law of development: man is selfish and will continue to be so. "That," according to Everhard, "is the meaning of the capitalist system" (p. 32). In footnotes, Meredith explains that the capitalistic state adhered to the doctrine of the survival of the fittest which exploited the worker and that, as a result, society is portrayed in terms of "pig-ethics" (p. 32): "The lords of society stole legally or else legalized their stealing, while the poorer classes stole illegally" (p. 43-44); "Men preyed upon one another like ravening wolves. The big wolves ate the little wolves . . . " (p. 48). Everhard maintains that "our boasted civilization is based upon blood, soaked in blood, and neither you [Avis] nor I nor any of us can escape the scarlet stain" (p. 54-55). The Oligarchy keeps the proletariat at bay since capitalism allows for the wolf-struggle in which the wealthy prey upon the poor like "ravening wolves" (p. 48). In other words, the capitalists maintain the present state of society by making the people slaves to the industrial machine. If a man loses an arm or is unable to continue working at his job, he is replaced. Production resembles a machine because the people are conceived to be slaves "to the industrial machine" until it stamps one's life out or works one to death (p. 55). If one part breaks down, another "appendage of the machine" is brought in to replace it.[16]

Speaking before the exclusive Philomath Club, which is composed of the "strongest-minded of the wealthy," Ernest leads a discussion on the inevitability of a class war (p. 73). He charges the Philomath's with incompetence and mismanagement of society, and then he proudly tells them that "twenty-five million" revolutionists will by conquest take all that the capitalists possess (p. 83). The workers will, like Marx proclaimed, "roll back the wheel of history" and abolish private property.[17] When his intellectual opponents respond to Everhard's "encyclopedic command of the field of knowledge" (p. 94), he punctures their arguments: "Sometimes he exchanged the rapier for the club and went smashing amongst their thoughts right and left. And always he demanded facts and refused to discuss theories. And his facts made for them a Waterloo" (p. 95). Finally, Wickson, a cool-headed capitalist, dispassionately and prophetically announces how the Oligarchy will defeat the worker's revolution.

> "A change, a great change, is coming in society; but, haply, it may not be the change the bear [the socialists] anticipates. The bear has said that he will crush us. What if we crush the bear?
> The world is ours, we are its lords, and ours it shall remain. As for the host of labor, it has been in the dirt since history began, and I read history aright. And in the dirt it shall remain so long as I and mine and those that come after us have the power. There is the word. It is the king of words--Power. Not God, not Mammon, but Power. Pour it over your tongue till it tingles with it. Power." (p. 96-97)

To this, Ernest can only respond "I am answered" (p. 97). Both men do not anticipate a peaceful, ballot-box coup, but a "roar of shell and shrapnel and in whine of machine guns" (p. 98). Death and the eventuality of a class war are inevitable.

Everhard's socialist brothers, like London's, underestimate the strength of the Oligarchy. Immediately, after Everhard's speech, the aristocrats gird-up for battle. They suppress books; they promote members of the favored unions to the position of the aristocracy of labor, and they create the brutal, stolid Mercenaries, who were once part of the old regular army. The new power structure is tuned to a machine-like precision: it was "forming more definitely and taking on the appearance and attributes of permanence" (p. 297). Distinct class lines are established, and, as a result, the Oligarchy itself undergoes a cohesive evolution. "As a class, they disciplined themselves. Every member had his work to do in the world, and this work he was compelled to do. There were no more idle-rich young men. Their strength was used to give united strength to the Oligarchy" (p. 299). The Oligarchy's final preparation for war creates growing discontent among the masses. The Oligarchs "lulled . . . and robbed the proletariat of its natural leaders" (p. 302). The Oligarch's social evolution is Spencerian because they have superior ability, foresight, and adaptability to help bring them through the class war. The upper class, not the proletariat, "recruits from all classes of the population" to form an aristocratic socialism, or what might be called a meritocratic socialism, spawned by Social Darwinism.[18]

Jack London was never completely satisfied with the socialist movement in America. The Russian revolution of 1905 and the organization of the I.W.W. in 1905 have been credited as the sources for the militant spirit in The Iron Heel.[19] London's indictment of the socialists was not necessarily of the proletariat but against the inability of the Party to produce a leader. Joan London notes that her father "had never considered the masses capable of helping themselves; on the contrary, he had long been convinced that the many 'fool men' would always have to be led by the few, superior individuals."[20] With this in mind, he set out to draw a character who embodied all the traits necessary to lead the people. He intentionally patterned the character of Ernest Everhard after himself.

