

Trinity College

Trinity College Digital Repository

Senior Theses and Projects

Student Scholarship

Spring 2012

Jack London: A Life in Search of Love

Ian S. Bain

Trinity College, ibain804@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.trincoll.edu/theses>



Part of the [American Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Bain, Ian S., "Jack London: A Life in Search of Love". Senior Theses, Trinity College, Hartford, CT 2012.
Trinity College Digital Repository, <https://digitalrepository.trincoll.edu/theses/169>

Jack London: A Life in Search of Love

Ian Bain
American Studies Program
Senior Thesis
Advisor: Eugene Leach
Spring 2012

Table of Contents:

Foreword	3
Chapter 1: Solitary Youth	9
Chapter 2: Lover and Aspiring Writer	17
Chapter 3: The Descent: <i>The Kempton-Wace Letters</i> and "Salt of the Earth"	30
Chapter 4: Finding a Mate	43
Chapter 5: Philosophy and Women in <i>The Sea-Wolf</i>	49
Chapter 6: A Mate-Woman	62
Chapter 7: Martin Eden: On the Other Side	65
Chapter 8: Conclusions	82

Foreword

I was introduced to Jack London the way I imagine he has entered countless other lives. My sister and I were huddled around our parents' bed. The night before they had finished reading us *Watership Down* and we eagerly awaited the next family book. Apparently they were on an animal kick because they told us we were reading *Call of the Wild*. I had never heard of Jack London but was amazed by the transportive power of his words. It took us a few weeks to finish the book, always tackling a few chapters during our after dinner ritual. After finishing the *Call of the Wild*, my sister and I realized that he was the only author we had enjoyed equally in recent memory. So they read us *White Fang* and again we reveled in his words, living vicariously through Jack's adventure. Then, for over a decade I thought very little about Jack London. He was the writer of those great adventure stories I vaguely remembered from my childhood. I remembered his fiction like I remembered a movie. It was entertaining but had left me with no lasting value.

During my first two and a half years at College nothing about that changed. I had no reason to think about London or read his work until the Spring of my Junior year. I took an American thought and culture course with Professor Masur and *Martin Eden* was one of the assigned books. I noticed the book had been written by London but had never heard of it. Professor Masur's class met on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. When the time came to read *Martin Eden* I planted myself on the couch, prepared to attack the first hundred or so pages. Suddenly it was six in the morning, the sun was rising and the book was finished.

I looked up from the final page as if waking. The common room of my dormitory reappeared and as if for the first time I emerged from the world of London. When I later

learned that the book was an autobiographical narrative of London's rise from poverty to literary success I was blown away. Never had I felt so understood. The book retold Jack's struggle with maturation, love, aspirations, identity, loneliness, the list goes on and on. It was the way London captured that seemingly endless journey to find an existence that contents us, completes us as individuals, that had struck a chord. The feeling was inexplicable as London's words seemed to silently cry out, 'YOU ARE NOT ALONE!'

After finishing the book there was a response paper to write and class discussions to follow but it all felt like a let down. *Martin Eden* had awakened something in me and now that something was hungry. It needed context, information; it wanted more of London. My classes and a play kept me sufficiently busy for the rest of the semester. But over Spring Vacation I devoured his work. In seven days I read seven London novels. *The Sea-Wolf*, *The Iron Heel*, *The Road*, *People of The Abyss*, *The War of the Classes*, *Adventure* they all became a part of my lexis, to borrow from London, my 'philosophy of life.'

What drove my identification with Jack was the incredible dynamism of his writing. His interests and identity changed direction like a cutting horse and I had discovered him at a time when mine were doing the same. Jack stressed the essentiality of experience. That man had to throw himself into his interests in order to understand and grasp the world around him. In a moment I realized the absurdity of trying to plan the next five years of life in my daydreams. I needed time to feel the squeezing implications of reality outside the vacuum of my own mind. I realized I had no idea what I wanted my life to say, to stand for. Something in London's writing whispered that it could help me get there.

I decided that a senior thesis was the perfect disguise for such a selfish exploit and promptly drafted a proposal. As soon as it had been approved I began the process of

sinking my intellectual fangs into Jack London. The diversity of his interests and opinions was dizzying. The ideas he promoted in different books often seemed at odds with each other. But three of his novels stood out to me as representing the primary progression of his writing.

The Kempton-Wace Letters, 1903, was a treatise on love in which I was shocked to find London disavowing the significance and meaning of emotional love. However, *The Sea-Wolf*, published only a year later, was much less certain in its philosophical message and the romantic element played a large role in the narrative. Finally, the book that ignited my interest in London, *Martin Eden* struck me as the most underappreciated American novel I had ever read. London's autobiographical masterpiece was a dazzling display of self-awareness and a nuanced discussion of the complicated nature of love, success, and existence. The effort is all the more impressive considering only seven years earlier London was too insecure to honestly discuss his childhood let alone publicize his every insecurity.

It was not until I studied London's romantic life that his literary progress took on added significance. London had written these three titles while in very different romantic mindsets. The power with which his love life affected his intellect and writing demanded that I dig deeper and thus the organizing principle of my thesis was born. Especially given the lack of scholarly consideration I found discussing London in that light. I was encouraged by the thought that I might actually be writing something original. Privately, I was already imagining my thesis inspiring the rediscovery of an American literary treasure. But I was getting ahead of myself as I was still woefully short on context.

Luckily, Trinity Professor Paul Lauter was kind enough to send me an article he had written, "London's Place in American Studies." Lauter's article examined how literary

anthologies historically treated London. His findings provided critical context to the scarcity of London scholarship and reinvigorated my desire to pick up Jack's banner. What Lauter uncovered was that London had been a minor but frequent presence in most anthologies pre-WWII. But, after the war discussion of Jack vanished. "With the onset of the Cold War," Lauter writes, "and this is what actually surprised me, London disappears from the screen ... As early as 1952, Ben Fuson in his study of the contents of American literature anthologies doesn't even list London among the 70 writers ... he tracks... Even the 1978 volume of *America in Literature* edited by the left-leaning Alan Trachtenberg ... omits London."¹ The marginalization of London was too specific to just be about his writing.

Why were *White Fang* and *Call of the Wild* still prominent in American Literature but fellow students I questioned could hardly name one of London's fifty-some other novels? Why did the anthologies, these records of our literary history, only start to forget London as the Cold War began? As I suspected and Lauter substantiated, it was his politics. Some of the anthologies went so far as to characterize London as bordering on madness.

The Brooks, Lewis, and Warren anthology was particularly harsh: "what attracted London to Marxism was less the dream of a society perfected in justice than the drama of a class war fulfilling his own need for apocalyptic violence." This portrait of London as a violence-addict has become particularly ironic in light of the way I came to see Jack. But from the 1940's through the 1960's, thanks to two world wars and the threat of a third, there was a cultural shift underway in America and London ended up on the wrong end of it. After two 'Red Scare(s)', two World Wars, and a public execution of the far left in this country, London had lost his footing. As Lauter agrees, "I had to conclude that it was, above

¹ Lauter, Paul. "London's Place in American Studies." *The Call: The Magazine of the Jack London Society* Spring/Summer 41.1 (2003). Print.p.2-3

all, those politics of London's investigative journalism and some of his fiction, his deeply reformist objectives, that for cold-war intellectuals place him outside the pale of literary respectability."² He survived this era in America only to be known as 'the guy who wrote the dog books.'

A new generation of socialist and revolutionary, springing out of the 1960's and 70's, brought renewed interest in London. Ironically, Lauter cites that the conditions of his return to the literary landscape, in the '70's and on, limits London in the same way his earlier critiques did. "His rehabilitation or relegitimization involved a certain depoliticization, reframing him in the familiar paradigm of ... "man"—against nature ... placing him into remote, indeed exotic locales that emphasize the romantic qualities that Brooks, Lewis, and Warren point to as fatal both to his intellectual pretensions and his aesthetic value."³ Lauter sees the re-examination of London as inherently flawed for the literary world seemed prepared to discuss seriously only a de-clawed Jack London. Something Jack would not have abided. But all the same, I dug into the most prominent books about Jack from the recent decades.

There were a few biographies and works of literary analysis but each one had a different view of Jack, and in my judgment none of them got him. Some called him a plagiarist, Jeanne Campbell Reesman, in *Jack London's Racial Lives*, had much of his fiction pegged as racially driven, Joan Hedrick ends her book, *Solitary Comrade*, asserting that London died as the title suggests, a solitary comrade, and David Hamilton, in his book *"Tools of My Trade" Annotated Books in Jack London's Library*, takes the view that London was defined by what he read.

² Ibid.p.10

³ Ibid.p.9

All of these scholars have plenty of evidence to validate their conclusions. But they miss a fundamental truth. London did not find a stable identity, philosophy, and literary voice until he had found the mate who could give him right love. All his other interests and passions could not hold him. It was love that gave him definition, love that shaped the rest of his philosophy, and love that inspired him to produce his greatest novels. This thesis is, therefore, a love story. Or to be a bit more precise, it is a history of Jack London's love stories.

Chapter 1: A Solitary Youth

Jack London was born John Griffith Chaney in San Francisco on January 12th, 1876. His birth was an induction into the brutal competition for survival that comprised working class existence in turn of the century America. Jack's childhood, or lack thereof, formed much of his outlook and personality in his later life. He spent much of his time alone. So it is no surprise he developed a gift for storytelling. Jack never had a definitive childhood home and he split many of his early years between his wet nurse, a loving black woman named Virginia Prentiss, and his mother, Flora Wellman.

Flora was a truly peculiar woman. Born in Ohio to a family of wealth, Flora was always rebellious but the death of her mother when Flora was only four years old deeply affected her and changed her forever. Additionally, Flora was nearly killed by typhoid fever as a child. The disease stunted her growth and caused spells of hysterical behavior. Her affliction fostered legitimate concerns that Flora had mental problems.

Flora despised the woman her father remarried and just as Jack would later do she left home when she was sixteen. Flora travelled the country, supporting herself by performing séances. It happened that her hometown had been swept by spiritual fervor during the second great awakening and it greatly affected Flora. She would continue to perform séances as a means of support until she died and Jack was spectator to more than a few in the London family living room.

London rarely discussed his childhood so it is hard to know how much digging he actually did. But there is evidence that he attempted to contact the man presumed to be his father, William Chaney. Jack was conceived while Flora and William were living together.

However, Chaney never acknowledged paternity, probably due to Flora's announcement soon after she discovered she was pregnant that she had been having an affair with a man named Lee Smith. In the months following her confession, Flora twice attempted suicide. The attempts on her own life caused widespread speculation that Chaney had demanded Flora get an abortion. The San Francisco Chronicle even ran a headline titled, "Discarded Wife: Why Mrs. Chaney Twice Attempted Suicide." It is hard to imagine Jack not finding that article, which goes far toward explaining the shroud he attempted to throw over his childhood in later life.

Soon after the headline ran, Chaney was run out of town by threats of violence from readers of the inflammatory Chronicle article. Though they were not officially married, Flora had lived with William for years and taken the Chaney name, creating the perception that William had abandoned his pregnant wife. But Jack's birth brought no joy for Flora. Instead, she used her pregnancy as an opportunity to play the victim and as proof of her mistreatment at Chaney's hands. As James Haley wrote in his book, *Wolf: The Lives of Jack London*, "with repeated reference to him as her 'Badge of Shame,' it became clear that she was barren of maternal instinct and felt no affection for him whatsoever."⁴ Jack's personality in later life still bears the scars of this loveless relationship with his mother.

For the first year of his life London did not even live with Flora. She pawned him off on Virginia and she took him with her and her husband Alonzo, who would introduce Flora to John London, to Chicago. After her marriage to John London on September 7th, 1876, Jack remained with Prentiss for a few more months before joining the London family, as London had reclaimed his own daughters from the orphanage immediately. The family moved

⁴ Haley, James L. *Wolf: The Lives of Jack London*. New York: Basic, 2010. Print.p.12

around the bay area four or five times during their first year together. Eventually they settled in Oakland where John established a store that gave the family some financial stability. After some success they moved again when Jack was seven, to a farm in San Mateo County, outside San Francisco. It was through his chores and time on the farm that Jack learned about masculinity. Hard work, physical strength, and the ability to drink huge quantities of beer, these were the traits Jack witnessed the men in his life aspiring to possess.

Despite Flora's faults, she did instill the importance of education in Jack. He could read by the time he was five and attended various grammar schools until he was fifteen. Jack had completed eight grades and, in the spring of 1891, graduated from Cole Grammar School. However, Jack's real education came from the public libraries. He walked through the doors of the Oakland Public Library when he was only ten years old. His quiet demeanor and voracious reading quickly intrigued the Librarian, Donna Smith. She was Jack's first literary guide. As he got older he increasingly felt like an outsider in the classroom and preferred solitary reading to learning at the prodding of an instructor. In a letter, later in life, London acknowledged to a friend, "had it not been for such institutions, he likely could not have fashioned himself a writer."⁵

Unfortunately, during the winter of 1885, disease wiped out the majority of John London's farm animals. That coupled with Flora's gambling and repeated attempts at get rich quick schemes, forced John to sell the farm the next time the mortgage was due. The London family moved frequently over the next few years. The trend was one of downward

⁵ London, Jack, Earle Labor, Robert C. Leitz, and I. Milo Shepard. *The Letters of Jack London*. Vol. 3 (1913-1916) Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1988. Print.p.1391-92

mobility. By the end of the decade, the family had settled into a cottage in one the lowliest neighborhoods in downtown Oakland.

It was during these years, living in downtown Oakland, that Jack discovered his identity. Around the time he was twelve Jack learned what a 'bastard' was and more troublingly that he was one. It drove him deeper within himself. The pain he felt was a deeply held desire to belong somewhere or to someone. While it forged his independence it also tainted Jack's youth with anger and defiance. Flora attributed these years, in an interview later in life, to Jack "(falling) in with bad company. He used to have terrible fights with the boys of the neighborhood," she complained that, "he got to going down to the water front ... (and) became awfully bossy in the house. We couldn't stand him sometimes."⁶ Not surprisingly, Jack and his mother had almost no relationship after he became self-sufficient.

In 1891, Jack finished his grammar school education at the age of 15. It was time for him to get a job and he became an employee of Hickmott's Cannery. London despised the job. He often had to work sixteen-hour shifts, seven days a week, to help support the family as his stepfather's health deteriorated. Jack did manage to save enough to buy his own small skiff. However, when Flora heard about his purchase, she marched straight into the cannery and in front of his coworkers demanded the money Jack was withholding. Embarrassing as the incident was it drove Jack to quit the cannery and he began his career as an oyster pirate.

The day Jack quit the cannery marked the beginning of his time spent as "The Wolf." It was a self-given nickname and one that appears frequently in London's literature and

⁶ Haley.p.24

personal writing, even going as far to sign copies of his books as 'The Wolf' for friends and fans. London's first published collection of short stories was titled, "Son of the Wolf." The title alone addresses Jack's struggle with personal identity, his lack of a father, and this identity as a 'Wolf.'

It was the first of many identities that London would try on and this one was his reaction to the bizarre nature of his childhood. As Haley explains in his biography of London, "Raised but little loved, taught toughness by dockside brawling, taught that tenderness would be detected and attacked as weakness, assimilating that an intellectual curiosity only led to frustration in one fated to be a Work Beast, Jack London by age fifteen already looked out on the world through the eyes of the Wolf."⁷ This is the philosophy of life that London takes to an extreme in the character Wolf Larsen in *The Sea-Wolf*.

Although emotionally stunted, the Wolf persona suited London well in his coming adventures. After oyster pirating for a few months he switched sides and patrolled the bay for oyster pirates. He discusses these months in his collection of stories, "Tales of the Fish Patrol." But John London's health continued to fail and Flora descended ever deeper into bitterness towards her increasingly permanent poverty stricken existence. At last, soon after Jack turned 17, on January 20th, 1893, he boarded a sealing schooner, the *Sophia Sutherland*, for an eight-month voyage and his independence. The ship's plotted course was to and from the seal hunting grounds, a cluster of Japanese islands called the Bonins. The trip later gave London the experiential background to create the world of The Ghost, the sealing schooner in *The Sea-Wolf*.

