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THE CALL

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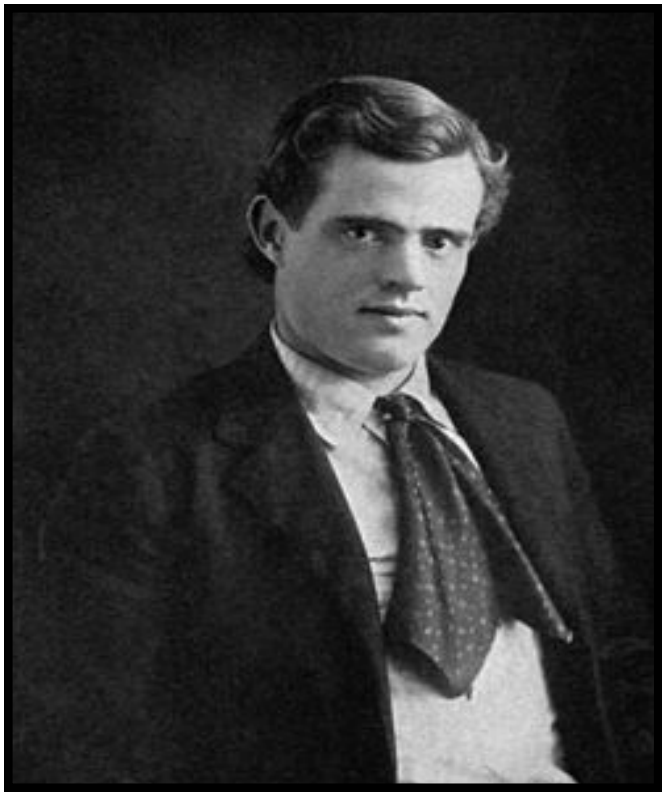
JUNG AT HEART: JACK LONDON'S "LIKE ARGUS OF THE ANCIENT TIMES"

Earle Labor



It was in the Klondike that I found myself. There you get your perspective.

—JACK LONDON by Himself [1]

I tell you I am standing on the edge of a world so new, so terrible, so wonderful, that I am almost afraid to look over into it.

—Jack to Charmian London, 1916 [2]

Speaking from a literary point of view, London did indeed find himself in the Klondike. He had gone there in 1897 to find gold. He returned the next year with less than five dollars in gold dust, but he had found something more valuable than gold: a new perspective on his writing career and on nature—nature in the human and nature in the wild. During the eighteen years following his return from the Northland—while traveling halfway around the globe, surviving multiple danger-fraught headline adventures, and building a model ranch on the fertile volcanic soil beside the Sonoma Mountain—he pioneered in the New Journalism and well as the New Fiction of the early twentieth century, producing more than a half-hundred books, several of which have achieved world-classic status.

Such a career would have sufficed for a half-dozen ordinary men, but Jack London was hardly ordinary. Driven by an extraordinary intelligence—genius, in fact—fueled by an equally extraordinary "seeking drive," he was ever a quick study and never content to rest for long.[3] Like Tennyson's Ulysses, he "had become a name" and was "a part of all that he had met." Moreover, like Ulysses, he aimed "to follow knowledge like a sinking star, beyond the utmost bounds of human thought" (416-18). So it was that in the summer of 1916, just a few months before his death, he discovered a new "Self" and a new perspective when he opened Dr. Beatrice Hinkle's just-published translation of C. G. Jung's *Psychology of the Unconscious*. Such a "terrible, wonderful" world must have been fearsome for one who had insisted throughout his life that he was "a materialistic monist" with neither inclination nor respect for all things metaphysical and spiritual. However, London was seldom deterred for long by fear because that primal emotion was overridden by his seeking passion. As a result, his philosophical attitude was altered dramatically during the last few months of his life, and that transformation was clearly revealed in the half-dozen remarkable stories he wrote during those months.