Like London's previous novels, The Iron Heel is a novel of philosophical ideas and ideals, not a work with typical character development and realistic dialogue. Ernest Everhard, like Wolf Larsen, Buck, and Martin Eden, is Jack London again. Avis describes her husband as being "simple, direct, afraid of nothing, and he refused to waste time on conventional mannerisms. He was a natural aristocrat--and this in spite of the fact that he was in the camp of the non-aristocrats. He was a Superman, a blond beast such as Nietzsche has described, and in addition, he was aflame with democracy" (p. 6). "Healthy laborers already had aristocratic muscles and, when properly educated, would develop aristocratic brains. The very struggle for their rights, if won, would insure that labor was worthy."[21] Also, Everhard (ever hard) is a dominant force in society. Although he possesses a muscular body of average height and a superior mind, as did other of London's Nietzschean heroes, he does not share their contempt for the proletariat. Like London himself, Ernest "had been born in the working class, though he was a descendant of the old line of Everhards that for over two hundred years had lived in America. He was self-educated . . . " (p. 24-25). His voice became a clarion call to all who seek a new life.

As a Superman, Ernest Everhard represents a threat to the Oligarchy. A series of animal images during the Philomath debate foreshadows the future fang and claw-like battle. He tells Avis that "If you come, I'll shake them for you. I'll make them snarl like wolves . . . I shall menace their money bags. That will shake them to the roots of their primitive natures. If you can come, you will see the caveman, in evening dress, snarling and snapping over a bone. I promise you a great caterwauling and an illuminating insight into the nature of the beast. 'They've invited me in order to tear me to pieces'" (p. 74). Everhard's challenge to their power and wealth does elicit their wolf-like natures as "a low, throaty rumble arose. . . . It was the growl of the pack, mouthed by the pack, and mouthed in all unconsciousness" (p. 84). Ernest awakens the angry beast that, as aristocrats, symbolize humanity as opposed to animal-natures of the masses.

Everhard is also described as an animal. In the opening chapter, Avis refers to him as "My Eagle." Again, she returns to this image when he addresses the Philomaths: "'We want all that you possess. We want in our hands the reins of power and the destiny of mankind. Here are our hands. They are strong hands.' And as he spoke he extended from his splendid shoulders his two great arms, and the horse shoer's hands were clutching the air like eagle's talons. He was the spirit of regnant labor as he stood there, his hands outreaching to rend and crush his audience" (p. 83-84). It was Ernest's nature never to give quarter to the enemy.

Later, Everhard is given the opportunity to address a dinner for the small businessmen--the middle class. Their businesses, however, are gradually being replaced by the larger trusts, and, in a last ditch effort to keep their businesses, they try to disrupt the trusts. While they were winning, the businessmen spoke highly of their abilities to maintain "efficiency and enterprise," but, Ernest tells them, when they "are being eaten up in turn by the bigger dogs, wherefore you squeal. You are all playing the losing game, and you are all squealing about it" (p. 129). Then he tells them that they are doomed to perish. This is fact. This is science. "This is the fiat of evolution. It is the word of God" (p. 132). However, he says there is strength in numbers.

> 'Combination is stronger than competition. Primitive man was a puny creature hiding in the crevices of the rocks. He combined war upon his carnivorous enemies. They were competitive beasts. Primitive man was a combinative beast, and because of it he rose to primacy over all the animals. And man has been achieving greater and greater combinations ever since. It is combination versus competition, a thousand centuries long struggle, in which competition has always been worsted. Whoso enlists on the side of competition perishes.' (p. 132)

At this point, he tells them to throw their profits into the sea, to join the socialists because they offer "'a greater economic and social combination than any that has yet appeared on the planet. It is in line with evolution. You prefer to play atavistic roles. You are doomed to perish as all atavisms perish'" (p. 134). Since the tide of evolution leads to the inviolable perfection of society, London explains that anachronisms maintain the abuses, injustices, and suffering which the people presently endure.

Ernest and forty-nine other socialists are elected to Congress. The legal machinery prevents them from changing the laws because they are in the minority. Concurrently, the strength of the Iron Heel develops. The people of the abyss "lived like beasts in great squalid labor-ghettos festering in misery and degradation. All their liberties were gone. In all truth, there in the labor-ghettos is the roaring abysmal beast the oligarchs fear so dreadfully--but it is the beast of their own making. In it they will not let the ape and tiger die" (p. 302-303). Finally, labor decides to make a stand, but it is too late. The Mercenaries gun down the revolutionists, but the beast roars one more time.