⁷ Ibid.p.29

London returned at a brutal time for California. The Panic of 1893 became a prolonged depression and painted 'laissez faire' capitalism in its most corrupt and self-interested light. The collapse of the Reading Railroad and the violent Pullman strike of 1894 placed the railroad industry at the center of the conflict. After returning from sea, Jack spent six months back in Oakland. He was pained by what he saw of the class struggle. Having felt the yoke of the 'Work Beast,' Jack was incensed at how the ruling class used its ownership of newspapers to control and manipulate the journalistic narrative. In headlines across the country, it was the unions and strikers who were painted as dangerous and radical, rather than the brutality of the work conditions and wages imposed on the working class daily. These were months that left a lasting effect on Jack's view of capitalism.

Though still naïve, by 1893 Jack was well read and intelligent enough to develop opinions on more complex issues. They were years when Jack wielded his intellect with little thought to discretion and practicality. It proved to be a dangerous time for Jack, as the beliefs he developed during these years were hastily conceived and later would be hard for him to shake.

Jack's few attempts at employment during these months left him totally unsatisfied. Additionally, the press's unchallenged and very public characterizations of the laboring class as lazy and entitled struck Jack as a blatant manipulation of truth made possible by the consequences of capitalism. So it should come as little surprise that when Jack heard about Charles "Kelly's Army," of tramps he decided to join up. Their plan and Jack's frustration were ideally aligned. He wanted a way to publicize that the working class and unemployed were not as they had been portrayed to the nation by newspapers. Charles Kelly's plan was to do just that, by taking his army of vagrants and head for the capital to

demand employment for his followers. By doing so, Kelly hoped to prove that he and his tramps wanted work and were not free riders as they had been portrayed in the press.

Unfortunately, London missed their departure and spent the next several months hopping freight cars from town to town trying to catch up. Eventually he ended up arrested and in an upstate New York jail for eighteen months as punishment for his freeloading and vagrancy. Jack retells the entirety of his tramping experience in *The Road*, one of his non-fiction narratives.

Upon release, Jack returned home to Oakland, where he found his family in improved financial standing. Flora had gone back to giving piano lessons and John had found part-time employment as a 'special policeman.' Jack moved back in and, to his surprise, discovered that his mother supported his literary aspirations wholeheartedly. Whether it was a bid for reconciliation, another long shot attempt at fame and fortune, or ultimately she did love Jack is unknowable. What is clear is that encouraging Jack's writing proved to be the wisest thing Flora ever did.

However, Jack's memory of his childhood must have been too painful, as they remained estranged for the rest of his life. Much later in life, Jack brought himself to give Flora some of the credit due for pushing him toward becoming a writer. After his return from prison, it was Flora who urged Jack to take his account of a storm from his sealing adventure and turn it into his first short story, "Typhoon off the Coast of Japan." With only an eighth grade education, Jack won first prize in a contest that included Berkley and Stanford students and with it his first taste of literary recognition.

Bolstered by proof of his ability, London focused more intently than ever on becoming a writer. In 1895, at age 19, he enrolled at the private Oakland High School. If his

age was not enough to make him stand out from his fellow students, Jack also had to take a job as the school's janitor in lieu of paying tuition. He found the other students to be terribly conventional and naïve. In relation to them, Jack's budding Socialism began to take form. He found an outlet for his writing and politics in *The Aegis*, the school publication, as well as the Henry Clay Debating Society, which Jack frequented after school. In *The Aegis* London first tried his hand at a socialist manifesto. Surprisingly It ran in March of 1895. But, it was at the debating society that Jack began to make friends outside his social caste. First among them was Ted Applegarth.

Jack and Ted spent afternoons together discussing their respective reading and philosophy and both joined in the debates after school whole-heartedly. At some point in their friendship Ted invited Jack to the Applegarth home for dinner. It was an evening London never forgot. That night, being his first invitation into an upper-class household, Jack arrived practically holding his breath. But after meeting Ted's older sister, Mabel, Jack could barely breathe. In the moment the experience must have been inexplicable. Jack had just felt the initial symptoms of first love and love changed him forever.

Chapter 2: Lover and Aspiring Writer

Meeting Mabel Applegarth introduced Jack to romantic love. It is hard to fully comprehend the meaning that held for Jack in light of his childhood. But it was truly revolutionary. In *Martin Eden*, Jack recalls his first meeting with this beauty of the bourgeoisie,

Here was something to live for ... to fight for ... The books were right. There were such women in the world ... She lent wings to his imagination, and great, luminous canvases spread themselves before him, whereon loomed vague, gigantic figures of love and romance, and of heroic deeds for woman's sake.⁸

However, Jack's discovery was about more than finding Mabel it was about seeing and feeling love, at all, for the first time. The lovelessness of London's childhood had left a hole in his experience. That hole was the warmth of emotion most people remember from some form of a loved childhood. But for Jack there was just a vacuum. He had no prior knowledge, no preconceived notions. It was as if his eyes were opening to human interaction for the first time:

How they loved each other, the members of this family! There flashed into his mind the picture ... of the kiss of greeting ... Not in his world were such displays of affection ... made... He had starved for love all his life. His nature craved love. It was an organic demand of his being. Yet he had gone without it, and hardened himself in the process. He had not known that he needed love.⁹

Jack was changed by the realization that love existed in him. He could no longer be the Wolf, or only the Wolf. His mother had drawn closed the curtains on love. Now that Jack had seen what was behind, his identity and the path of his life were changed. His life became a pursuit of Mabel in all things. In the single-mindedness of his pursuit, Jack's life

⁸ London, Jack, and Donald Pizer. *Martin Eden*. 1982. *Novels and Social Writings*. New York: Literary Classics of America, 1982. Print.p.564

⁹ Ibid.p.568

became simple for the very first time. To possess a woman like Mabel, Jack knew he had to acquire the traits of the men of her class and be able to support her. He would better himself through education and etiquette and in so doing make himself successful and worthy of Mabel.

Mabel was already a student at Berkeley so it became Jack's goal, or obsession, to gain admittance. Already bored of high school teachers and high school students Jack dropped out to pursue a more aggressive educational path. If he had stayed to receive his diploma from the four-year Oakland High School Mabel would have already left Berkeley. So, Jack worked out an agreement with a prep school, University Academy, whereby if he could pass the final semester and exams, of what was usually a two-year program, he could receive a diploma and take Berkeley's entrance exams. He enrolled at University Academy with his new friends from the debating society, Ted Applegarth and Fred Jacobs and Jacobs's girlfriend, Bess Maddern, who was excellent at math and tutored Jack for his entrance exams.

During his time at University Academy London burned through authors, inspired by his desire to impress Mabel. To his previous understanding of Darwin, London added Adam Smith, Benjamin Kidd, Emmanuel Kant, Ernst Haeckel, Nietzsche, and most importantly he took another shot at Herbert Spencer's *First Principles*. This book he had tried to read before but its meaning had largely eluded him on the first attempt. However, the second time around, London was blown away. In an 1899 letter, London wrote that "Spencer's *First Principles* alone, leaving out all the rest of his work, has done more for mankind, than a

thousand books like *Nicholas Nickleby*, *Hard Cash*, *Book Snobs*, and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.”¹⁰

The letter shows just how important Spencer became to London.

He studied constantly, and was tutored frequently in math and science by his friend Fred's girlfriend, now fiancée, Bess Maddern. London was terrified of the intellectual implications failure meant and his ego was not insubstantial. He fled the city after finally taking the exam and spent the week waiting for his results on a fishing trip. He returned to find that he had indeed passed and would be attending Berkeley with Mabel in the fall.

London arrived at Berkeley, in the fall of 1896, filled with possibilities of academia. But, by the end of his first semester the financial burden and his frustration at being told how much and exactly what he needed to learn were too much for him. He withdrew from Berkeley without expressing bitterness, though it is likely Jack was more upset than he showed. For the rest of his life he always downplayed the amount of formal education he had received. Soon after this the Applegarths moved to San Jose. But, Mabel and Jack continued their relationship by writing to each other frequently.

In the months after exiting Berkeley, London spoke frequently at 'Speaker's Corner,' a spot in downtown Oakland where impromptu debates between the leftist intellectuals of the working class clashed. Jack had often stopped and listened, and occasionally spoken himself, after his high school classes. In the period between high school and his departure from Berkeley Jack's commitment to socialism grew steadfast and his rhetoric gained in power and precision. With no way to see Mabel and no school to attend Jack's passion searched for direction. He joined the Socialist Labor Party and when the party decided to challenge a law against public gatherings, which had become the official reason for

¹⁰ London, Jack, Earle Labor, Robert C. Leitz, and I. Milo Shepard. *The Letters of Jack London*. Vol. 1 (1896-1905) Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1988. Print.p.103-104

breaking up 'Speaker's Corner,' London volunteered to be the speaker who would be arrested. He requested and received a jury trial. Unexpectedly, London successfully argued for his own release. The incident received copious press coverage and London found himself publicly labeled a danger to the Bay Area bourgeoisie.

To support himself Jack was forced to return to manual labor. His desire to make himself worthy of Mabel was strong. But so was his need for independence. With Mabel gone, Jack headed north for the Alaskan Gold Rush in July, 1897.

While Jack was in the Klondike he received his first contract for a short story series, from the *Overland Monthly*. Elated by the news, he quickly informed Mabel that upon his return they would soon be able to marry. Her response left London crushed. She told him it would be at least another decade before he would be able to care for her in the manner to which she had become accustomed.¹¹ This was a major moment of disillusionment for Jack. As a result he was increasingly skeptical of people's ability to free themselves from their cultural upbringing and the value system attached to it.

Jack was deeply hurt by Mabel's rejection. He had so recently discovered his potential to love and after Mabel extinguished it on such a materialistic basis Jack was forced to question the emotion that had driven him for the last two years. Mabel had snatched love away from Jack and it caused him to harden himself. This was a defense mechanism London employed routinely throughout his life. Jack's response was to become increasingly cautious in letting down his romantic defenses as he fought to ward off the ache of a loveless existence. A feeling Jack knew all too well.

¹¹ Kershaw, Alex. *Jack London: A Life*. New York: St. Martin's, 1998. Print.p.84

When Jack returned to San Francisco in 1898 he decided he had outgrown Mabel. In a letter from 1900, London said of their romance, "It was a great love, at the time ... I mistook the moment for the eternal ... Time passed. I awoke, frightened, and found myself judging. She was very small. The positive virtues were hers, and likewise the negative vices. She was pure, honest, true, sincere, everything. But she was small. Her virtues led her nowhere ... Her culture was a surface smear ... Can I explain further? I awoke, and judged, and my puppy love was over."¹²It takes little imagination to see Jack's judgment of Mabel as a coping mechanism, re-defining her as ultimately not good enough for him. The criticism that London presents for Mabel was also his larger frustration with Bourgeois society, a lack of self-awareness surrounding the bias and prejudice inherent in bourgeois cultural upbringing.

From 1898 to 1900 London was back in Oakland making a herculean effort to become published. He chronicled the frustration of this period in *Martin Eden*, during the early years when his published work was limited to short stories. But Jack had had his first story published when he was only nineteen, in 1895, and by 1900 five or six of his stories had been serialized. London's growing awareness of his own intelligence and ability, in spite of the insecurities he harbored about his humble origins, fostered the development of his ego.

When London returned to San Francisco it was with this new sense of distaste for the bourgeoisie and their shallow existence he had once glorified. The result of Jack's experience with Mabel was a belief that love could not exist between two people who did not share values. Accordingly, the rest of the important women in his life had experienced

¹² Ibid.p.84

adversity in some form during their youth and they all valued writing in their own way. In fact his next courtship makes perfect sense in light of his failure with Mabel.

Anna Strunsky, London's second love was in all things the opposite of Mabel. The Strunskys were Russian Jews and Anna spent the first nine years of her life in Russia until the family fled to New York City in 1886. The family first landed on Manhattan's Lower East Side where they lived in a densely packed tenement house on Madison Street. Eventually, her father, Elias, and brothers made enough in the garment industry to eventually move the family to San Francisco, for Elias' health and a liquor business, in 1893.

It took little time for Anna to make a name for herself among the Bay Area intelligentsia. While living in Manhattan, she had been recognized in a *New York Herald* article, titled "Miss Annie," as P.S. 49's brightest and most promising student. Once in California, Anna attracted more attention. In 1896, while attending Lovell High School, she was named the "Girl Socialist of San Francisco," by the Hearst's *San Francisco Examiner*.¹³ In her senior year of high school, Anna was admitted to Stanford and joined the Socialist Labor Party. It was at the local American branch of the Socialist labor Party, while a student at Stanford, that she first met Jack. Years later, Strunsky wrote of the encounter that, "(Jack) seemed at once younger and older than his years. There was that about him that made one feel that one would always remember him. He seemed the incarnation of the Platonic ideal of man, the body of the athlete and the mind of the thinker."¹⁴ Their relationship quickly progressed to regular correspondence and before long Jack offered to serve as a sort of literary mentor, which Strunsky accepted.

¹³ Boylan, James R. *Revolutionary Lives: Anna Strunsky & William English Walling*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1998. Print.p.7-8

¹⁴ *Ibid.*p.2

Befitting of his ideological shift after Mabel, in Strunsky London got the closest he would come to an intellectual companion and mate. Anna could match Jack thought for thought and like London, had high aspirations for her intellect and in her writer's soul, a great affinity for truth. She was a socialist activist, an aspiring writer, a child of the working class and most of all she craved bigness, not smallness. When London discusses notions of 'bigness,' and 'smallness,' in his summation of Mabel Applegarth, he is really talking about ambition, "she was pure, honest, true, sincere, everything but she was small. Her virtues led her nowhere. Works? She had none."¹⁵ Conversely, Anna shared Jack's ability to think in epic terms. She also dreamed of an international Socialist revolution and acted on it, writing short stories, songs, and poems to aid the Socialist cause. She and Jack both ardently believed in the reformatory power of words and worked to affect change with their writing.

Their courtship progressed swimmingly until April of 1900, about six months after their first meeting. Jack took Anna for a picnic outside the city with the intent of proposing. London must have given some hint, because Anna wrote of that afternoon that she had sensed "the critical moment, for her, had arrived." She would later recall the afternoon to a friend:

On a certain Wednesday they had climbed the slopes, slippery with pine needles and sun-parched grass, still warm to the touch... They would remember that day, the clear sky, the breeze stirring the leaves of the red-wood ... the book open to the chapter on Kant with which her review in class would deal with the following morning ... There was a feeling of crisis between them, of something nearer, sweeter about to be born.¹⁶

¹⁵ Kershaw.p.84

¹⁶ Boylan.p.15-16

Anna goes on to describe a concern that came over her. That the strength of the feelings she had for Jack was somehow unladylike. In modern parlance, she politely freaked out. To calm the building significance of this romantic afternoon, Strunsky mentioned to Jack that she was making plans to return to Russia soon and aid the Socialist cause. After months of pursuit, Jack is taken aback by this turn in the conversation. With another heartbreak fresh in his memory, a romantically cautious London throws up his defenses and interprets her comment as a final rejection of his courtship.

While Anna could match Jack thought for thought, her sense of obligation to socially appropriate, lady-like behavior was at odds with Jack's rough and tumble lifestyle. He enjoyed sex and had a strong appetite for it. Strunsky was a chaste virgin. Jack found meaning by pitting himself in primal struggle against nature, a hobby that was strange to Anna, who was more used to creating in a vacuum than through experience.

Strunsky's reference to taking "refuge in a remark about going to Russia," was the crux of this whole misunderstanding.¹⁷ After London's romantic assault on Anna's resolve falls flat again he was surely discouraged. Once London takes her Russia comment seriously his fuse was lit and circumstances aligned such that three days later London proposed to Bess Maddern.