Among these last stories, only one is set in the Northland: "Like Argus of the Ancient Times." Jeanne Reesman remarks that this tale "is nearly as important to the Northland fiction as 'To Build a Fire'" (48). This is exceedingly high praise for a little-known work in **[Cont. P. 4]**

Jack London Society 11th Biennial Symposium
October 4-6, 2012
Logan, Utah

Cosponsored by Utah State University Special Collections, Merrill-Cazier Library Department of English

Conference Director:
Jeanne Campbell Reesman
University of Texas, San Antonio
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Panel/Paper Proposal:

Send abstracts, completed papers (15-minute limit), or panel proposals including speakers' names and paper titles, chairs, and any a/v requests, to Jeanne Reesman by the new, extended deadline of **August 15, 2012**. On a separate page, include name, affiliation, mailing and email addresses of each participant. Panels are usually 3 papers plus a chair, but other formats are also available (ex.: panel discussion, round table, teaching seminar).

Hotel:

Marriott Springhill Suites/Riverwoods Conference Center, 635 South Riverwoods Parkway, Logan, UT 84321, ph. 435-750-5180

Participants should call for reservations before the cut-off date of September 4. Rooms are $89, single or double. The hotel features large suites; complimentary breakfast; complimentary high speed and wireless internet; indoor fitness center, hot tub and pool; refrigerator and microwave in each room; The Elements Restaurant.

Logan, Utah, is located in the scenic Cache Valley about 85 miles north of Salt Lake City on US Hwy 89, which also leads to Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming. Near Logan along this route you can visit Bear Lake and the American West Heritage Center. Camping, fishing, mountain biking, boating, and hiking opportunities are offered in the mountains around Logan year-round.

Most participants will fly into Salt Lake City, where they may rent cars or take the airport shuttle (http://www.saltlakeexpress.com) to Logan, approximately an hour and a half away.

Symposium Highlights:

Wednesday Cocktail Reception
Thursday Luncheon
Thursday Evening Trout Fishing and Dinner
Friday Tour of Merrill-Cazier Library Jack and Charmian London Collection
Friday Reception at Logan Golf & Country Club
Saturday Afternoon Winetasting and Film Showing

Research in the Jack and Charmian London Collection at Utah State University

Symposium participants may wish to schedule time before or after the symposium to do primary research at the Utah State University Jack and Charmian London Collection. This is the second-largest collection of Jack London material in the world. Arrangements must be made ahead of time but readerships are readily available.

The papers of Jack and Charmian Kittredge London comprise MSS Collection 10 in Utah State University's Division of Special Collections and Archives. The papers, generous gifts from the London Estate, were accessioned into four major groups in 1964, 1966, 1967, and 1971. Largely comprising the correspondence of the London's and their associates, this collection also contains 6 boxes of manuscript materials including short stories, articles, diaries, financial records, etc. belonging to Jack London. Original manuscripts by both Londons, including *The Assassination Bureau, Martin Eden*, the Tramp Diary, *Log of the* Snark, and Macmillan Company author's contracts. A link to the Collection's Finding Guide:
http://udadb.orbiscascade.org/udasearch/fstyle.aspx?doc=ULA_mss010.xml&t=k&q=london

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CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

News Release

Jack London State Historic Park to Remain Open

First Nonprofit Agreement under AB 42 Now Final

California State Parks announced that it has given final approval for the Valley of the Moon Natural History Association (VMNHA) to operate Jack London State Historic Park. The final agreement has been signed by the Association and State Parks and given final approval by the State Department of General Services, the agency which must review and approve such state contracts. Assembly Bill 42 by Assembly Member Jared Huffman authorized State Parks to enter into agreements directly with non-profits.

"We have reached a milestone in our effort to save this park," said Ruth Coleman, director of California State Parks. "We are pleased the Association has stepped forward and we are confident they will do all possible to care for this remarkable historic home during their tenure."

"We are excited and ready to get to work," said Greg Hayes, long-time park ranger at Jack London and currently President of the Valley of the Moon Natural History Association. "We are eager to provide a community based, inviting, well maintained park where history, recreation, community events, education and natural resource stewardship continue, here in the Valley of the Moon."