> It was now dynamic--a fascinating spectacle of dread. It surged past my /‾Everhard's_7 vision in concrete waves of wrath, snarling and growling, carnivorous, drunk with whiskey from pillaged warehouses, drunk with hatred, drunk with lust for blood--men, women, and children, in rags and tatters, dim ferocious intelligences with all the godlike blotted from their features and all the fiendlike stamped in, apes and tigers, anaemic consumptives and great hairy beasts of burden, wan faces from which vampire society had sucked the juice of life, bloated forms swollen with physical grossness and corruption, withered hags and death's-heads bearded like patriarchs, festering youth and festering age, faces of fiends, crooked, twisted, misshapen monsters blasted with the ravages of disease and all the horrors of chronic innutrition--the

> refuse, the scum of life, a raging, screaming, screeching, demonical horde. (p. 326-327)

The people realize that life and death are analogous: neither has any meaning.

Everhard leads the socialists' terror organizations in one last effort to over-come the Oligarchy, but to no avail. "And through it all moved the Iron Heel, impassive and deliberate, shaking up the whole fabric of the social structure in its search for the comrades, combing out the Mercenaries, the labor castes, and all its secret services, punishing without mercy and without malice, suffering in silence all retaliations that were made upon it, and filling the gaps in its fighting line as fast as they appeared" (p. 353). The Oligarchy wins this battle, but War will be waged forever.

The Iron Heel ends in mid-sentence. Avis, according to Anthony Meredith, hid the manuscript when warned that the Mercenaries were coming. Ernest is caught, and his "secret execution . . . was the great event of the spring of 1932 A. D." (p. 1). The novel ends on a note of disillusionment. Although The Iron Heel concludes with a type of socialism, it is a socialism composed of supermen, not the people.

London believed that the people were unfit to govern themselves. As a result, they needed someone to direct them toward the goals that they neither understood nor wanted. The people needed a superman. Ernest Everhard is that superman, but he must compete against a collective superman--the Oligarchy. Ernest and the plutocrats understand that the key to survival is discipline and preparation. The Oligarchs organize their forces, and they are powerful enough to prevent the proletariat from mobilizing their own forces. In the end, the downfall of the masses is reminiscent of Wolf Larsen's phrase that "might is right." The strong still dominate the weak.

The Iron Heel has had a tremendous impact on other utopian/dystopian novelists of the twentieth century. Like Orwell's *1984*, Zamyatin's *We*, and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, *The Iron Heel* is a prophetic vision which anticipates a future where freedom lies dead and all concepts of morality and freedom are forgotten.

ENDNOTES

[1] *New York Times*, February 1, 1906 as quoted by *Jack London at Yale* (Westwood, MA: Ariel Press, 1972), p. 22. *This pamphlet* includes speeches from London's Intercollegiate Socialist Party lecture tour (and several newspaper reviews).

[2] From "Jack London to Yale Men," *Press Comments and Remarks*, pp. 19-20.

[3] *The Register*, p. 26.

[4] *Letters From Jack London*, King Hendricks and Irving Shepard, eds. (NY: Odyssey Press, 1965), p. 255.

[5] Joan London, *Jack London and His Times*(1939; rpt. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1968), p. 307.

[6] Leon Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky on Literature and Art*, ed. Paul N. Siegel(NY: Pathfinder Press, 1970), pp. 221-224.

[7] John Spargo as quoted by Joan London, p. 310.

[8] Jack London as quoted by Joan London, p. 358.

[9] George Orwell as quoted by William Steinhoff, *George Orwell and the Origins of 1984*(Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1975), p. 16.

[10] Maxwell Geismar, *Rebels and Ancestors: The American Novel, 1890-1915* (NY: Hill & Wang, 1963), pp. 163,166.

[11] Kenneth Lynn, "Jack London: The Brain Merchant," *The Dream of Success* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1955), p. 97.

[12] Jack London, *The Iron Heel* (1907; rpt. NY: Grosset & Dunlap, 1910), p. 152. All further references to *The Iron Heel* will be noted parenthetically within the text. George Orwell was so taken with London's title and this metaphor that his hero, Winston Smith, remarks: "If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stomping on a human face--forever."

[13] Robert C. Elliott, *The Shape of Utopia: Studies in a Literary Genre* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 52.

[14] The "found manuscript" has been used by several science fiction writers. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and James DeMilles' *A Strange Manuscript in a Copper Cylinder* (1888) are prime examples of how one achieves a distancing effect from the reader by use of the "found manuscript." This, then, helps the writer create a "suspension of disbelief" on the part of the reader.

[15] *Letters From Jack London*, p. 235.

[16] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," Marx and Engels: Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy, ed. Lewis S. Feuer (1843; rpt. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1959), p. 14.