Bess was the ex-fiancee of Fred Jacobs, London's friend from high school and University Academy. They met while Fred was an assistant at the Oakland Library and London practically lived there. Jacobs brought Jack to his first public debate at the Henry Clay Debating Society and over the course of their friendship Jack became acquainted with

¹⁷ Ibid.p.15

his girlfriend Bess. She was tall, smart, and athletic and she and Jack shared an enthusiasm for long bicycle rides out into the country.

Knowing that she was excellent at mathematics, Jack had asked Bess to tutor him in preparation for the Berkeley entrance exams two years earlier. A year after Jack returned from the Klondike, in 1899, Fred left to serve in the Spanish-American War. A letter came back only months later informing Bess and his family that Fred had died of tropical fever before seeing any action.

Jack and Bess bonded as he grieved for his friend and she for her lover. Though they had always been close there are no letters between them or stories of time spent together that indicate any romantic involvement in the months leading up to London's proposal, but after Fred's death. Clearly Jack's actions had more to do with Strunsky's rejection and the loss of his friend than a sudden and overwhelming love for Bess.

Losing Anna must have greatly affected Jack to cause such a rash response. However, the swiftness of Jack's reaction and he and Anna's continued exchange of long, soul-searching letters suggests that London's proposal was more a spiteful, defense mechanism than an indication that he was over her. During these years, inspired by autodidact scholars like Herbert Spencer and Tomas Huxley and in need of a distraction, London started to fancy himself a philosopher. So, his choice and his life had to be examined. His first attempts to create a philosophy come across as part rejection of his mother's spiritualism and part justification of his recent and abrupt choice of mate. He and Bess were married on April 7th, 1900.

Jack revealed part of his logic in a letter he wrote shortly after the wedding. He pronounced that he had married Bess for she would give him "seven sturdy Saxon sons,

and seven beautiful daughters.” In one sentence Jack managed to take love, marriage, companionship, and family and reduce it to a question of simple biology. Apparently he had chosen his wife for her breeding stock.

The philosophy he soon publicizes took the way he chose his wife and turned it into an organizing principle. He removed the epic and divine from the world around him. He marginalized traditional definitions of love, beauty, spirituality, etc. as abstractions and primitive in origin. In a letter to Strunsky, which was included in the *Kempton-Wace Letters*, London preached that:

The functions of life are few and simple. Reproduction is growth... Just as other organs arose, so arose sex-differentiation... Male and female... Each was the complement of the other. In times and seasons each felt a vital need for the other. And in satisfying of this vital need ... we have the first manifestation of love ... The choice (of mate) may be good or ill, as chance and time may dictate, but the impelling excitement forces a choice ... And so this love of the human in no ways differs from that of the sparrow which forgets preservation in procreation. Thus nature tricks her creature and the race lives on... And man is content to rest coequal with the beast in the matter of mating... he is unable to perpetuate his species without the aid of the impelling madness ... to improve upon nature's methods and breed swifter carrier-pigeons and finer horses ... is permitted; but to improve upon nature in the breeding of the human, that is a sacrilege! ... There is no intrinsic shame in the thing itself, but the same lies in that we are not greater than it.¹⁸

London takes love, the burning core of human passion and emotion and traces it back to grubs and single cell organisms. Philosophers who were heroes to London, like Nietzsche and Spencer, had recently expounded on the idea so it is not surprising to find the young London eager to try it out. Especially as Jack was trying to shield himself against a mother he resented and the vulnerability that comes with emotionally loving another. What London really offers Strunsky is the death of all idealism, wonder, and excitement. In

¹⁸ London, Jack. *The Kempton-Wace Letters*. London: Isbister &, 1903. Print.p.110-120

this reduced and drained world where everything must be taken to the very base of its evolutionary roots, what room is there for individuality or even feeling? London thought that through seeing existence laid bare of these diversions he could find real truth.

Soon after Bess and Jack were married Anna left for London. Before she left, Jack revealed the persistence of his feelings and suggested that they write a book together. So began one of the most highly publicized love triangles of its era. London's love life was the subject of much tabloid fodder during these as he travelled, caroused, and wrote habitually to Strunsky. Their book was to take the form of a debate between an elderly poet, Dane Kempton, played by Strunsky, and a young economist, Herbert Wace, played by Jack. The issue up for debate was the true nature of love and the book was titled *The Kempton-Wace Letters*.

London could not have chosen a worse time to espouse his views on love. After Anna's rejection, Jack decided the way he was approaching love must have been flawed. Why else would he have failed so spectacularly in his two previous endeavors? Young, foolish, and somewhat egotistical, Jack's proposal to Bess became representative of his revelation that romantic love was an archaic reproduction based convention and that he would lead the way to a new form of intellectual love, based on conscious genetic choices and admiration. It is a belief that Jack lays out at length in *Kempton-Wace*, as well as using to justify his marriage.

Despite the wall of scientific and scholarly theory that London erected between himself and emotional love, the truth of his feelings for Anna did not disappear. But he had taken an ideological stand based on his choice of bride and this made it a harder renunciation for London to take. It was no longer just a divorce but an admittance of

intellectual defeat. By 1902, though still married, he had grown estranged from Bess and proposed again to Anna. Despite initially agreeing, she reneged on her promise. Anna decided it was selfish to take her own happiness at the expense of Bess and her child's. Again it was Anna's refusal to appear unladylike, or give in to her passion that kept her and Jack apart. The ability to be swept up by passion and give in to lust were perhaps the only traits or values that London and Strunsky did not share. But that was enough.

Just weeks after Jack's proposal, Anna found out that Bess was pregnant again. This time she definitively closed the door on a relationship London. But they continued to write each other for years, even unabashed love letters, and at year's end, *The Kempton-Wace Letters* was published. That it originally appeared with only London's name attached could have been one last dig at Strunsky or it could have been an effort to avoid further speculation that an affair with Strunsky was the reason for London's marital friction. Either way it was not surprising that Wace's (London) argument focused on marriage as an institution of "breeding potential," meant only as a means to ensure Spencer's theory of "race maintenance," which recommended humans breed in the manner of animals, keeping each species to its own, or in the case of man, each race within itself.

After he and Strunsky's relationship broke down, London pushed his philosophy even further into the dirt, away from the ethereal. For the first time since his childhood, Jack was half of a loveless relationship. Only this time there was no socially acceptable means of gaining independence. Consequently, London was further hardened against emotional love, re-imagining himself as a completely intellectual creature.

The Kempton-Wace Letters and his essay, "Salt of the Earth," remain as unfortunate reminders of London's temporary obsession. Once again locked in a loveless relationship,

London's philosophy, of the moment, evidenced his search to find something of value in himself. His marriage inflamed the insecurities of his childhood because the tone of his writing became frantic. London was hell bent on being taken seriously as an intellectual. In his pursuit of intellectual, not literary, greatness he wildly overreached, writing as if he had something to prove.

Whether he was trying to prove that Strunsky was not good enough for him, that his philosophy was enlightened, his choice of wife justified, or that he was better than everyone else, who knows. But, London's condescending tone runs rampant throughout he and Anna's correspondence as well as his other work during the Bess era.

Chapter 3: The Descent: *The Kempton-Wace Letters* and “Salt of the Earth”

London’s obsession with philosophical dogma and pure intellectualism grew as quickly as the love in his marriage dwindled. He used dogma and intellectualism to fill the hole left by love, of which he was now all too aware. London retreated into Haeckel, Nietzsche, and Spencer. The evidence is all over his work, particularly in the above titles. Without love London was, as he later wrote in *Martin Eden*, “chartless and rudderless.”

During these years Jack’s depression grew and the tone of his letters hint at thoughts of suicide. In a letter to his friend Cloudsey Johns, London comes across as weary beyond his years:

After all, what squirming, anywhere, damned or otherwise, means anything? That’s the question I am always prone to put: What’s this chemical ferment called life all about? Small wonder that small men down the ages have conjured gods in answer ... But how bout you and me, who have no god?¹⁹

To keep himself distracted and preserve his own will, Jack fixated on the philosophical systems of others. At the time, London described his philosophy to Johns in the same letter as “materialistic monism,” identical to the philosophy London ascribed to Wolf Larsen.

In this time of weakness, London made a dangerous connection between two of his favored philosophers, Nietzsche and Spencer. In 1896 the first English translation of Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* was published. London was fixated on Nietzsche’s discussion of ‘will to power’ and society once man had evolved to a higher existence. “Will to power” was a theory of existence which weighed the importance of an individual’s life in relation to the extent to which the individual’s surroundings are changed by the

¹⁹ *The Letters of Jack London*. Vol.1. Print.p.128

individual's beliefs.²⁰ An instructive example would be that Jesus Christ is generally considered as having possessed the largest. It makes sense that this view of existence would resonate with London as Nietzsche was philosophically reinforcing London's pre-existing belief from growing up among the working class that life was about working harder and wanting things more than his cohort.

The aspect of Nietzsche's work from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* that plagued London was his theory of the "ubermensch." (interchangeable with "superman" or "overman") It was a concept London never totally grasped, though who knows if anyone other than Nietzsche ever really did.

London's specific misstep was how literally he took the idea. Nietzsche wrote of the 'superman' that:

Man is something that shall be overcome. All beings so far have created something beyond themselves; and do you want to be the ebb of this great flood and even go back to the beasts rather than overcome man? What is the ape to man? A laughingstock or a painful embarrassment. And man shall be just that for the (superman): a laughingstock or a painful embarrassment... Behold, I teach you the (superman). The (superman) is the meaning of the earth.²¹

The superman in its most literal interpretation would be an entirely different species from human beings as similar, Nietzsche says, to man as man is to apes. The superman also represents the end of all religion, or 'other-worldliness' to use Nietzsche's terminology. The superman will worship the earth and existence and create new values to maintain society based not on any supposed threat of eternal damnation but rather on reason. Man is just the bridge between the beast and the superman. So the best moment for

²⁰ Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm, and Graham Parkes. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for Everyone and Nobody*. New York: Oxford UP, 2005. Print.p.98-100

²¹ Ibid.p.11-16

man, Nietzsche says, is, "the hour when you say, 'What matters my happiness? It is poverty and filth and wretched contentment. But my happiness ought to justify existence itself.'"²² It is a moment when man is comfortable with his own insignificance and aware of his larger purpose as the bridge to the superman.

London found proof for the veracity of Nietzsche's assertions in the Social Darwinism of Herbert Spencer. However high-minded Nietzsche's sentiments were, Spencer's were equally heartless. But at the time he was a rock star. American scientist and former Columbia University President F.A.P. Barnard went so far as to say the following about Spencer. "As it seems to me, we have in Herbert Spencer not only the profoundest thinker of our time, but the most capacious and most powerful intellect of all time. Aristotle and his master were no more beyond the pygmies who precede them than he is beyond Aristotle. Kant, Hegel, Fichte, and Schelling are gropers in the dark by the side of him."²³ However, Spencer's brand of Social Darwinism was defined by intense utilitarianism, which allowed him to discuss all too casually the inevitable economic slavery of inferior races and dominance of the superior ones.

Initially London only marveled at his work for the way in which he proved Nietzsche correct. Haley wrote in his biography that at some point during Jack's time at University Academy he took another crack at Spencer and found immense, new meaning.

He could perceive in *First Principles* a kind of grand unifying theory, how Darwin's natural selection had also allowed dominant and subservient social classes to emerge, and how the very idea of natural selection, the survival of the fittest,

²² Ibid.p.3-5

²³ Wilson, Francis G. "The Foremost Philosopher of the Age." *Docstoc*. 21 Oct. 2011. Web. 3 Mar. 2012. <<http://www.docstoc.com/docs/100339360/The-Foremost-Philosopher-of-the-Age>>.p.1-2

necessarily meant that man was perfectible. And for man to be perfectible gave effect to Nietzsche in *Man and Superman*.²⁴

If human society was perpetually evolving and improving toward something, as Spencer stated and London agreed. Then London believed *that* ‘something’ must be Nietzsche’s ‘superman.’

London probably saw Spencer’s work in this light because it is how Spencer saw it as well. The stated purpose of his philosophical trope, *First Principles of a New System of Philosophy*, was to bridge Biology, Physics, and Philosophy.²⁵ It was an attempt to take all the new knowledge that had come out of the 19th Century and make sense of it, order and categorize it for the 20th Century. The better one gets to know Spencer the easier it becomes to see why he was so appealing to London. Like London, Spencer was a self-made intellect born of the lower-middle class.

To summarize the philosophy he espoused in *First Principles* Spencer created a world where all organisms, whether individual or group, move from a state of unstable homogeneity to, over time, stable heterogeneity and eventually achieve a state of equilibrium. London restates this view of existence almost exactly in *The Kempton-Wace Letters*. Because the evolutionary process is omnipresent eventually all organisms will reach equilibrium. In a living organism such a state of equilibrium occurs upon death and decay.²⁶

Spencer ultimately applied his theory to social structures. In his framework it was inevitable that the dominant races would expand over the planet as “survival of the fittest”

²⁴ Haley .p.77-78

²⁵ Spencer, Herbert. *First Principles of a New System of Philosophy*. New York: D. Appleton and, 1864. Print. “Introduction”

²⁶ Ibid.

guaranteed. But London's experiences in love and on the road had instilled in him compassion rooted in comradeship. As the socialists call it, 'the brotherhood of man.' The problem being that Jack's loveless marriage brought his Wolf persona back to the surface. His depression, loneliness, and resentment grew during this time London called his 'Long Sickness.' Eventually the old persona overwhelmed the London formed out his recent experience. He lashed out in all directions and Spencer's work became the basis for Jack's shared belief that the putative, self-denominated, dominant races had a right to expand over the globe at the expense of any in the way. The assumption became that it was even right in some way for them to do so. We see that belief strong in London, even if only for a time, in his 1902 essay "The Salt of the Earth."

His tone reaches a level of callous lunacy by today's standards as he wrote, "that the superior races, engaged as they are in overrunning the earth, should suddenly stop short, is impossible. That the inferior races must undergo destruction or some humane form of economic slavery, is inevitable."²⁷ The fervor and complete doctrinal devotion to Spencer bears the marks of an intellectual fad. Though to know those are London's words is truly disheartening.

London explains his philosophy with more depth in *The Kempton-Wace Letters*. Thankfully, he does so in less racial terms. He begins the book as if trying to give the reader a key to his personal insecurities, overcompensating like crazy. By page seven London is bragging about the "doctorate" he is working to receive, and the "assistant professorship" for which he is being considered, two accomplishments the real London

²⁷ London, Jack, and Jonah Raskin. *The Radical Jack London: Writings on War and Revolution*. Berkeley: University of California, 2008. Print.p.98-115

never approached.²⁸ It is clear from his tone that Jack still feels as though he is not taken seriously. 1903 was the year during which London's *Call of the Wild* was published, igniting his career. But, while sitting, writing these letters to Strunsky, London sounds unsure of himself.

The following excerpts illustrate the source of Jack's concern. On some level Jack knows he has forced his beliefs to fit around marrying Bess. Rather than making decisions based on his real beliefs. Here he describes what he loves about Bess and Strunsky follows as Kempton with an injured response.

There is about her a certain lightness, a glow or flash almost Latin or oriental, or perhaps Celtic. Yes, that must be it – Celtic. But the high-stomached Norman is there and the stubborn Saxon... The Saxon grapples with the celt, and the Norman forces the twain to do what the one would not dream of doing and what the other would dream beyond and never do... Her most salient charm is, I think, her perfect poise, her exquisite adjustment.²⁹

It is another uncharacteristic passage from London, further evidence that his Social Darwinism developed as a justification for his choice of wife. Strunsky's reply is brilliant.

It is because you know not what you do that I cannot forgive you. Could you know that your letter with its catalogue of advantages and arrangements must offend me as much as it belies (let us hope) you and the woman of your love, I would pardon the affront of it upon us all, and ascribe the unseemly want of warmth to reserve or to the sadness which grips the heart when joy is too palpitant. But something warns me that you are unaware of the chill your words breath, and that is a lapse which it is impossible to meet with indulgence.³⁰

The reader can hear in Strunsky's words her concern that it seems she is writing to a different Jack London. The foundation for his love and philosophy has been built on a suspect premise that he used to justify his marital misstep. This is a Jack London who has

²⁸ London, Jack. *The Kempton-Wace Letters*. London: Isbister &, 1903. Print.p.7-10

²⁹ Ibid.p.9

³⁰ Ibid.p.11

insulated himself to the point that he is capable of reducing his love for his wife to an analysis of her racial, genetic competition.