The Valley of the Moon Natural History Association is a 501 (c) 3 organization that was established in 1977. Their purpose has been to support the educational, volunteer and interpretive studies at three Valley of the Moon (Sonoma Valley) state parks, including: Jack London State Historic Park, Sugarloaf Ridge State Park and Annadel State Park. From 1986 to the present, over 750 VMNHA-trained docents have delivered more than 5,000 guided tours and contributed more than 75,000 hours of volunteer time to California State Parks.

The agreement and proposed operating plan covers a 5 year period with a one year extension. It calls for the park to be open and operating a minimum of 36 hours per week with the Association responsible for daily maintenance, visitor services, volunteer staffing, protection of natural and historic resources and interpretation. The association will begin operating the park May 1st and their goal is to make the transition as seamless as possible to the point where park visitors will be aware of little change in basic operations.

Visit the Jack London State Historical Park's New Website:

www.jacklondonpark.com

[Labor cont. from p. 1]

comparison with one that has become one of the most widely anthologized stories in world literature. Nevertheless, a close examination of "Like Argus of the Ancient Times" and its history indicates that although it may never become a classic, it may be even more important than "To Build a Fire" in revealing London's inner life. To fully appreciate that statement necessitates our checking the genesis or, perhaps more accurately, the geneses of the later story, starting with Jack's Klondike adventure in 1897.

Simply getting to the Klondike gold fields—not to mention surviving the ferocious arctic winter—was a formidable challenge in 1897. There were no roads, much less railroads. In fact, there were few trails—commercial propaganda notwithstanding.

Ever the seeker, Jack London was among the first of the stampeders who flooded into the Klondike following the arrival of the *Excelsior* and the *Portland*, both of which docked in San Francisco in July, 1897, disembarking forty miners who lugged down a ton of gold they had found in the muddy tributaries of the Yukon River. Financed by his sister Eliza and her elderly husband, Captain James Shepard, Jack got enough money for ship fare and for the year's worth of supplies required by the Northwest Mounted Police to enter Canada. On July 25, he and Shepard boarded the badly overloaded *Umatilla* (licensed to carry 290 passengers) along with 469 other Argonauts en route to Victoria, Port Townsend. At Port Townsend—thirty miles northwest of Seattle—London, Shepard, and fifty-nine other passengers transshipped to the *City of Topeka* for Juneau. Among those other passengers were three with whom Jack and Shepard had bonded to make a "Klondike Party": James Goodman, Ira Merritt Sloper, and Fred C. Thompson. Not counting Shepard, whose rheumatism and general frailty would force him to give up and return home, the other four new partners were ideally suited for surviving their perilous quest because they shared certain vital qualities of character: adaptability and camaraderie.

Well matched in these qualities, the four partners also possessed complementary talents: "Big Jim" was a powerful physical specimen, with considerable skill in hunting wild game and in mining. Thompson, a former clerk, was less impressive physically but better qualified in recording and organization skills. Record he did, keeping a diary that has become an invaluable source of factual details for London scholars. Sloper was the grittiest of the four. A California carpenter/mechanic, he was also a veteran adventurer. London immortalized him in "In a Far Country," defining his character against that of Carter Weatherbee and Percy Cuthfert, the two fatally flawed "Incapables" of his story: "His body was a ludicrous contrast to the healthy physiques of the Incapables. Yellow and weak, fleeing from a South American fever-hole, [his] weight was probably ninety pounds, with the heavy hunting-knife thrown in, and his grizzled hair told of a prime which had ceased to be. The fresh young muscles of either Weatherbee or Cuthfert were equal to ten times the endeavor of his; yet he could walk them into the earth in a day's journey" (*Complete Stories* 1: 212-13).