[17] Marx and Engels, p. 18.

[18] Marx and Engels, p. 15.

[19] Joan London, p. 305.

[20] Joan London, p. 306.

[21] Conway Zirkle, *Evolution, Marxian Biology, and the Social Scene* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1959), p. 336.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Earle Labor writes that "London's fantasies may not constitute his best work, but they are both readable and revealing."[1] They are readable because London was able to achieve a literary style which, like his dramatic themes, were "hammered out in sweat and blood"; his stories are revealing because they sprang from the deep well of personal experiences.[2] After London had acquired fame as an author, he was asked what things were requisite to be a best-selling author. He replied: "In my opinion, three positive things are necessary for success as a writer. First, a study and knowledge of literature as it is commercially produced today, Secondly, a knowledge of life, and Third, a working philosophy of life."[3] London had and worked hard to maintain all three. He meticulously studied the popular magazines of his day to discover what themes people wanted to read. Since Rudyard Kipling was the most popular stylist of the time, London would literally copy Kipling's stories in an attempt to emulate his writing style. Most importantly, London knew life. He had a philosophy. He lived it.

The prophetic vision of London was linked to his present by social and scientific developments. Seeing scientific knowledge as the incarnation of the future, London fused politics and science. For him, revolutionary socialism and evolutionary racism were equally fruitful methods for man to realize his aspirations in the present. This conviction, then, released man, the proletariat, from the fear of poverty and tyranny.

London's language abounds with images of food and physical gusto that express his total affirmation in the future of the proletariat.

> There I am content to labor, crowbar in hand, shoulder to shoulder with intellectuals, idealists, and class-conscious working men. . . .
>
> I look forward to a time when man shall progress upon something worthier and higher than his stomach, when there will be a finer incentive to impel men to action than the incentive of today, which is the incentive of the stomach. I retain my belief in the mobility and excellance of the human. I believe that spiritual sweetness and unselfishness will conquer the gross gluttony of today. And last of all, my faith is in the working class.[4]

The essence of London's revolutionary collectivism is its emphasis on the organic terms.

> It [socialism] is its purpose to wipe out, root and branch, all capitalistic institutions of present-day society. It presents a new spectacle to the astonished world,--that of an organized, international, revolutionary movement. It is the prime preachment of socialism that the struggle is a class struggle. The working class, in the process of social evolution, (in the very nature of things), is bound to revolt from the sway of the capitalistic class and to overthrow the capitalistic class. He [the capitalist] must learn that socialism deals with what is, not what ought to be.[5]

People and society are growing and developing an era of fulfillment greater than anything the world has seen.

Leading this charge into the future is the Superman who, when he hears the peoples' cries of agony, proclaims that socialism, or altruism, is the supreme destiny of society. He recognizes that capitalism is a malfunctioning, diseased political system, and that poverty and injustice can be cured since scientific knowledge has shown that socialism and evolution offer a salvation for mankind. The Superman personifies this very point. He is one of nature's elect. Being a superior creature who is dedicated to the pack, he leads them to what is naturally theirs: the abolition of property and the acquisition of political power.

London feared that capitalism, if it continued as it was at the turn of the century, would lead to greater political and social injustices. H. G. Wells, Zamyatin, and Orwell, as well as London, predicted a regimented future if the lives and the thought processes of the people were controlled by the State. Their worst fears have been realized. Millions have been murdered and brain-washed in concentration camps; those who have survived these nightmares discovered that the world has no place for them. "Social engineering" has been practiced in Russia and China; fascism and other political injustices have occured in Portugal, Spain, and Italy. Instead of a zeal for life, we seem headed towards greater political and social injustices.

The utopian/dystopian writer always issues a call for courageous and devoted action if man is to discover a solution for his political and social problems. If we evade action, life will only become more tragic. London's creative efforts suggest that a utopia is within man's grasp, but that it can only be achieved when all people, not just one individual, solidify an altruistic vision which will lead to the greatest happiness for the greatest number. London's accomplishment was not the recording of a future, but the construction of one based upon group individualism.

ENDNOTES

[1] Earle Labor, Jack London (NY: Twayne, 1974), pp. 105-106.

[2] Letters From Jack London, King Hendricks and Irving Shepard, eds. (NY: Odyssey Press, 1965), p. 116.

[3] Letters From Jack London, p. 437.

[4] Jack London, "What Life Means to Me," Jack London: American Rebel, ed. Philip Foner (NY: The Citadel Press, 1947), p. 399.

[5] Jack London, "Preface" to War of the Classes (1905; rpt. NY: Macmillan, 1912), pp. xiii, xiv, xvi.

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