After his insistent discussion of economics and science, London culminates in this condescension of Anna, "I looked down upon a real world; you were caught up in a beautiful cloudland and shut away from me. Possibly it was because life of itself appealed to you, while to me appealed the mechanics of life. But bet it as it may, yours was a world of ideas and fancies, mine a world of things and facts."³¹ Here, London draws a precarious and pretentious distinction between his and her work. Seemingly implying that the hardship and grit of the real life that he portrays in his writing is a higher calling. But it is hard to imagine London having a leg to stand on here as Strunsky had been a leading Socialist advocate in San Francisco and was currently in London aiding the cause. In this moment Jack strikes sounds like no more than a pissed off, rejected lover.

It is after this dressing down that Strunsky notices a change in London but it is her choice of words that makes the observation all the more poignant.

That pale sunrise seen from Mt. Tamalpais and your voice vibrant to fierceness ... It threw you into the scintillant Dawn with an abandon ... Tell me do you still read your Wordsworth on your knees? ... I resent your development if it is because of it that you speak prosaically of a prosaic marriage and of a honeymoon simultaneous with the degree.³²

Poor London, this passage must have ripped his heart out. Strunsky beautifully conjures a sunrise they spent together and how virile and alive he seemed to her in that moment.

Then she shuts him down hard. The imagery of London no longer reading Wordsworth on his knees captures the change in Jack with an effortless poetry.

³¹ Ibid.p.15-16

³² Ibid.p.15

It is once the discussion grows less personal that the full extent of London's philosophy emerges. His first connection is to take love and strap it to biology: "Since he takes sexual selection into his own hands and scientifically breeds the fish and the fowl ... why may he not scientifically breed his own kind."³³ In the next paragraph this notion is condensed into law. "Now this is the law: *Love, as a means for the perpetuation and development of the human type, is very crude and open to improvement. What the intellect of man has done with the beast, the intellect of man may do with man.*"³⁴ Here again London falls prey to the Spencerian trap that all interactions are based in the same desires and must be connected. The result of this assumption is a philosophy akin to classical sculpture. Though beautiful and elegant from afar, upon closer inspection it is riddled with cracks and imperfections. In London's philosophy there were more than cracks there were holes. Yet who could blame him, a young man with a broken heart?

His response was to strap love to biology. By doing so Jack changed what love was and eventually Strunksy forced him to explain how he experienced his new conception of love: "Thus I choose (Bess). And I do truly love her, but in the intellectual sense and not the sense you fanatically demand ... I do feel for (Bess) what happily mated men and women, after they have lived down the passion, feel in the afternoon of life."³⁵ This forced and phony sentiment is simply not Jack London, so the only possible culprit for it is the demon of rationalization that often bedeviled London. London can rationalize and justify until he's blue in the face but what he describes above is no kind of happiness for a twenty-four year old..

³³ Ibid.p.66

³⁴ Ibid.p.67

³⁵ Ibid.p.68

Just to prove that he was not always this way, Strunsky comes back at London's discussion of love.

Do you wish to know why I care? I care because I know you to be of those who are capable of love. Probably it was one little twist in your development that has turned you into alien ways of thinking and living ... because I know the life that is by the grace of God yours, and because I cannot bear to let you coffin it ... I am sorry we darken the days for each other.³⁶

Strunsky nails him. The irony of her critique and what must have made it sting all the more for London, was that it was her rejection and his resulting marriage to Maddern that was the "twist in his development," that almost derailed the rest of his literary career.

Anna further responds to his incessant, scientific explicating by illuminating the process of his own disillusionment:

Nature tricks her creatures and the race lives on, and I am prayerfully grateful. The difference between us is you are not. You are suffering from, what has been well called, the sadness of science. You accept the thesis of a common origin only to regret it. You discover that romance has a history, and lo! has vanished! You are a Werther of science, sad to the heart with a melancholy all your own and dropping inert tears on the shrine of your accumulated facts.³⁷

Boom goes the dynamite! London's new definition of love was contradictorily devoid of feeling. The purely animalistic, instinctual 'love' that London thinks he derives from evolutionist science is actually, when applied to human, a primitive, unevolved conception of this most human of emotions.

Jack's response only further proves Strunsky's point. Jack may place the label of 'love' on the male-female companionship he has conceived but that does not make it real love. At this moment, Jack was in a loveless marriage so his impulse was to imagine an

³⁶ Ibid.p.78-79

³⁷ Ibid.p.125

existence where his definition of love would come to power in society and romantic love would fall away.

London used the same evolutionary process to make his definition of love come to power as Nietzsche used to predict the coming of the “overman.” Jack did so in an effort to turn the rationalization of his marriage into a larger human point which resulted in his overestimation of mankind’s intellectual ability to override instinct and emotion in *The Kempton-Wace Letters*.

During the time romantic love runs its course in an individual, that individual is in a diseased, abnormal, irrational condition. Mental or spiritual health, which is rationality, makes for progress, and the future demands greater and greater mental or spiritual health, greater and greater rationality. The brain must dominate and direct both the individual and the society in the time to come, not the belly and the heart. Granted that the function romantic love has served has been necessary; that is no reason to conclude that it must always be necessary, that it is eternally necessary.³⁸

London’s own first marriage was the result of irrational behavior caused by love or love lost. To hear him deride that same irrationality is ironic at best. It makes sense that London was highly aware of the potential for romantic emotion to inspire illogical behavior. That he discusses that danger as something others should avoid by following his philosophical path is laughable. London was miserable in his own marriage and had proposed to Bess only after Strunsky rejected him and while he was in the throes of the same irrationality he criticizes. London’s fundamental contradiction was using a lesson he learned from the failure of his marriage to try and justify the philosophical basis on which he chose his wife.

³⁸ Ibid.p.176

This view of love was a time bomb for Jack because it ran contrary to his individual nature. As a product of the working class London's stories are full of references to the 'easy girls' of the working class who are happy for carnal distraction from the brutal struggle of their day-to-day lives. By removing passion and carnal attraction from love, London was mutilating not just his philosophy of life but his nature as well. The latter is not nearly as pliable as the former.

As Strunsky rightly responded,

Have you never found yourself in the wrong, never disobeyed your best promptings ... Is it not possible that you are not yet awake ... that you are hidebound in the dogmatism of your bit of thinking... You idealize your attitude, you go far back in time, you enmesh yourself in theories and generalization, you ride your imagination proudly, in order to reconcile yourself to something which suggests itself as more ideal than that for which the unreasoning heart hungers.³⁹

The cold dogma to which Anna objected represented a new and incomplete turn in Jack's intellectual life. Where once passionate love and love making held a place of great importance Jack now placed them behind a dark shroud, if only temporarily, as if he had converted to a scientifically rather than theologically grounded Puritanism.

Strunsky branded Jack's definition of love as a form of scientific, "new-love." But London's philosophy was really a disavowal of love as the sensual trappings for drives vital to survival and improvement of the species. Anna realized that and, over the course of her letters as Wace, compellingly makes the point that Jack's definition of love is in direct conflict with the essence of real love. How can London's philosophy, which idealizes the moment man evolves past emotional response and feeling, have room for the emotion of

³⁹ Ibid.p.125-134

love. Anna later wrote that London defended his position “so passionately as to again make on suspect that he was not as certain of his position as he claimed to be.”⁴⁰

In his closing letter Jack continues this intellectualized distancing when he says that he “honour(s) (Bess) in the finest, loftiest fashion that man can honour woman.”⁴¹ It is certainly an attractive sentiment but a problematic one because that is not how Jack loved. He was a drinker, a brawler, an adventurer, and most of all a man, a term that was very specific to Jack in a way it is not to our century.

As the book ends, the proper evolutionary and social roles of women remain up in the air. There is no definitive winning or losing philosophy implicit in the conclusion. But the substance speaks volumes about the personal and philosophical crises of London as he struggled with wrong love. Mabel had been his idealized first love and naïve attempt at usurping class. In Anna Jack sought an intellectual equal and kindred spirit but she lacked the adventurousness, passion, and sexuality he needed in a mate. Her obedience to societal requirements of ladylike behavior left Jack cooled. His greatest romantic blunder was marrying Bess in an ill-conceived effort to protect himself from heartbreak and out think love.

After finishing *The Kempton-Wace Letters*, London had to find new stimulation or face the coldness of his home life unprotected by distraction. He manufactured wind in his sails by accepting an American Press assignment to travel to South Africa and interview survivors of the Boer War. London arrived in New York eager to leave only to find the assignment had been cancelled. His ticket to England already purchased, London floated

⁴⁰ Reesman, Jeanne Campbell., and Sara S. Hodson. *Jack London: One Hundred Years a Writer*. San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 2002. Print.p.29 (Quoted from Anna Strunsky Walking Manuscripts)

⁴¹ *The Kempton-Wace Letters*. p.240-241

the idea to his publishers at Macmillan of doing some writing on the slums of London.

Unbeknownst to Jack, Macmillan had recently begun buying up as much Jacob Riis work as they could find. They loved the idea of having a similar work by Jack to publicize alongside Riis. London's inkling quickly took form.

The book would be a non-fiction narrative illuminating the reality of daily life in the West End Slums of London; it was published under the title *People of the Abyss*. Typical of Jack, his journey to the epicenter of urban poverty reinvigorated his mind and his pen. It also awakened new, albeit extramarital, romantic possibilities. Jack seemed to be emerging from his doldrums.

Chapter 4: Finding a Mate

On July 17th, 1902 Jack London boarded his train to New York in preparation of what he thought would be a journalistic voyage to South Africa. Happy to escape the emotional chill of his home life, London wasted no time in enjoying his independence. After encountering a young lady on the train, who proved more than willing, Jack helped himself. As he later confided to a friend, "You remember when I started for South Africa. In my car was a woman traveling with a maid and a child. We came together on the jump, at the very start, and had each other clear to Chicago. It was sexual passion, clear and simple ... Nothing remained when our three days and nights were over."⁴² It is rare to see London discussing his sexual life so openly. It is rarer still in light of the fact that he sent that letter to a woman, Charmian Kittredge.

London first met Charmian in 1900. Five years Jack's senior, Charmian was born in Los Angeles to poet Dayelle 'Daisy' Wiley and hotel owner Willard Kittredge. When Charmian was nine 'Daisy' died of Valley Fever. With her father's health deteriorating Charmian was sent to live with her aunt and uncle, Ninetta and Roscoe Eames, the publishers of the *Overland Monthly*. Charmian never saw her father again. She spent two years of college at Mills Academy, paying for her tuition by serving as the secretary to school founder Susan Mills.

Charmian was a virtuoso piano player as well as an expert on horseback often drawing critical looks for her refusal to ride sidesaddle position, preferring to sit astride. This defiance was indicative of her all around tom-boyishness and perfect for London, who had always found different satisfactions in the camaraderie of men and women. Charmian balanced the two, even boxing with London on occasion. Perhaps most importantly, she,

⁴² Haley.p.138 (quoted from *The Letters of Jack London*, Vol.1. p.301)

like her mother Daisy, was a product of the San Francisco free love scene. As London's letter demonstrates, she was probably the only woman with whom he discussed his sex life openly. Especially considering London wrote that to her before they had ever been romantically or physically involved.

Charmian was committed to being self-sufficient and supported herself with a secretarial job at a San Francisco shipping firm as well as editing and writing in her spare time for her aunt and uncle at the *Overland Monthly*. The magazine had agreed to publish Jack's Klondike stories, "Son of the Wolf," which Charmian helped edit and later wrote a positive review for the *Overland Monthly*. One afternoon, when Jack happened to be visiting Ninetta, she introduced him to Charmian. Charmian was initially unimpressed, as she later wrote in her biography of Jack, "Auntie turned the knob for the egress of a rather odd caller, clad in shabby bicycle trousers and dark gray woolen shirt... So that's your wonderful Jack London."⁴³ Jack's appeal to Charmian was no doubt buoyed once "Son of the Wolf," was published to rave critical reviews. As they spent more afternoons together at the *Overland* the full extent of their common interests emerged.

Most importantly for Jack, both had endured abrupt childhoods cut short by the absence of real parents. Both believed in the importance of being self sufficient, standing on their own legs. Though Anna matched Jack thought for thought, Charmian matched Jack passion for passion. She loved the outdoors, she loved and appreciated good writing, and she loved sex.

⁴³ London, Charmian. *The Book of Jack London*. New York: Century, 1921. Print.p.4

Where Anna had always sought to be Jack's intellectual equal Charmian was a mate with whom Jack could share experience. Much as he enjoyed debating with Anna, it was not what he craved from his home life. Jack needed solitude in thought and companionship in experience, something Charmian could offer that Bess and Anna could not. But Jack and Charmian's interaction remained completely platonic for the time being. She was a guest in the London marital home on many occasions and became Bess's best friend among Jack's gang of bay area intellectuals, known as 'The Crowd.'

Jack returned from his examination of poverty in the West End a literary superstar. 1903 arrived just as *Call of the Wild* hit the shelves. It was the book that ignited Jack's career. Almost immediately he became "the man" among 'The Crowd.' There was a publishing rush to acquire any unused material. Though his short stories received critical acclaim, *People of the Abyss* and *The Kempton-Wace Letters* fell flat. As Haley explains in his biography, "it was an early manifestation of a phenomenon that haunted London's whole career ... the audience who craved entertainment did not care to read about the troubles of the world. He could bountifully satisfy what they wanted, but they refused to listen to what they needed to hear, and what he needed to tell them."⁴⁴ Haley's point is all the more poignant in light of the resentment London felt towards his commercial, literary success.

In the summer of 1903 London was still riding the wave of success from *Call of the Wild*. But success could not fix his broken marriage. In fact, it exacerbated tensions between Jack and Bess to the point that he sent her and his two daughters to live in Glen Ellen, just north of San Francisco, for the summer. Left to his own devices, Jack and his friend Frank Atherton headed for Jack's favorite old bars from his oyster pirating days and

⁴⁴ Haley.p.78

drank their fill. Meanwhile, Bess had asked their friend Charmian to bring some things down to Oakland for Jack because she was not far from Glen Ellen.

Charmian arrived in Oakland to find Jack in one of his foul moods, preparing his boat, *The Spray*. They talked briefly and as she was preparing to leave Jack kissed her. From there the details of how rapidly things heated up are unclear. But they saw more of each other that summer. For someone who had been so frustrated by all the mystery and games of male-female interaction it must have been a huge relief for Jack to find himself, as Haley writes:

“discuss(ing), rationally, their growing animal attraction to one another. More than that, London found himself falling in love – a concept he had once argued against ... (Charmian) was altogether different from both the brilliant and repressed Anna Strunsky and his increasingly distant and carping wife. The physical affair tht ignited was rich and lusty, but London also found himself sharing his feeling honestly and fully with a woman capable of bearing them.”⁴⁵

Clearly something was afoot. But London was still married and soon after he and Charmian’s romance blossomed Jack left to spend eight months covering the Russo-Japanese War. He returned to find his life a mess. Bess had filed for divorce and frozen Jack’s finances, citing any number of indiscretions and mental abuses. Among them was that Jack and Anna had made love in front of her, an event which never took place.

Strunsky emerged as the villain in the story. Bess claimed they were having an affair. It took little time for newspapers to pick up on the story and soon Anna was being hounded for a statement. Ironically, it was Charmian, who Bess believed had been her closest ally among Jack’s friends, that was having an affair with Jack. But, he and Bess’s marriage had

⁴⁵ Ibid.p.87

been over for some time. So, to save Anna the misery, he finally told Bess that he was having an affair but it was with Charmian.

During his time in Korea, Jack and Charmian had grown closer. He confided to her his private dream of having a great 'man-comrade,' "so much one with me that we could never misunderstand."⁴⁶ It was a concept he rarely shared, fearing it would make a potential mate-women feel perpetually inadequate. But Charmian understood and accepted him and the excitement of Jack's response evidences his relief.