London rounded out his partners' various capabilities with his own expertise from road and sea, and with his youthful exuberance. Five decades later, interviewed on his ranch near St. Helena, eighty-three-year-old Sloper remembered Jack as a "strong, vital man, full of the joy of living and getting the most from life [who] soon had found every book in camp and eagerly devoured every bit of reading matter he could secure." None of the four partners would strike it rich in the Klondike, but all would return home, like Sloper, "infinitely richer in experiences."[4]

Those experiences were often far from pleasant. Simply getting to the

Klondike gold fields—not to mention surviving the ferocious arctic winter—was a formidable challenge in 1897. There were no roads, much less railroads. In fact, there were few trails—commercial propaganda notwithstanding. There was of course the "Rich Man's Route" from Seattle to St. Michael in a cruise ship, then on up the Yukon River one thousand miles to Dawson City in a shallow-bottom steamer, but many who chose that route had failed to reckon with the early onset of freezing weather and were left stranded along the way, unable to reach Dawson until the ice thawed the following spring. Jack and his partners took the cheaper, more arduous and practicable "Poor Man's Route." Their journey was succinctly recorded in Thompson's diary:

> ***August 2-4:*** *Arrived at Juneau Monday evening. Remained here Tuesday and Wednesday. Rained all the time.*
>
> ***August 5.*** *Left Juneau at 11:00 A.M. for Dyea, with Indians and canoes.*
>
> ***August 6.*** *Still on our way to Dyea.*
>
> ***August 7.*** *Arrived at Dyea at 3:30 P.M.*[5]

The reader gets no sense of the "Dyea Drama" from Thompson's diary. Dyea was the end of the ocean voyage and the start of the infamous Chilkoot Trail. Although a point of disembarkation, Dyea was scarcely a harbor. Bad enough, there were no wharves for unloading the Argonauts' supplies. Worse yet, there were no shelters for protecting those supplies after they reached the sorry excuse for a beach—which was little more than a mudflat located uneasily between a thirty-foot-tide from the ocean on one side and a rushing stream from mountain glaciers on the other. Ships that came up the Dyea Inlet usually stopped well offshore and dumped their passengers along with their cumbersome gear regardless of worth or safety. Many unfortunate Argonauts lost their entire outfits while trying to make the beach, and some drowned in the cold, muddy waters.

Because they were wise enough to make the trip from Juneau in Indian canoes instead of ships, Jack's party landed their goods without mishap. On August 8, while waiting to hit the trail, he wrote to Mabel Applegarth from Dyea, with no mention of the chaos and confusion others less fortunate were suffering:

> *I am laying on the grass in sight of a score of glaciers, yet the slight exertion of writing causes me to sweat prodigiously. . .*
>
> *I expect to carry 100 lbs. to the load on good trail & on the worst, 75 lbs. That is, for every mile to the Lakes, I will have to travel from 20-30 miles. I have 1000 lbs. in my outfit. I have to divide it into from 10 to fifteen loads according to the trail. I take a load a mile & come back empty that makes two miles. 10 loads means 19 miles, for I do not have to come back after the 11th. Load for there is none. . .*
>
> *Am certain we will reach the lake in 30 days. . . have little time to write now—but next winter will be able to write good, long, & real letters.* (Letters 1: 11)

"Like Argus of the Ancient Times". . . is significantly more than a formulaic rags-to-riches success tale: it is extraordinarily rich in a deeper sense. Written barely two months before London's death, the story is an eloquent refutation of the biographical cliché that Jack was a depressed, drug-ridden alcoholic too badly sunk in spirit and creative energy during his last days to produce any significant work.

He was mistaken in his intention to write "good, long, & real letters" during the coming winter. No record has been found of his writing letters to anyone else while he was in the Klondike; he evidently spent most of the winter reading and listening instead of writing. He was correct, however, in his prediction that the party would "reach the lake in 30 days." The lake to which he referred was Lake Lindeman, the starting place for the water journey down to Dawson City. But before reaching that point, they had to hike a rough and hazardous thirty-three mile Chilkoot Trail. A bare outline of their traverse, with a hint of the ordeal, may be found in Thompson's diary:

> ***August 14.*** *This morning very hot, and the road was rough. We are now nine miles from Dyea. . . Mr. Shepard left us today for his home at Oakland, California; his rheumatism got very bad.*
>
> ***August 15.*** *Very warm to day—did not do much. Met Tarwater of Santa Rosa—took him as a passenger, ex changing board and passage for his work.*

Eighteen years later, during the creative outburst that followed his discovery of Jung's work, London decided to feature Tarwater of Santa Rosa, California, as the hero of "Like Argus of the Ancient Times." According to the story's narrator, John Tarwater had once been a well-to-do landowner in Sonoma County but has lost most of his wealth through financial speculations and lawyers' fees. At the advanced age of seventy, he is condemned as virtually worthless and senile by his family, who are convinced he needs to be "institutionalized." Even his neighbors think him "mildly insane" when word gets out that he has joined the Klondike Gold Rush. Virtually penniless after exhausting his limited financial resources on passage to Dyea, he manages to ingratiate himself with a small group of fellow Argonauts by making himself useful as a first-rate cook and general handyman. Moreover, he manages—especially with help by the young ex-sailor named Liverpool (nom de plume for London)—to trick his way past Mounted Police guarding the Canadian border. Continuing to defy all reasonable odds, including near death, he discovers a bonanza goldfield and returns home the next year very rich.

This brief plot summary does scant justice to "Like Argus of the Ancient Times," for it is significantly more than a formulaic rags-to-riches success tale: it is extraordinarily rich in a deeper sense. Written barely two months before London's death, the story is an eloquent refutation of the biographical cliché that Jack was a depressed, drug-ridden alcoholic too badly sunk in spirit and creative energy during his last days to produce any significant work. The narrative—one of London's longest at 10,532 words—is a fabulous blend of Greek myth and Jungian archetypes layered upon the Northland Code dramatized in his earlier Klondike stories. In this late story the aged protagonist—variously and fondly called by fellow Argonauts "Santa Claus," "Old Christmas," and "Father Christmas"—achieves a mythic dimension beyond that of London's earlier fictional heroes. As the narrator comments, "Old John Tarwater became a striking figure on a trail

unusually replete with striking figures." Among newcomers and sourdoughs alike, all of whom marvel at his indomitable spirit and his will to work against all odds, he becomes a legendary hero: "Work! On a trail where hard-working men learned for the first time what work was, no man worked harder in proportion to his strength thanOld Tarwater. . . . Early and late, on trail or in camp beside the trail, he was ever in evidence, ever busy at something, ever responsive to the hail of 'Father Christmas'" (*Complete Stories* 3: 2445-46).

During the course of his quest, Tarwater overcomes all nature of adversity along with the disabling aches and pains of old age: fatigue, fever, scurvy, frostbite, and Death itself. Once settled into winter camp in gold country, he has maintained himself by hunting and trapping. Near the end of January, while he is out in the wild checking his traps, he gets caught in a blizzard and loses sight of his trail back to camp. Without bearings in the continually falling snow, he wanders for days in the dark wilderness, trapped in the relentless jaws of the arctic winter. After days of futile trudging through the snow have lengthened into weeks, he stops at last and builds a makeshift camp, starting a fire behind a small shelter of spruce boughs as protection against the unrelenting frost. Totally worn-out, he collapses and falls into the dreamlike state of lethal freezing as his body gradually succumbs to the cold.

> [*Then], weighted by his seventy years, in the vast and silent loneliness of the North, Old Tarwater, as in the delirium of drugs or anesthetic, recovered, within himself, the infantile mind of the child-man of the early world. It was in the dusk of Death's fluttery wings that Tarwater thus crouched, and, like his remote forebear, the child-man, went to myth-making, and sun-heroizing, himself hero-maker, and the hero in quest of the immemorable treasure difficult of attainment. Either he must attain the treasure… or else sink into the all-devouring sea, the blackness eater of all the light that swallowed into extinction the sun each night* . . . (Complete Stories 3: 2455-56)

Minutes before he lapses into endless sleep, he is suddenly brought back to consciousness by the loud snort of a crippled moose who, likewise totally exhausted, has strayed into his tiny shelter

The Red One was published by Macmillan in 1918.