YOU, YOU who are so much more, who know life and have looked it squarely in the face, who are open-eyed and worldly wise ... that YOU should love me ... Pride? Oh, if you could but know the pride I take in this.... Oh, believe me, dear, I have reason for this very great pride. And it is so much greater because it has not the novelty of being for the first time loved."⁴⁷

But when Jack returned from Korea, in 1904, the romantic fallout began and he discovered Charmian had fled to her aunt's house in Iowa. Mostly this was due to Bess's repeated attempts to vent to Charmian about how horrid Jack was while she still assumed Strunsky was the harlot. London viewed it as a betrayal because before he left for Korea she had stated her willingness to face whatever storm of public opinion their relationship would cause. Their relationship stumbled. Not to mention once Bess found out she promptly filed an interlocutory decree on November 11th, which started the clock on a one-year period until London and Charmian could marry.⁴⁸ But London, now supremely cautious in affairs of the heart, was not as sure of their relationship as he once was.

The turmoil of Jack's life from 1900-1904 was his emotional backdrop for his most highly anticipated novel to that point, *The Sea-Wolf*. London wrote the book over a period in his life when he pin-balled from dogma to dogma and Anna to Charmian. Written while

⁴⁶ London, Charmian. *The Book of Jack London*. 2 Print.p.81-82

⁴⁷ *Letters of Jack London*. Vol 1.p.371-372

⁴⁸ Haley.p.185

unsure of what to believe and who to love, in *The Sea-Wolf* London gives the reader unique insight into the struggle for his romantic and philosophical lives.

Chapter 5: Philosophy and Women in *The Sea-Wolf*

When it came to writing *The Sea-Wolf* London insisted that “the love-element will run throughout, as the man and woman will occupy the center of the stage pretty much all of the time. Also, it will end happily.” Not surprisingly, around this time Jack’s romantic sensibilities were beginning to return. In the summer of 1903, while writing *The Sea-Wolf* and separated but not yet divorced from Bess, London admitted to his close friend Cloudsey Johns that “it’s all right for a man sometimes to marry philosophically, but remember, it’s damned hard on the woman.”⁴⁹ Finally, London let the philosophical façade he had erected around his failed marriage fall. Thank goodness he did otherwise *The Sea-Wolf* could have become London’s expansion on his essay “Salt of the Earth.”

The Sea-Wolf is a unique London novel in that it features Humprey “Sissy” van Weyden (Hump) and Wolf Larsen as dueling protagonists. The relationship between van Weyden and Larsen illuminates London’s complicated relationship with Nietzsche’s “super-man,” which Wolf Larsen embodies. Wolf is an individualist to a fault, a utilitarian, and an animal. But Larsen’s independence, strength, and will power represent qualities to which London aspired.

Van Weyden and his weakness at the outset of the book are indicative of insecurities London had about himself. Despite having taught himself to sail, Jack often became ill on his sailing expeditions. Disease and alcoholism were the primary contributors to his early death. The notions of ‘bigness’ and ‘smallness’ that Jack used to discuss Mabel are present throughout *Sea-Wolf* and have not changed. While London may have struggled with Nietzsche’s “overhuman” concept, he had a firm grasp on “will to power” and it was a major

⁴⁹ *Letters of Jack London*. Vol.1.p.381

part of his philosophy of life. One of the reasons London made so many ill advised albeit courageous attempts at serious scholarship was his fear of being confined to a smallish intellectual existence and the implications that had for his 'will to power.'

Not surprisingly one of the first qualities described in Larsen is the fact that he is universal. London describes the captain in epic terminology.

The massiveness seemed to vanish and a conviction to grow of a tremendous and excessive mental or spiritual strength that lay behind, sleeping in the deeps of his being...seemed to speak an immense vigor or virility of spirit that lay behind and beyond and out of sight. There was no sounding such a spirit, no measuring, no determining of metes and bounds, nor neatly classifying in some pigeonhole with others of similar type.⁵⁰

It is important to remember that as London defines the "superman," through Larsen, he is also clarifying his own aspiration by giving concrete form to his favored concept.

While van Weyden is the professed Spencerian in the book, it is the fate of Wolf Larsen which more closely parallels London's rejection of Spencer. Larsen is the embodiment of the superman and limited by no scruples. In the following passage Wolf explains his existence to Hump.

Utility,' he interrupted. 'This body was made for use. These muscles were made to grip, and tear, and destroy living things that get between me and life. But have you thought of the other living things? They too have muscles of one kind and another, made to grip, and tear, and destroy; and when they come between me and life, I outgrip them, outtear them, outdestroy them. Purpose does not explain it. Utility does.'⁵¹

Wolf Larsen's use of all his natural gifts and potential with no regard for morality, compassion, and empathy is ultimately the flaw that London saw in Spencer's philosophy.

⁵⁰. London, Jack, and John Sutherland. *The Sea Wolf*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007. Print.

p.21

⁵¹ Ibid.p.98

That in the attempt to reduce all to law all humanity is lost. As a writer and a socialist it was a realization with which Jack was very uncomfortable.

In *The Sea-Wolf*, Hump is the self-proclaimed Spencerian. But as the above quote illustrates, Larsen is the character whose actions actually exemplify the principles of Spencer's philosophy. Hump's progression from 'dead man's legs,' to walking on his own exemplifies Spencer's theory about the superior adaptability that exemplified the superior races. However, the way in which Larsen's 'will to power' affects his environment with submission by force is much closer to the brand of Spencerian-ism that London expounds upon in "Salt of the Earth." While he may be the Nietzschean 'ubermensch' personified, Wolf Larsen lacks the inherent righteousness, implicit in Nietzsche's concept. He exists bereft of morality, believing, as he states, that "might is right, and that is all there is to it. Weakness is wrong."⁵²

After a card game, Larsen asks Hump to discuss philosophy with him and they get onto the topic of Spencer. It is the conversation in which Hump and Wolf most explicitly discuss their philosophies. After Wolf explains his hyper-individual system, purely based on self-interest, Hump challenges Wolf on whether or not he believes in altruism. They define the concept within the Spencerian framework. Larsen begins, "In as few words as possible ... Spencer puts it something like this: First, a man must act for his own benefit, to this is to be moral and good. Next, he must act for the benefit of his children. And third, he must act for the benefit of his race' ... 'and the highest, finest, right conduct,' I interjected, 'is that act which benefits at the same time the man, his children, and his race."⁵³ His definition

⁵² Ibid.p.72

⁵³ Ibid.p.73

becomes more interesting when considering that Merriam-Webster's current definition of altruism is, "unselfish regard for or devotion to the welfare of others."

While the familial and racial aspects of Spencer's definition could be seen as a confined iteration of the dictionary definition, the first rule that Larsen recalls is that "a man must act for his own benefit." These two definitions are directly contradictory because at the turn of the century a man's family and race were extensions representative of the individual. Meaning, the individual benefits from belonging to a powerful race or powerful family.

Spencer's definition of highest action, therefore, is much closer than it initially appears to Larsen's philosophy, which London defines as "materialistic monism." It was another intellectual dogma that had piqued London's interest, outlined in Ernest Haeckel's book *The Riddle of the Universe*. As John Sutherland explained in his notes for *The Sea-Wolf*, "monism, assumed that all life derived from, and remained forever connected with, the most basic protozoic, unicellular forms. 'man is separated from other animals only by quantitative, not qualitative differences.' ... In his/her life cycle, the individual replays the entire evolutionary drama, from the most simple functions of the monera up."⁵⁴ This type of philosophy, bordering on nihilism, consistently appealed to London in his darker moods because it disconnected man from any moral obligation, reducing morality to a contest of will power, 'might is right.' This was London's outlook when he was 'The Wolf,' and he shares it with Wolf Larsen.

The only real difference between Spencer's definition of altruism and Haeckel's view of the purpose of life is an expanded definition of self-interest by the former. London wrote

⁵⁴ Ibid.p.74

the book during the last two years of his marriage to Bess. During which time he insulated himself, using intense individualism to avoid dealing with his marriage. So it makes sense that of two philosophies at odds in *The Sea-Wolf* one eliminated morality and the other demanded adherence to self, familial, and racial interests.

Wolf Larsen mimics the mistrust of emotions London expressed in *The Kempton-Wace Letters* when he aims the following blow at Hump's idealism.

Do you know, I am filled with a strange uplift; I feel as if all time were echoing through me, as though all powers were mine. I know truth, divine good from evil, right from wrong. My vision is clear and far. I could almost believe in God. But' and his voice changed and the light went out of his face, 'what is this condition in which I find myself? this joy of living? this exultation of life? This inspiration, I may well call it? It is what comes when there is nothing wrong with one's digestion ... It is the bribe for living, the champagne of the blood, the effervescence of the ferment, that makes some men think holy thoughts, and other men to see God or to create him when they cannot see him. That is all, the drunkenness of life, the stirring and crawling of the yeast, the babbling of life that is insane with consciousness that it is alive.⁵⁵

Epic transcendental moments like this were London's bread and butter. For him to issue such a strong indictment of them, through his character Larsen, is indicative of his inner turmoil. As London became unhappier in his marriage the entire belief system he established in *The Kempton-Wace Letters* gets thrown into question. The ripples go so far as to challenge the inspirational value London finds in the natural world. As London re-evaluates his philosophy of life he has Hump do so as well.

Van Weyden and Larsen debate at length the relevance of morality. Hump's time aboard the *Ghost* has thrown into doubt some of his preconceived notions about right and wrong. Wolf Larsen's beating of the sailor, Johnson, sets off a series of violent episodes over the course of a day. Larsen forces Hump to watch the beating and Hump is changed by this

⁵⁵ Ibid.p.73

introduction to man's animalistic potential. As Hump spectates, Larsen sneers at the bloodied crewmember.

Look at this bit of animated dust, this aggregation of matter that moves and breathes and defies me and thoroughly believes itself to be compounded of something good; that is impressed with certain human fictions such as righteousness and honesty.⁵⁶

Hump responds, "His human fictions ... make for nobility and manhood. You have no fiction, no dreams, no ideals." Larsen's reply gives away the essence of his character.

Quite true, Hump, quite true. I have no fictions that make for nobility and manhood. A living dog is better than a dead lion, say I with the preacher. My only doctrine is this doctrine of expediency, and it makes for surviving. This bit of the ferment we call 'Johnson,' when he is no longer a bit of the ferment, only dust and ashes, will have no more nobility than any dust and ashes, while I shall still be alive and roaring.⁵⁷

Larsen is pure animal aggression. His violence follows no ideological path. In his mind, it is merely a form of self-expression, a brutal celebration of life.

Tensions aboard the Ghost boil over twice more that day as a result of the beating to Johnson. That night in his bunk Hump confronts growing doubts about the accuracy of his worldview in light of recent experience. He lies in his bunk, his eyes opened to a new world.

My mind itself was shocked. All my days had been passed in comparative ignorance of the animality of man. In fact, I had known life only in its intellectual phases ... that men should wreak their anger on others by the bruising of the flesh and the letting of blood was something strangely and fearfully new to me. Not for nothing had I been called 'Sissy' Van Weyden, I thought, as I tossed restlessly on my bunk between one nightmare and another. And it seemed to me that my innocence of the realities of life had been complete indeed. I laughed bitterly to myself, and seemed to find in Wolf Larsen's forbidding philosophy a more adequate explanation of life than I found in my own.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Ibid.p.102-103

⁵⁷ Ibid.p.103

⁵⁸ Ibid.p.110

Van Weyden's dark introspections must have closely mirrored what was going in London's mind at the time. Like Hump, London was also dealing with a crisis of ideology. In order to marry Bess, Jack had constructed a vision of an idealized intellectual existence. Their union represented Jack's doomed, personal pursuit of Nietzsche's superman concept.

As the violence aboard the boat continues, Hump's moments of private, moral outrage grow less frequent and he questions himself more.

The general gloom had gathered me into its folds. The worst appeared inevitable; and as I paced the deck, hour after hour, I found myself afflicted with Wolf Larsen's repulsive ideas. What was it all about? Where was the grandeur of life that it should permit such wanton destruction of human souls? It was a cheap and sordid thing after all, this life, and the sooner over the better.⁵⁹

As Hump and London both suffer from what Jack called one of his 'long sorrows,' it is no wonder that he would have seen life as more driven by mere utility. What just world would allow him to suffer and provide so little light at the end of the tunnel? The inevitability of a divorce with Bess was growing, if not already determined and Jack's relationship with Anna had broken down after his proposal was followed with the second pregnancy of his estranged wife.

It is not until the female presence arrives on *The Ghost* that the tone of the book takes a drastic turn. Wolf Larsen, the dogmatic, amoral, hyper-individualist begins his descent into paralysis only after Hump musters the "cojones" to stand up to him and escape with Maud, the shipwrecked woman who ends up stranded on board. Paralleling a similar struggle in London's life, once Van Weyden accepts his need and want of a companion, the thoughtful humane writer starts to get the better of the brawling, brutal sailor.

⁵⁹ Ibid.p.139

The two characters represent London's deeply divided aspirations, on one hand to be a respected writer, on the other to be a proletarian superman. His marriage to Bess was London's attempt at embodying the superman concept. He tried to be a creature built of will power, in complete mastery of his primal impulses, transcending class, society, even his own needs. As he realized the impossibility of his goal, Jack brought his expectations for himself back to earth. He had spent three years overreaching, trying to be something that he was not. Now Jack was finally righting the ship. While critics cite the arrival of Maud as the death of the narrative, in a larger sense it represents the re-birth of London. It may not be great writing but it creates the potential for all that is to come.

Maud's arrival on the boat, like Charmian's into Jack's life, shows Hump how much he has changed. She comes from the bourgeois world that he previously inhabited. In the days leading up to her appearance, Hump has become increasingly indifferent to the constant threat of violence aboard the boat. The first evening she is on board Larsen drags the cook, Mugridge, over the side and he loses a foot to the shark. Hump's conversation with Maud reveals his shocking demoralization to them both.

Maud cannot understand how Hump has permitted the event she witnessed and the earlier killing of crewmembers. She pushes Hump for answers, "You speak in purely materialistic terms ... there is such thing as moral courage, and moral courage is never without effect."⁶⁰ Hump's response shows how his time with Larsen has changed his outlook.

You advise me to kill neither him nor myself, but to let him kill me ... For moral courage is a worthless asset on this little floating world. Leach, one of the men who were murdered, had moral courage to an unusual degree. So had the other man,

⁶⁰ Ibid.p.199

Johnson. Not only did it not stand them in good stead, but it destroyed them. And so with me if I should exercise what little moral courage I may possess.⁶¹

That's what Wolf Larsen, this creature of dogma and willpower, has done to Hump, robbed him of the unseen world, of nobility, courage, love and reduced life to its skeleton, a primal struggle for existence. In this confined world, "floating island," as Hump puts it, life has lost all abstract value and all potential for divinity. This is what London's retreat from feeling, into Spencerian and Nietzschean dogma, did to his philosophy of life. It laid existence bare before him and, as Strunsky put it, gave London, "the sadness of Science ... you discover that romance has a history and lo! Romance has vanished."⁶² Hump's time aboard the Ghost has a strikingly similar effect on him as the marriage to Bess does on Jack. They both feel isolated from a world they used to know and lose their ability to see the divine, the greatness, and the love within human interaction.

There is a bit of Strunsky as well as Charmian in the Maud character. Upon her arrival she more resembles Anna in Jack's description of her. "She was like a bit of Dresden china, and I was continually impressed with what I may call her fragility ... Describe her verse, as the critics have described it, as sublimated and spiritual, and you have described her body."⁶³ This mention of her fragility and the fact that the basis of their interaction is writing and poetry mirrors his interaction with Strunsky more than Charmian.