Contents:

"The Red One"
"The Hussy"
"Like Argus of the Ancient Times"
"The Princess"

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and accidentally stepped into the campfire. This is the moment of crisis—death or life—for old "Father Christmas." Feebly and very slowly he manages to thaw his frostbitten fingers in the still-warm hollow beneath his left arm. Carefully lifting his rifle, he draws a bead on the moose and pulls the trigger. He kills the moose but faints from the shock. After some indeterminate time, he slowly awakens, not knowing how long "he had bedded in the arms of Death." Then he somehow manages to rise, "girding himself with rifle, ammunition, matches, and a pack of twenty pounds of moose-meat. Then, Argus rejuvenated, albeit lame of both legs and tottery, he turned his back on the perilous west and limped into the sun-arising, re-birthing east" (*Complete Stories* 3: 2456-57).

Thus returned to the brighter world of the living, Tarwater makes his way over this frozen terra incognita until lucking into a camp of true sourdoughs—so far removed from civilization that they have not even heard about the Gold Rush until he staggers in, bringing the news. After several revitalizing days in their care—food, rest, and heavy doses of tea brewed from spruce needles and willow bark to relieve his scurvy—the gritty old hero is on his feet again, sharing their chores and mining the extraordinary gold lode they have found. He is now able to put the finishing touch on his "quest for the immemorable treasure difficult of attainment." Having won to this goal, he heads back to the world outside "a true prodigal father," wealthy and wise enough to regain all lost respect not only from his Sonoma neighbors who name his restored ranch "Tarwater Valley and Tarwater Mountain" but also from those family members who had tried to commit him to an institution for the old and feeble-minded.

What prompted London to write this remarkable story so removed from and so unlike his earlier Northland narratives? Charmian refers to it several times in her biography—briefly mentioning an interview with Tarwater that she and Netta Eames conducted before she met Jack (2: 130-31). More importantly, she connects the story with her husband's reading Jung's *Psychology of the Unconscious*: "Throughout Dr. Jung's chapter on 'Symbolism of Mother and Rebirth,' there are penciled indications of the meaning of folklore and mythology of recorded time. . . . Even in 'Like Argus of the Ancient Times,' written in the first half of September [can be seen] the influence of Jack's probings into the stuff of the psyche" (2: 354-55). David Mike Hamilton, in his meticulous survey of more than fifteen thousand volumes of London's books housed in the Huntington Library, reveals that Jack made nearly three hundred notations in Jung's book, the most heavily marked volume in his personal library.[6] The following marked quote cited by Charmian is particularly relevant to old Tarwater's dream of death and rebirth: "The blessed state of sleep before birth and after death . . . is something like old shadowy memories of that unsuspecting thoughtless state of early childhood, where as yet no opposition disturbed the peaceful flow of dawning life, to which the inner longing always draws us back again and again, and from which the active life must free itself anew with struggle and death, so that it may not be doomed to destruction " (Jung 362; misquoted by Charmian 2: 354).

James McClintock, in his pioneering analysis of London's late fiction, explains that Jung's central concept of the *libido*—the vital energy that drives us to action—was "most personally significant to London," pointing out that "Jung's ideas had restored London's passion for

adventure [helping] him find some unique human quality that marked man invulnerable or equal to the crushing forces of nature and capable of overcoming irrationality." McClintock also links this late story to the world-classic 1908 version of "To Build a Fire" as "the other side of the Jungian coin," explaining that in London's ultra-naturalistic 1908 tale the protagonist dies in darkness because he lacks the psychic energy necessary for survival (157-58). It is worth noting that the hero of the lesser-known 1902 version of this story, published in *The Youth's Companion*, possesses libido strong enough for survival. [7]