The change in London's literary style as Maud and Hump's romance blossoms is the subject of extensive criticism. It is labeled as 'mush' and 'pandering,' almost universally. As Sam Baskett wrote in his essay, "Sea Change in 'The Sea-Wolf,'"

⁶¹ Ibid.p.200

⁶² *Kempton-Wace Letters*.p.125

⁶³ *The Sea-Wolf*.p.204

Many readers of ... *The Sea-Wolf* have found themselves in agreement with Ambrose Bierce's dismissal of the last half of the book. 'The love element,' Bierce pronounced, 'with its absurd suppression and impossible proprieties, is awful. I confess to an overwhelming contempt for both the sexless lovers.' The undeniable achievement of the novel has been widely recognized, but it has been seen to lie principally in the characterization of Wolf Larsen as an embodiment of the Spencerian-Darwinian-Nietzschean complex of ideas at the turn of the century, with the sentimentality of 'the love element' a major flaw.⁶⁴

While the quality of the writing may deteriorate as London has his character rediscover his humanity, the change in his narrative style serves a definitive purpose. The return of romance to Hump's life, as romance returned to Jack's own life, reopens Hump's eyes to the potential for nobility in human action. London reflects this change in Hump with the change of narrative style as it becomes more high minded and sentimental.

It is after Hump's discovery that he is in love with Maud that he puts his escape plan into action and less than two days later they are in a lifeboat on the open ocean. Hump's recollection of his final hours aboard illuminates the effect of his new love.

I, Humphrey Van Weyden, was in love! And again the doubt assailed me. Not that I was afraid of it, however, or reluctant to meet it. On the contrary, idealist that I was to the most pronounced degree, my philosophy had always recognized and guerdoned love as the greatest thing in the world, the aim and summit of being, the most exquisite pitch of joy and happiness to which life could thrill, the thing of all things to be hailed and welcomed and taken into the heart... Symons's lines came into my head; 'I wandered all these years among a world of women, seeking you.'⁶⁵

This sentiment reflects a huge swing from the London of *Kempton-Wace Letters*. Hump's love of Maud has revived his idealism.

All his former caution, qualification, and doubts are thrown to the wind as love compels Hump to pit himself with irrational passion against nature and the ocean in an attempt to save the woman he loves. "I, who had lived my life in quiet places, only to enter

⁶⁴ Baskett, Sam. "Sea Change in "The Sea-Wolf." 1996. Comp. Leonard Cassuto and Jeanne Campbell. Reesman. *Rereading Jack London*. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1996. Print.p.92

⁶⁵ *The Sea-Wolf*.p.207

at the age of thirty-five upon a course of the most irrational adventure I could have imagined, never had more incident and excitement crammed into any forty hours of my experience.”⁶⁶ Once they escape, demarcating the moment when Hump proves his love and finds the will to act, Maud starts to sound more like Charmian.

Once Maud and Hump reach their island she becomes his assistant in all things.

Their conversations about literature are replaced by plans to build shelter, collect food, and re-step the mast of the Ghost. Hump describes their first weeks on Endeavor Island.

For two weeks we toiled at building a hut. Maud insisted on helping, and I could have wept over her bruised and bleeding hands. And still, I was proud of her because of it. There was something heroic about this gently bred woman enduring our terrible hardship.⁶⁷

It is hard to imagine London attaching such admiration to any memory of Strunky. This is much more his image of Charmian.

London knew he was a hard man to put up with. The hardships Maud endured on Endeavor Island may represent his budding realization of how much it cost the women he loved to form a relationship with him.

Finally, Hump and Maud succeed as a couple and when Wolf Larsen arrives on the wrecked Ghost, Hump’s love for Maud has erased any admiration or respect he once had for the captain. More important is Wolf’s descent into paralysis. When Hump escapes Wolf’s final attempt to kill him it marks the decisive moment in a steady reversal of the power dynamics between the two men. The shift is driven by Hump’s realization that the simplistic, naïve philosophy with which he began and Larsen’s amoral, materialistic outlook are both incomplete.

⁶⁶ Ibid.p.207

⁶⁷ Ibid.p.349

Larsen's character is largely responsible for inspiring that understanding in Hump. London called Larsen the evolutionary, "culmination of all savagery ... True, Wolf Larsen possessed intellect to an unusual degree, but it was directed solely to the exercise of his savage instincts and made him but the more formidable a savage."⁶⁸ The words call out the necessity for an overarching sense of beneficence. London's point is that, Larsen's high level of intellect does not matter and the well conceived philosophy he uses to justify his world view does not matter. If Wolf's sole motivation is individual self-interest and his means are strictly force then he can never be more than a savage. His use of philosophy and reason only serve to mask that perpetual truth. That is what is missing from *Kempton-Wace Letters* and the reckoning that Larsen brings on himself.

The brutality of Larsen's fate announces London's renunciation of the 'superman' concept and of Spencerian dogma that left all to utility. He takes everything that matters from Larsen one by one, leaving his mind intact to experience the death of his will. In Larsen and Hump's final encounter the Wolf laments his fate. "The course of it is that I must lie here, conscious, mentally unimpaired, knowing that the lines are going down ... I cannot see, hearing and feeling are leaving me, at this rate I shall soon cease to speak; yet all the time I shall be here, alive, active, and powerless."⁶⁹ Hump suggests that the "here" of it, is Wolf's soul, a sentiment Larsen mocks, "Bosh! ... I can remember, I can think and reason. When that goes, I go. I am not. The soul?"⁷⁰ However, the moment of his full paralysis suggests that Larsen is the one who has been philosophically mistaken all along.

⁶⁸ Ibid.p.204

⁶⁹ Ibid.p.342

⁷⁰ Ibid.p.342

In Larsen's last moment London writes of his illness, "Now it bound him with insentient fetters, walling his soul in darkness and silence, blocking it from the world which to him had been a riot of action. No more would he conjugate the verb 'to do' in every mood and tense. 'To be' was all that remained to him – as he had defined death, without movement; to will, but not to execute; to think and reason and in the spirit of him to be as alive as ever, but in the flesh to be dead, quite dead."⁷¹ London's decision to kill Larsen in this way is immensely significant. London implies there is nothing Larsen could have done differently. His fate was inevitable. All the strength and will power in the world could not have helped. The death Jack devised for Larsen dramatized his conclusion that the "superman" concept that once infatuated him was terribly, fatally flawed.

What is important in the final moments of Larsen's activity is London acknowledges that there is meaning outside the quantitative. Larsen's reality is defined by actions, things that are done, things that have a cause and effect. Though London might have once subscribed to that, here he recognizes that motivations, intentions, and spirit have meaning as well. How could they not if Larsen has lost all ability to act but some part of him is still alive? Whether it is the soul or just the mind, it is the part of humans that is capable of malice but also of beneficence and love.

The hopeful sentiment with which *The Sea-Wolf* concludes suggests that Jack also saw rescue on the horizon. Shortly after *The Sea-Wolf* was published he divorced Bess and married Charmian.

⁷¹ Ibid.p.333

Chapter 6: A Mate Woman

London's divorce from Bess Maddern in 1904 was perversely poetic as it represented his rediscovery of self and provided the opportunity for his subsequent marriage to Charmian Kittredge the following year. Charmian became his true soul mate or 'mate-woman,' London's pet name for her. The new infusion of romance into his life, coupled with a nagging inkling Jack had that the amoral, utilitarian aspects of Spencer's philosophy were unfounded, brought London back from the brink of an embittered and callous worldview. London frequently described this period of his life as his 'long sickness.'

In the months after Jack's return, their marriage was far from a sure thing. Jack returned from reporting on the Russo-Japanese War to find that Charmian had fled the scandal of their affair. Ironically it was through illness that Jack and Charmian ended up bonding. In April of 1905, Jack found lumps on his rear. Convinced it was a malignant tumor, Jack prepared for the worst. It turned out he had contracted a bad case of hemorrhoids. All it would require was minor surgery and a week's stay in the hospital. During this time Charmian cared for him constantly. She wrote, "these days (after Jack's surgery) are the turning point in the lives of Mate and me. We are more truly learning each other, our worth to each other."⁷² Her willingness to be his compliment was how she became indispensable to Jack and his 'mate.'

Once London was well again, Charmian offered to serve as his literary secretary. Soon she was typing his manuscripts, editing them on completion and generally keeping his life in order. This ability to be a silent but critical half of Jack's creative process was

⁷² Hedrick, Joan D. *Solitary Comrade, Jack London and His Work*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1982. Print.p.136

Charmian's secret weapon. Jack did partake in at least one dalliance during their courtship. But, cheating was a defense London compulsively used against the gnawing fear that if he gave himself completely to one woman and their love did not last it would be the end of him. Jack's neuroses are no excuse merely an explanation so his behavior is not confused with indifference to Charmian. As Haley wrote, "London was aware that he had intellectual equals among the bohemians ... in ways that Charmian could not compete with. But during the course of 1905 he also came to realize that he did not need other equal captains; what he needed was his mate – one who loved and helped and understood and steadied him in ways that The Crowd could not compete with."⁷³

They were married during the summer of 1905 and London quickly bought a new property, Beauty Ranch, for himself and his new wife. Charmian's presence stabilized London's romantic and emotional psyche. London had finally overcome his "Great Sickness," that drove Martin Eden's, eventually unsuccessful, struggle to find value in life.

Jack and Charmian busied themselves preparing for their attempt at a sail around the world. He had rediscovered his passion for adventure. Jack built a schooner, *The Snark*, and along with a few close friends he and Charmian embarked on their voyage. The expedition ended disastrously. London fell ill with Tropical Fever as a result of sun poisoning, forcing them to stop in Hawaii for weeks. By the time the expedition reached Australia they opted to cut the trip short of their ambitious goal. It was a chastening experience that further helped Jack overcome his illusions about the "superman" concept.

The trip had taken nearly two years and had included stops in Hawaii, Tahiti, the Solomon Islands, an emergency run back to San Francisco, and their final stop in Sydney

⁷³ Haley.p.197

before returning to the United States. Prior and during the expedition, on his ranch, and while on the boat, London penned a significant amount of his autobiographical opus, *Martin Eden*. Charmian's Aunt Netta sold the book for 9,000 dollars and succeeding in doubling the size of London's Beauty Ranch.

Martin Eden was a reintroduction to London for his audience. It was not as popular as *The Sea-Wolf* or *Call of the Wild* at the time of release. However, it generated much more critical interest and acclaim than his earlier tales had done. The novel reflected a matured and more confident London. His ability to write such an autobiographical novel honestly and with perspective evidenced a newfound self-awareness and comfort with his own limitations.

Chapter 7: Martin Eden: On the Other Side

The foundation of unconditional love, which Charmian provided, was what Jack had always needed. It allowed him to establish a stable identity, philosophy, and produce his best writing. The autobiographical nature of *Martin Eden* made it a much more important step in London's effort to discover himself and exercise personal demons while creating great literature. Charmian's love gave Jack the strength and safety net he needed to honestly examine himself and his flaws. Without that ability Jack never could have reached the level of self-awareness necessary to write *Martin Eden*.

On the other side of his philosophical struggles, *Martin Eden* presented an older, wiser London who no longer relied on other philosophers to organize existence for him. He is more secure in himself, finally on the other side of his battle with wrong love and intellectual dogma. *Martin Eden* was an effort of cathartic authorial expression misunderstood by critics as an endorsement, rather than rejection, of the philosophical dogmas and romantic turbulence of Jack's youth.

London was writing a treatise on the mistakes of his own youth by forcing Martin to live through them. Making the path of Martin's life the roadmap to London's own mistakes. But, in order to make that point, Martin had to be a tragic hero. As opposed to Jack, who had successfully reconciled his romantic and philosophical conflicts. For London, *Martin Eden* was evidence of the path his life could have taken and how it would have ended had he not found love. Even if he had not killed himself a Jack London who went on believing

that, “Love is a disorder of mind and body, and is produced by passion under the stimulus of imagination,” could not have written much anything of value.⁷⁴

Jack and Martin’s life stories so closely parallel one and other that in discussing the book it is easy to allow them to become synonymous. Remember that London incorporated autobiographical components into *Eden* as a way of examining and understanding how the motivations and aspirations of his youth had led him astray. While Martin may enjoy philosophers like Herbert Spencer and idealize a woman like Ruth, London’s inclusion of them makes their presence an inherent critique.

Martin and Jack shared the same class anxieties, they both suffered from an emotional emptiness left by their lack of a cohesive family, and finding romantic love represented salvation for both men. Though London could not escape his insecurities, by dealing with them head on through his creation of Martin Eden, he gained new self-awareness and comfort with their existence. Jack had learned to live more and intellectualize less, not allowing his tremendous passion for ideas to make every decision a matter of life and death. London’s message in *Martin Eden* is that had he not learned that lesson he would have ended up like Martin.

The real life of Martin Eden begins after first setting eyes on Ruth Morse at her family’s home. Dinner has not even begun but already Martin has been transformed by meeting her. At the first opportunity to collect his thoughts Martin proclaims that, “here was something to live for, to win to, to fight for – ay, and die for. The books were true. There were such women in the world. She was one of them. She lent wings to his imagination, and great, luminous canvases spread themselves before him, whereon loomed

⁷⁴ *Kempton-Wace Letters*.p.98

vague, gigantic figures of love and romance, and of heroic deeds for woman's sake."⁷⁵

Immediately we learn that 'love and romance' have regained their former significance to London. The phrasing, framing Martin's conception of love as "vague" and "gigantic", warns of the fickle and ephemeral nature of love while not diminishing its value or importance.

Ironically, it is Ruth's conception of love that mirrors Jack's position in *Kempton-Wace*. London had Ruth confess to Martin that:

She had never had any experiences of the heart. Her only experiences in such matters were of the books, where the facts of ordinary day were translated by fancy into a fairy realm of unreality ... She did not know the actual fire of love. Her knowledge of love was purely theoretical, and she conceived of it as lambent flame ... Her idea of love was more that of placid affection, serving the loved one softly in an atmosphere ... of ethereal calm. She did not dream of the volcanic convulsions of love, its scorching heat and sterile wastes of parched ashes.⁷⁶

This fear of losing control, passion overwhelming the self, was a major part of London's criticism of bourgeois values. One of the unavoidable side effects of love is that it awakens the irrational and animalistic potential in man and that scared the daylights out of the wealthy. As the controlling demographic in society, the ruling class needed to perpetuate the status quo or lose a measure of their power. Perpetuating the status quo was and always will be about controlling those beneath you. How can you control the masses if they are irrational and, therefore, uncontrollable? Martin's initial idealization of this class is evidence of how naïve he truly is at the outset of the book.

London directly tied Martin's lack of understanding about love to his childhood. Like Jack, Martin was born fatherless and his mother died when he was twelve, not true of Jack. From his own experience, London rooted Martin's ignorance in his lack of a family. That

⁷⁵ London, Jack, and Donald Pizer. *Martin Eden*. 1982. *Novels and Social Writings*. New York: Literary Classics of America, 1982. Print.p.564

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*p.617

void forced Martin to work to support himself at a premature age. Martin's ignorance comes back to haunt him after he has developed his intellect because he never re-examined critical assumptions he made about Ruth, the Bourgeois, and love until it was too late.

London explained what drove his initial aspiration to the "overhuman" in the aftermath of Martin's dinner at the Morses. The ambition to become an idealized version of himself comes from Martin's naïve and idealized vision of Ruth. As Martin walks home, after his first evening with the Morses, he grovels at the altar of Ruth.

He was not fit to carry water for her – he knew that; it was a miracle of luck ... that had enabled him to see her and be with her and talk with her that night... He did not deserve such fortune. His mood was essentially religious. He was humble and meek, filled with self-disparagement and abasement. In such frame of mind sinners come to the penitent form. He was convicted of sin... Ambition soared on mad wings, and he saw himself climbing the heights with her, sharing thoughts with her, pleasuring in beautiful and noble things with her. It was a soul-possession he dreamed, refined beyond any grossness, a free comradeship of spirit that he could not put into definite thought... he did not think at all. Sensation usurped reason, and he was quivering and palpitant with emotions he had never known, drifting deliciously on a sea of sensibility where feeling itself was exalted and spiritualized and carried beyond the summits of life.⁷⁷

I cannot think of a passage which more aptly discusses how torturously entwined physical attraction and feelings of love are. Martin's mind alternates between intellectual flights of fancy in the abstract and awareness of the physical sensation that is vibrating through his body as he explores this romantic stratosphere. The conundrum is whether love informs this physical attraction or their physical attraction deludes their minds into creating a fantasy of cosmic love. In the case of Martin and Ruth it is the latter. This confusion of emotions leads Martin to elevate the Ruth beyond what is rational or humanly feasible. A lesson London presumably learned from Mabel.

⁷⁷ Ibid.p.579

Martin's feelings for Ruth are a volatile mix of naiveté and sexual attraction, catalyzed by Martin's idealized view of the bourgeois. All these emotions are too much to process and Martin is left consumed by his feelings for Ruth. As London writes in the full passage from above, "a free comradeship (with Ruth) that he could not put into definite thought. He did not think it. For that matter, he did not think at all. Sensation usurped reason."⁷⁸ This was a lesson from Jack's own experience. As beautiful and powerful as love is, it is also illusory. As Martin's imagination runs with the possibilities of a union between himself and Ruth he forgets, as London wrote, that he was allowing sensation to usurp reason.

In Martin's intellectual infancy it was easy for Ruth to be the total embodiment of purity to him. But, as Martin's eyes opened to the truth of the society around him it became impossible for Ruth to live up to his initial awe. "And now, in her, he conceived purity to be the superlative of goodness and of cleanness, the sum of which constituted eternal life. And promptly urged his ambition to grasp at eternal life."⁷⁹ Surely this is too high a standard for any person to live up to. Martin's need to be the superman comes out of what he sees Ruth as deserving in a man. London says of Martin that he "would murmur fervently ... 'It's up to me to make good ... I will be *the* man. I will make myself *the* man. I will make good."⁸⁰ The mantra-like quality of Martin's speech comes out of his singular ambition to attain Ruth.

This dogged sense of purpose was another side effect of love that had intoxicated London and he includes it in Martin's character. The pursuit of a woman simplified Martin's life. There was only one thing to do and that was to make himself worthy of Ruth. The

⁷⁸ Ibid.p.579

⁷⁹ Ibid.p.579

⁸⁰ Ibid.p.645

pursuit demanded Martin undertake myriad new endeavors. But he did so all in the service of a single end. There was always a next step to take in etiquette and intellect. What London was talking about is the ephemeral pleasure of the chase. The chase becomes its own high and Martin mistakenly ascribes it specifically to Ruth. His aspirations are created by his desire to become worthy of her. As Ruth's worth changes in relation to Martin, he becomes disillusioned with the entire pursuit and the chase as well as the high disappears.

A moment during one of Martin and Ruth's afternoon picnics foreshadows Martin's later disenchantment. He brings cherries for their luncheon and one happens to stain Ruth's lips. Martin's shock evidences how he allowed his feelings to manipulate his perceptions. Upon seeing her stained lips Martin realizes that "for the moment her divinity was shattered. She was clay after all, mere clay, subject to the common law of clay as his clay was subject, or anybody's clay ... It was a revelation that stunned him. It was as if he had seen the sun fall out of the sky, or had seen worshipped purity polluted."⁸¹ This moment actually helps narrow the separation between Martin and Ruth as he is reminded that she is fallible just like him. However, it is the precursor of a deeper realization of Ruth's frailty and limitations that, Martin will not see in the same benign light.

While the love between Ruth and Martin does not last, the effect that love had on Martin is unquestionable. It is important to keep in perspective that Martin's desire for literary greatness was always in service of his pursuit of Ruth. Martin has already made great progress in his intellectual transformation when London clarifies that:

(Martin) was a lover first and always. All other things he subordinated to love. Greater than his adventure in the world of thought was his love-adventure. The

⁸¹ Ibid.p.645

world itself was not so amazing because of the atoms and molecules that composed it ... what made it amazing was the fact that Ruth lived in it.⁸²

Even though Martin was fascinated by the knowledge he had acquired he still holds love above all else. London's most crucial understanding from his marriage to Charmian was that this sacred and lofty conception of love was immature. Right love had to be realistic not just idealistic. Otherwise it would crumble at the first signs of discord. While Martin's conception of love could sustain a fling it could never sustain a ten-year marriage.

But, Martin Eden's journey is a testament to the power of love, the power of love to drive man to the heights of existence and its power to deceive him. London traced the root of this deception to the entanglement of romantic emotions. In Jack's experience, love, lust, idealism, and self-deception all intermingled, transforming each other to create the illusion of this capital L Love. The process of London's maturation from age twenty-two to thirty was one of discovering these fallacies within his illusions and coming to terms with them.

Martin used his love for Ruth to fill the hole left by his growing disillusionment with the people around him and society at large. This is problematic as eventually Martin believes only Ruth's love can save his life. In the following passage Jack gives the reader a window into the substance of Martin's transformation.

"He had forgotten immortality of late, and the trend of his scientific reading had been away from it ...He remembered it was at this table, at which he now sneered and was so often bored, that he had first eaten with civilized beings in what he had imagined was an atmosphere of high culture and refinement. He caught a glimpse of that pathetic figure of him, so long ago."⁸³

⁸² Ibid.p.644

⁸³ Ibid.p.846

London's intent was to create a tragic hero so Martin's effort had to be in the pursuit of the wrong love. The precision and insight with which London dissects love in *Martin*

Eden stands in stark contrast to Jack's romantic fumbling in the *Kempton Wace Letters*.

Back in his room, after spending the evening with Ruth at a lecture, Martin racks his brain.

Who are you, Martin Eden? he demanded of himself in the looking-glass ... Who are you? What are you? Where do you belong? ... And yet you dare to open the books ... to think thoughts that none of your own kind thinks ... and to love a pale spirit of a woman who is a million miles beyond you ... Who are you? and what are you? damn you! And are you going to make good ... Then he got out note-book and algebra and lost himself in quadratic equations.⁸⁴

Love gave purpose and definition to Martin. His lack of an identity and place in the world haunts him. Yet, he is able to silence the paranoid questioning by focusing on his pursuit of Ruth until he "lost himself" in process of bettering himself for her. It is another moment where London tried to demonstrate the intoxicating qualities of feeling in love. Feeling in love becomes a refuge from daily anxieties, which makes the individual want to feel in love, which tempts him to convince himself he is when it is more likely that he is not, starting the countdown to heartbreak, a feeling London knew too well.

London puts Martin through the greatest struggle of his own life, the search for the right love. Jack discusses the complexity of love from all angles. The danger of being too eager to be in love, the danger of confusing sexual attraction with love, the danger of putting your love on a pedestal, on and on. Starting with Jack's childhood he was terrified of emotional pain at the hands of a woman who was supposed to love him. So he creates his doppelganger, Martin, and writes him into the same situations now that he is able to understand the mistakes he once rushed into.

⁸⁴ Ibid.p.650

As Martin becomes more disillusioned with people, Jack has him sink deeper into the world of ideas and it is not long before Martin's quest of self-education leads him to Spencer. Martin immediately values Spencer because he gives new meaning to the diversity of existence by exploring life's common origins. Spencer bridged the material and the immortal worlds for Martin. He expressed such sentiment when explaining to Ruth why he so values the philosopher.

Beauty has significance, but I never knew its significance before. I just accepted beauty as something meaningless, as something that was just beautiful without any rhyme or reason, I did not know anything about beauty. But now I know, or, rather, am just beginning to know. This grass is more beautiful to me now that I know why it is grass, yes, and adventure, too. The very thought of it stirs me. When I think of the play of force and matter, and all the tremendous struggle of it, I feel as if I could write an epic on grass.⁸⁵

Spencer has shown Martin beauty in the unity and self-sufficiency of the universe. However Martin's search for concrete meaning and definition eventually go too far. Martin reasons his way to the same mistake that Strunsky charges Jack with in *Kempton-Wace Letters*. In the effort to reduce or trace everything to its origin the mystery and beauty of the unknown is lost. The history of society has been one of attributing divine and powerful origins to those parts of existence that man did not understand. Spencer's assertion, that the unknown is merely that, unknown, robs existence of its potential for the epic. The power of Martin's love for Ruth maintains the beauty in his world. When love leaves Martin, he is left with nothing but intellectual dogma and finds the cold light of his material and scientific world unbearable.

By writing retrospectively London was able to simultaneously examine his previous mistakes, understand what they were, and why he had made them. Which is why it is fitting

⁸⁵ Ibid.p.650

that London describes Martin and Ruth's relationship as one of "children together, so far as love was concerned, and they were as naïve and immature in the expression of their love as a pair of children. And this despite the fact that she was crammed with a university education and his head was full of scientific philosophy and the hard facts of life."⁸⁶

London's ability to perceive and examine the immaturity of his youth with such objectivity is a testament to the progress that he had made over the last six years, not only as a writer but as a man and a companion as well.

Another one of love's fickle characteristics that Jack illuminated in *Martin Eden* was how indistinguishable feelings of love and physical attraction can be. It is physical attraction that holds Martin and Ruth together after he eclipses her intellectually and they clash frequently over his desire to be a writer. After attending the opera Ruth and Martin have a particularly nasty fight over the importance of realism. Martin, not surprisingly, believes it to be paramount. Yet listen as London softly sounds the alarm,

She was vexed with him, and as she walked beside him she had a vague feeling of outrage... But when he took her in his arms at the door and kissed her good night in tender lover-fashion, she forgot everything in the outrush of her own love to him. And later, on a sleepless pillow, she puzzled, as she had often puzzled of late, as to how it was that she loved so strange a man, and loved him despite the disapproval of her own people.⁸⁷

However, the reader soon learns that Ruth does not, in fact, love Martin in spite of the disapproval of her own people. This moment is one where physical and sexual attractions magnify their other emotions, giving them distorted weight and importance.

Within one of Martin's evening with Brissenden, London discussed his struggle with emotion, love, writing, and society.

⁸⁶ Ibid.p.750

⁸⁷ Ibid.p.743

You are so young, Martin boy, so young. You will flutter high, but your wings are of the finest gauze ... Do not scorch them. But of course you have scorched them already. It required some glorified petticoat to account for that 'Love-cycle,' and that's the shame of it.' 'It glorifies love as well as the petticoat,' Martin laughed.⁸⁸

This 'glorification of the petticoat' was something London had experienced in his own life. It is indicative of the larger potential danger for our creativity to erect expectations that reality cannot live up to. It creates an untenable divide between the world that the writer has imagined and the world in which he is forced to live. It's a divide that threatens to leave the writer constantly disappointed and disillusioned with the world around him after his imagination has idealized existence.

The goal Martin set for himself was to rise above the slave moralities of society. Through self-education Martin attempts to perfect his understanding of existence and society to the point that he would be immune to the irrationality of emotion response. What London realized was awareness was not enough. An enlightened mind is no protection against the primal part of the brain that tells man to fight, flee, protect his family; in crucial moments it just takes over; and pretending that part of man does not exist, as London tried, does not make it true.

During a night out, Brissenden evokes a reaction from Martin that proves he is still subject to society's slave moralities. All Brissenden has to do is offer him charity in the form of a meal. Martin is consumed with rage in the moment but afterwards offers this insight into the relationship between the intellectual human and the primal human:

I confess you made a fool of me, Brissenden. That I am hungry and you are aware of it are only ordinary phenomena, and there's no disgrace. You see, I laugh at the conventional little moralities of the herd; then you drift by, say a sharp, true word, and immediately I am the slave of the same little moralities... The prejudice of early youth, you know. I learned such things then, and they cheapen what I have since

⁸⁸ Ibid.p.815

learned. They are the skeletons in my particular closet.' 'But you've got the door shut on them now?' 'I certainly have.'⁸⁹

Despite his protestations to the contrary, only moments later, when Brissendon doesn't allow him to contribute to the bill, London wrote that, "Martin pocketed it with a grimace, and felt for a moment the kindly weight of Brissenden's hand upon his shoulder."⁹⁰ Martin's embarrassment is evidence that his class anxieties still hold sway despite his herculean effort of self-education. London illustrated the futility of Martin's "overhuman" aspiration by having him respond to Brissenden's goading based on his class insecurities. These are the exact limitations that the 'overman' must transcend.

London gave repeated indications that it was impossible for Martin to transcend his limitations. Martin continues his pursuit of the 'overhuman' blind to the aspects of his own behavior that exhibit the hopelessness of his objective. The pursuit also fostered a growing indifference in Martin. The last things that retain value for Martin are love and Ruth. At Martin's last dinner party with the Morses he looks around the room with new eyes.

Bourgeois,' 'trader's den' – Brissenden's epithets repeated themselves in his mind. But what of that? He demanded angrily. He was marrying Ruth, not her family... He glanced at Ruth for reassurance, much in the same manner that a passenger, with sudden panic thought of possible shipwreck, will strive to locate the life preserver. Well, that much had come out of it – love and Ruth. All the rest had failed to stand the test of the book. But Ruth and love had stood the test; for them he found a biological sanction. Love was the most exalted expression of life.⁹¹

London's search for the right philosophy was almost as dire as his search for the right love. Though Brissenden pushes Martin into intellectually dangerous waters as long as Ruth remained the focal point of Martin's desire his life remained tolerable. As the

⁸⁹ Ibid.p.811

⁹⁰ Ibid.p.811

⁹¹ Ibid.p.846

physical world holds increasingly less value for Martin he looks to philosophy to fill the void. In *Martin Eden*, it is Brissenden's "real dirt," friends that represent this hop-scotching from one dogma to another until the individual has been lost in a sea of hierarchies and corollaries. The exhaustive extent to which London categorizes and describes Brissenden's intellectuals makes London's point for him.

Strawn-Hamilton's his name ... He was a Spencerian like you till Kreis turned him to materialistic monism ... Norton's another monist – only he affirms naught but spirit ... (Kreis) the only thing in this world ... he really cares for , is monism. Haeckel is his little tin god... There's one fellow -- Steven – a theopolist ... And there's another fellow – Parry ... a statistician and a sporting encyclopedia ... and another fellow, Harry ... red hot socialist and strong union man.⁹²

It is impossible to keep everybody's philosophies straight. London doomed them as their need for concrete truth sends them ricocheting from one philosophy to another. Eventually they are left drained of all their will by their relentless pursuit of truth. While Martin loves and idealizes this one night, "among the real dirt," the whole experience is nostalgic for a reason. He knows he can't go back because he would become just as disillusioned with them as he is with everything else. All the while Martin is blind to how his adherence to Nietzschean Individualism is just as dogmatic in its individuality as the philosophies of 'the dirt.' When Brissenden, king of the dirt, dies, his death represents this ultimately grim fate for all the 'dirt.'

After Martin's speech at a socialist meeting, despite promoting individualism, not socialism, in his speech, a newspaper runs a scathing article naming him the leader of San Francisco's radical socialists. Soon after he receives a letter from Ruth breaking off their engagement. Martin holds out hope that it is her family that is keeping her from him.

However, when Martin sees Ruth, she confirms that the break-up was in accordance with

⁹² Ibid.p.838

her wishes. This rejection marks the death of Martin. The only things which stood the test of the books, "love and Ruth," have proved themselves false in one fell swoop. Martin has inflated love to impossible heights and, upon discovering that it could not overcome class barriers, the one ideal Martin has is lost.