It is also worth noting that as he transmuted fact into fiction, London made several significant alterations. For example, the real Tarwater was named Martin, not John—"John" (Jack's own name on his birth certificate) being one of London's favorite names for his heroes. Martin Tarwater was sixty-six years old—not the symbolic three-score-and-ten—when he went to the Klondike. Dale Walker reports a meeting with Tarwater's great-granddaughter on August 17, 2000, in which he learned that the real-life Martin Tarwater was well respected before his decision to join the Gold Rush by his neighbors and by his family, who never threatened to institutionalize him and who honor his memory to this day: "Before he caught the 'Klondike fever' Tarwater had spent many years as a rural mail carrier in the Santa Rosa area and, as the *Santa Rosa Press Democrat* reported in the news of his death, 'Few men were better known, and at every fireside in Sonoma County, he was a welcome guest.'" There is no record of his striking a bonanza, but it is on record that he did not return home rich. In fact, he died of "acute asthma" on May 20, 1898, and was buried at Ft. Yukon, Alaska.[8]

What prompted Jack to return to the long-neglected country of his youth nearly two decades after his own Klondike adventure? As previously noted, among the last half-dozen stories London wrote during those few short months before his death on November 22, 1916, "Like Argus of the Ancient Times" is the only Northland narrative. Except for "The Princess,"[9] the others are all set in Hawaii, where Jungian theory is alloyed with Polynesian mythology. Not coincidentally, the last of these, "The Water Baby," is also a celebration vital old age as well as a homage to Jung. Unlike Tarwater, London was only forty years old at this time, but his own medical situation was critical—as a matter of fact, he was struggling desperately against the dark forces of permanent sleep.

In short, London was feeling very old before his time. In his copy of Jung's book he underscored the following admonition by Jesus to Nicodemus: "Think not carnally or thou art carnal, but think symbolically and thou art spirit" (Jung 253).[10] Jack must have felt a deep-seated need to mythologize old Tarwater's story: his own body was showing unmistakable signs of deterioration—and perhaps he himself now dreamed of seeking a spiritual golden fleece in the country for old men.

Notes

*An earlier version of this article was published in *A Voyage Through American Literature and Culture Via Turkey:A Festchrift for Sam S. Baskett's 90th Birthday*, Prepared by Belma Otus Baskett and Oya Basak, Edited by Nur Gokalp Akkerman (Istanbul, Turkey: BUTEK A.S., 2011).

1. Jack *London by Himself*.
2. Quoted by Charmian London 2: 323.
3. See Howe 157-59, 172-75. For explanations of the "seeking drive," see Jaak Panksepp, *Affective Neuroscience: The Foundations of Human and Animal Emotions* (New York: Oxford UP, 1998). Also see Temple Grandin and Catherine Johnson, *Animals in Translation: Using the Mysteries of Autism to Decode Animal Behavior* (New York: Scribner, 2005), and Roz Carroll, "Panic, Seeking, and Play in Psychotherapy," http://www.thinkbody.co.uk.
4. In an interview with *The Oakland Tribune*, August 14, 1938, Sloper is described as a "strong, vital man, still erect and vigorous, [showing] little evidence of the strenuous life he has led." According to the California Department of Public Health Certificate of Death, Ira M. Sloper (Conn Valley Ranch, Napa County) was born December 5, 1855, and died June 17, 1942.
5. Subsequent entries refer to this edition. Original in the Huntington Library.
6. Hamilton ix, 43, 145-46.
7. See *The Complete Short Stories* 1: 698-704. The 1902 story is an exemplum, underscoring the sermon that youngsters should follow the wise counsel of their more experienced elders and "Never travel alone." London later explained that this first version of "To Build a Fire" was written "for boys merely" and the later version "for men." See his letter to Richard W. Gilder, Editor of *Century Magazine* (*Letters* 2: 777) and Earle Labor and King Hendricks, "Jack London's Twice-Told Tale," *Studies in Short Fiction* 4 (Summer, 1967): 334-41. An abridged version of this essay is reprinted in Reesman 232-36 .
8. See "It was the Golden Fleece ready for the Shearing." Walker provides an excellent summary of this story.
9. There is little or no trace of Jungian theory in "The Princess," which London based on notes from George Sterling. Reesman praises "The Princess" as "a late flowering both of London's capacity for social realism and his capacity for irony" (91). "The Water Baby," especially rich in Jungian theory, was the last story London wrote before his death on November 22, 1916. See Reesman 176-80.
10. Also quoted by Charmian London 2: 354. For a detailed study the medical problems leading to London's death, see Phillips Kirk Labor, M.D., "Jack London's Death: The Homicide of the Suicide Theory," *Jack London Foundation Quarterly Newsletter* 23:2 (April 2011): 2-7.