After Martin has received Ruth's letter, but before he has made his final appeal, Martin has a conversation with his sister, Gertrude, which illuminates the impossibility of his mission to become the "overhuman." She repeatedly implores Martin to get a 'real job,' causing Martin to simultaneously resent the distance he feels from her while aspiring to greater distance from society:

He was appalled at the awful intellectual chasm that yawned between him and his people. He could never cross it and explain to (Gertrude) his position, -- the Nietzschean position ... Their highest concept of right conduct, in his case, was to get a job... Poor, stupid slaves, he thought, while his sister talked. Small wonder the world belonged to the strong. The slaves were obsessed by their own slavery. A job was to them a golden fetich before which they fell down and worshipped ... She went away weeping audibly, and he felt a pang of sorrow shoot through him at sight of her heavy body and uncouth gait. As he watched her go, the Nietzschean edifice seemed to shake and totter. The slave-class in the abstract was all very well, but it was not wholly satisfactory when it was brought home to his own family. And yet, if there was ever a slave trampled by the strong, that slave as his sister Gertrude. He grinned savagely at the paradox. A fine Nietzschean man he was, to allow his intellectual concepts to be shaken by the first sentiment or emotion that strayed along -- ay, to be shaken by the slave-morality itself, for that was what his pity for his sister really was. The true noble men were above pity and compassion. Pity and compassion had been generated in the subterranean barracoons of the slaves and were no more than the agony and sweat of the crowded miserable and weaklings.⁹³

Becoming the 'overhuman' requires the end of the self. But, when it comes to his sister, Martin is still controlled by his feelings for Gertrude. Each pang of compassion illustrates why Martin could never become Nietzsche's 'superman.' For that reason, Martin ends the moment resenting the compassion he feels for his own sister. Martin's sentiment

⁹³ Ibid.p.864-5

expresses an aspiration for callousness; and it grows in him, as science and dogma steal more and more of the beauty in his world.

After his and Ruth's separation Martin has a crisis of personality. The pursuit of Ruth, and love, gave Martin his heading from the start of his journey. When he loses Ruth and love he is left dead in the water, without purpose. London wrote that,

He was chartless and rudderless, and he had no port to make, while drifting involved the least living, and it was living that hurt ... He was waiting for some impulse, from he knew not where, to put his stopped life into motion again ... The effect produced upon him was one of great sadness. In the crash of his whole world, with love on the pinnacle, the crash of magazinedom and the dear public was a small crash indeed ... Martin, had spent arduous and futile years in order to find it out for himself ... Well, he was done he solaced himself. He had hitched his wagon to a star and been landed in a pestiferous marsh.⁹⁴

This is the moment at which Jack and Martin diverge. Martin becomes the anti-Jack because, where London found the courage to overcome his disillusionment and find right love, Martin retreats deeper into his ideological isolation and confines himself to an existence devoid of any sustainable emotion. He returns to the Bay to see his old crowd one afternoon and after being forced into a fist fight Martin grasps just how far gone he is. "Already the zest of combat, which of old had been so keen and lasting, had died down, and he discovered that he was self-analytical, too much so to live, single heart and single hand, so primitive an existence."⁹⁵ He was consumed with transforming himself into his idea of the perfect man for Ruth. Now, without her and without love Martin is left to a purely intellectual existence. In these final moments he is a stranger unto himself and examines this new Martin Eden. When he was with Ruth, Martin had no need to analyze himself. He was the ideological soldier of love, bettering himself and succeeding for its sake, for Ruth's

⁹⁴ Ibid.p.874-875

⁹⁵ Ibid.p.883-884

sake. After Martin's realization that his conception of love was wrong the legitimacy of all his actions are thrown into question and Martin is left empty.

Once he becomes a literary success, Ruth returns to Martin and he explains to her the origin of his collapse. Ruth created the potential for love in Martin only to irreparably shatter the illusions she had inspired. As he declares to Ruth here,

The publication of what I had written, and the public notice I received, wrought a change in the fibre of your love. Martin Eden, with his work all performed you would not marry. Your love for him was not strong enough to enable you to marry him. But your love is now strong enough, and I cannot avoid the conclusion that its strength arises from the publication and the public notice... Of course, all this is not flattering to me. But worst of all, it makes me question love, sacred love. Is love so gross a thing that it must feed upon publication and public notice? It would seem so. I have sat and thought upon it till my head went around.⁹⁶

This is the reality that London successfully reconciles himself with and Martin dies rather than accept. Much as Martin aspired to be the 'ubermensch,' he had created an 'uberlove' that mankind was simply too fallible to live up to. Unwilling to live in a world without idealism Martin commits the ultimate 'superman' act, overcoming man's strongest primal instinct, the will to live.

This is the cautionary tale of Martin Eden. The uncompromising need to possess this 'uberlove' is the greatest obstacle to Martin's happiness. It was a shared obsession for Martin and Jack but one that Jack overcame with Charmian. Though their marriage was not perfect Charmian's love and companionship was perfect for Jack. However, she gave London exactly what he needed in a marriage, stability, unconditional love, and the family unit he had always craved. Solving the turmoil of his love life allowed London to focus purely on his other true love which was writing. Charmian gave London roots in the real

⁹⁶ Ibid.p.914

world and all its imperfections and after their marriage the fiction London produced rivals the best American literature has to offer.

Once Jack accepted that we are all unavoidably and irreversibly fallible, he realized that he did not need “uber-love.’ Right love exists differently in each individual as the compliment to the unique intricacies of that individual person. This understanding helped Jack to safely divide his creative life, the world within his head, and his real life. As a writer it was his job to seek out those universal truths to which all of mankind can relate. However, as an individual it was Jack’s job to be happy in a way specific to him alone. In that pursuit London had to let his feelings guide him.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

In an 1899 article in *The Editor*, titled “On the Writer’s Philosophy of Life,” London addressed the importance of having a personal philosophy. The “writer’s philosophy of life” according to London is what “enables the writer to put not only himself into his work, but to put that which is not himself but which is viewed and weighted by himself.”⁹⁷

The progression of Jack’s philosophy was the product of an intense competition between his inclinations for naturalism, realism, and romanticism. After he found right love with Charmian the naturalism that had seeped in during his tumultuous, younger years finally fell away. The struggle of that time without love, as he wrote to his friend Cloudsey, was, “that small men down the ages have conjured gods in answer ... But how bout you and me, who have no god?” The same reassurance that many gather from the religious assurances of a God and an after life London found once he was totally and completely loved. The reassurance that he could reveal his true self to another and she would love him for it.

He was committed to showing human interaction for what it was, cutting through all the bullshit and propaganda. London’s dedication to realism was formed and fostered by his time at sea, riding the rails, and in Alaska. He romanticized that time in his own life for the freedom and incredible experience it brought him. As Jack slipped the bonds of his home life, he discovered the inspirational qualities of nature. Forces of nature were physical proof of the universal sentiments that London was trying to tap into with his

⁹⁷ London, Jack, and Dale L. Walker. *No Mentor but Myself: A Collection of Articles, Essays, Reviews, and Letters on Writing and Writers*. Port Washington, NY: Kennikat, 1979. Print.p.7

writing. As he elaborates in his essay to aspiring writers, “You must know the spirit which ... gives birth and momentum to great ideas, which hangs a John Brown or crucifies a Savior. You must have your hand on the inner pulse of things. And the sum of all this will be your working philosophy, by which, in turn, you will measure, weigh, and balance, and interpret to the world.”⁹⁸ Jack wrote to react to things; he wrote to understand things; he wrote to change things, and I believe he wrote to prove he existed.

The criticism offered by the few anthologies that do discuss London is an attack on his commitment to realism. The Brooks, Lewis, and Warren, *American Literature* Anthology, Lauter stated, “ends in much the same terms by which Melville was dismissed early in the 20th Century ... ‘not even the idea that literature should use ideas to bring about real change in a real world was enough to make Jack London a realist. His temperament triumphed over all his ideas.’”⁹⁹ Perhaps he was not committed to mundane realism but Jack’s entire understanding of literature and his place in it was much more realistic and significant because he was trying to create real change with his work.

Ambrose Bierce’s criticism of the ‘romantic strain’ in *The Sea-Wolf* does land. The interactions between Hump and Maud become increasingly mushy. Considering their relationship is supposed to be platonic until the final pages of the book. But that is because London had an immature understanding of love when he wrote *The Sea-Wolf*. Hump and Maud share the idealized, lofty kind of love that London had rejected by the time he wrote *Martin Eden*. Jack’s second marriage had made him realize that the sacred love he had idealized was nothing more than a vague and naïve understanding of love. His love with Charmian was the perfect love for him as she straddled the Mate-Comrade and Mate-

⁹⁸ Ibid.p.7-11

⁹⁹ Lauter.p.7

Woman roles for Jack. Their love could be high minded and pure. But it could also be gritty and tough during Jack's tougher moods. The credit is to Charmian; it was a gargantuan task.

What is the point of all this work on London's behalf? It is to portray Jack as he truly was. As he was in his loveless marriage, after, as he struggled to rediscover himself, and out the other side, made content by his Mate-Woman. Jack's various conceptions of love were the skeleton on which he built and changed his philosophy. But intellect and knowledge gave his philosophy corporeal form. In the same essay to aspiring writers, London proclaimed the importance of continued self-education: "What do you know of history, biology, evolution, ethics, and the thousand and one branches of knowledge? broaden your thought, lengthen out your vistas, drive back the bounds of the field in which you work. They give you your philosophy, which is like unto no other man's philosophy, force you to original thought." Love was the seed. But from there his philosophy had to find grounding in the real world.

So London shaped his view of experience and existence to fit whatever his current understanding of love was. This interrelation between love and intellect requires an understanding of London's literature in the context of his love life, not just non-fiction or autobiographical text, like *Martin Eden*, but all of his work. As my understanding of Jack grew something changed. All his books began to inform the others, changing their meaning as a whole and tracing the trajectory of a great life in the sum of their parts. To me, Jack became more meaningful, more impressive through his progress. He began writing unsure of: who he was, how to love, how he felt about society, his place in it, and what the right life was. The family he overcame had imparted no system of values or hierarchy of existence

upon which to draw. As a result, London was forced to search for the answers to those questions by himself. Having only the benefit of his own perspective, Jack made mistakes.

His first attempts at creating an identity overshot the mark. Jack's re-invention of his childhood as the son of John London and a hyper-individual loner was a way of taking the meaning of his youth back from his mother. The result was a London frighteningly similar to Wolf Larsen. *Kempton-Wace* stands as a testament to how deeply affected Jack was by his relationship to love. The conflict and conclusion of *The Sea-Wolf* illuminate London in his years estranged from Bess, dealing with feelings he still had for Anna while finding Charmian, the woman who could finally keep him. Jack reflected the romantic and philosophical confusion of this period of his life in his writing. Finally, *Martin Eden* defines Jack London as the passionate, conflicted writer who almost lost his life in his efforts to find ultimate truth and perfect love. The fact that Jack found himself without losing all semblance of sanity, given his childhood, was a superhuman effort.

He tried to live life without love, with wrong love, with the wrong woman, and all the while he kept on writing, in fact writing voluminously. A lot of what he wrote during those periods intellectually overreached. Whether London did so in attempts to prop himself up, put others down, or just to stick it to those who had wronged him, Jack wasted many words. But, the more I read his work the more I understood and appreciated London.

His ego guarded his deep-seated insecurities about worth and identity stemming from an unloved childhood as a bastard. Yet, his only scars were the profound insecurities that he eventually overcame once he allowed someone to love him for who he really was, bearing witness to all his flaws. His need for love was paramount and as a result his intellectual and romantic lives were deeply connected. Leaving his narrative voice to ride in

the sidecar as London's romantic life took them on a six-year, death-defying journey to find right love from under the shadow of London's childhood. Somehow he emerged more secure and more self-aware.

Like the captain of a ship, Jack's relation to love steered the rest of his intellect. A break-up or new romantic possibilities were quickly followed by new opinions and views on a host of other philosophical issues. Love was the capstone and key to his will to live. Sadly, London's rough lifestyle took him from us prematurely. At the very least we should remember him for the brilliant work he produced. Jack London was more than an adventure writer in every sense. He was a romantic, an experiential realist, and an advocate for social and political change. Literary critics struggle with Jack's refusal to be categorized or pigeonholed. That they allowed London to fall by the wayside rather than deal with his brilliant complexity is a crime against every generation that has walked through life ignorant of his work.

My ultimate realization was that the greatest struggle of Jack's life was finding a stable identity. The nature of his childhood and relationship with his mother forever connected Jack's need for identity with his need for love. Whether he wanted to define love scientifically, be beloved by sea-going comrades, loved by the daughters of the bourgeoisie, or just loved by the one right woman, London spent his life looking for love. But it was not until he discovered right love and the right woman that he finally allowed a mate to see his inner self.

By accepting Charmian as his Mate-Woman Jack purged himself of the hyper-individualism that had plagued him since childhood and in so doing removed the greatest obstacle to his need for love and commitment to the 'brotherhood of man.' During his final

decade London published more work than in any other ten-year period of his life. He re-dedicated himself to the socialist cause and Jack died as close to peace as he ever came, at home on Beauty Ranch with Charmian. Charmian London never re-married and she and Jack are buried side by side on the ranch; and as I'm sure Jack would have wanted it with only an unmarked boulder for a headstone. Jack's life was a truly incredible journey of experience as well as intellect and it was right love that saved his life and his writing.

Works Cited

Auerbach, Jonathan. *Male Call: Becoming Jack London*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1996.

Print.

Baskett, Sam. "Sea Change in "The Sea-Wolf." 1996. Comp. Leonard Cassuto and Jeanne Campbell. Reesman. *Rereading Jack London*. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1996.

Print.

Boylan, James R. *Revolutionary Lives: Anna Strunsky & William English Walling*.

Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1998. Print.

Cassuto, Leonard, and Jeanne Campbell. Reesman. *Rereading Jack London*. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1996. Print.

Haeckel, Ernst. *Riddle of the Universe*. [S.l.]: Watts, 1908. Print.

Haley, James L. *Wolf: The Lives of Jack London*. New York: Basic, 2010. Print.

Hamilton, David Mike. *"The Tools of My Trade": The Annotated Books in Jack London's Library*. Seattle: University of Washington, 1986. Print.

Hedrick, Joan D. *Solitary Comrade, Jack London and His Work*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1982. Print.

Hofstadter, Richard. *Social Darwinism in American Thought*. Boston: Beacon, 1955. Print.

Kershaw, Alex. *Jack London: A Life*. New York: St. Martin's, 1998. Print.

Lauter, Paul. "London's Place in American Studies." *The Call: The Magazine of the Jack London Society* Spring/Summer 41.1 (2003). Print.

London, Charmian. *The Book of Jack London*. New York: Century, 1921. Print.

- London, Jack. *The Kempton-Wace Letters*. London: Isbister &, 1903. Print.
- London, Jack, and Dale L. Walker. *No Mentor but Myself: A Collection of Articles, Essays, Reviews, and Letters on Writing and Writers*. Port Washington, NY: Kennikat, 1979. Print.
- London, Jack, and Donald Pizer. *Novels and Social Writings*. New York: Literary Classics of America, 1982. Print.
- London, Jack, and Earle Labor. *The Portable Jack London*. New York: Penguin, 1994. Print.
- London, Jack, and George Varian. *Tales of the Fish Patrol*. New York: Macmillan, 1905. Print.
- London, Jack, and Jonah Raskin. *The Radical Jack London: Writings on War and Revolution*. Berkeley: University of California, 2008. Print.
- London, Jack, Earle Labor, Robert C. Leitz, and I. Milo Shepard. *The Letters of Jack London*. Vol.1-3. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1988. Print.
- London, Jack. *Novels & Stories*. New York, NY: Literary Classics of the United States, 1982. Print.
- London, Jack, and John Sutherland. *The Sea Wolf*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007. Print.
- London, Jack. *The Son of the Wolf*. [New York]: Garrett, 1969. Print.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm, and Graham Parkes. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for Everyone and Nobody*. New York: Oxford UP, 2005. Print.
- Perry, John. *Jack London, an American Myth*. Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1981. Print.
- Reesman, Jeanne Campbell., and Sara S. Hodson. *Jack London: One Hundred Years a Writer*. San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 2002. Print.

Reesman, Jeanne Campbell. *Jack London: A Study of the Short Fiction*. New York: Twayne, 1999. Print.

Reesman, Jeanne Campbell. *Jack London's Racial Lives: A Critical Biography*. Athens: University of Georgia, 2009. Print.

Spencer, Herbert. *First Principles of a New System of Philosophy*. New York: D. Appleton and, 1864. Print.

Wilson, Francis G. "The Foremost Philosopher of the Age." *Docstoc*. 21 Oct. 2011. Web. 3 Mar. 2012. <<http://www.docstoc.com/docs/100339360/The-Foremost-Philosopher-of-the-Age>>.