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Decolonial Dialogic: Narrating the Silence of Jack London's Chinago Mexican

Calvin Hoovestol

Famous for "naturalism" in his stories about animals and humans struggling to survive in the Klondike or in the South Seas, Jack London also wrote about urban naturalism, wherein people struggle for survival against other human beings. London narrates two short stories, "The Chinago" (1908) and "The Mexican" (1911), not from a macro-political or colonial viewpoint, but from a personal, decolonial, human point of view on oppressed immigrants who struggle individually. As ferocious as wolves in *The Call of the Wild* (1903), colonial oppressors silence, beat, and kill, or try to kill, a Chinese coolie and a Mexican boy. London's Chinago and his Mexican symbolize the wretched poverty, confusion, and silenced dialogic voices of all marginalized people.

From a decolonial perspective, London's Chinago and his Mexican symbolize the same dialogic voice of racial identity for an immigrant who has been silenced by colonial oppression. Both men are treated like fungible labor or inhuman commodities by white Anglos, yet both protagonists earn similar respect and sympathy from the reader. Their stories were not published as a single text, but a Chinago-Mexican personification of silence as a metonym for all forms of colonial oppression merges into a solitary trope because both immigrant men (1) are displaced by poverty and colonial politics, (2) don't fully understand their Caucasian enemies, (3) face the risk of death alone in a crowd, (4) dream of future freedom, and (5) symbolize the polyphonic voices of other displaced foreigners whose marginalized voices are silenced by racial or economic oppression. London's Chinago and his Mexican are essentially the same person, silently struggling for survival against ignorant Caucasians while stifling a resentful, confused inner voice.

(1) Marginalized Immigrants

Jack London wrote "The Chinago" and "The Mexican" during a time when the United States Congress enacted a series of immigration laws directed against Asians and Mexicans and when "scientific" theories of a racial hierarchy were acceptable as rational discourse. Applying Tzvetan Todorov's distinction between ubiquitous *racism* in human behavior and *racialism* as a tool for social differentiation in a democracy, Jeanne Reesman compares London's naturalism to the "naturalist tensions" of Frank Norris and Stephen Crane. She suggests that London's unique "clamor for social justice" ("Race and Naturalism" 275) begins with his "cross-identification" of imagining himself as another race and "telling a story from another race's point of view" (284).

London's childhood matched in some ways the social instability and racial complexity of alienated, overworked immigrants. His vagrant family lived in twenty-three different houses before his twentieth birthday in 1896 (Reesman, *Racial Lives* 20). The child of an absent father and harsh mother, London was nurtured by Virginia Prentiss, an African-American former slave and neighbor who became his wetnurse and lifelong friend (25). He was also a working-class gang member and wandering oyster pirate in his youth (Reesman, "Race and Naturalism" 285). Reesman explains London's intent "to expose the banality of evil in the colonial setting" and to propose that individual survival in stories like "The Chinago" depends upon cultural knowledge and language rather than upon "some essential racial trait" (285).

In "The Chinago" and "The Mexican," London explores the silenced spaces of a Chinese indentured servant and a young, undersized Mexican fighter. But how does one narrate the dialogic voices of people silenced by colonial power? London attempts to place himself inside their minds so that he can see the world from their perspectives. London's racial ideas are described by Reesman as "complex and contradictory" (*Racial Lives* 8). London was "conflicted about his own racial identity" (10); yet, "in contrast to his white contemporaries he identifies directly with these characters instead of merely projecting traits" (15). He tries to "see things through their eyes" (16), and his characters represent sympathetic stereotypes. The executed Chinago represents 500 other silent coolies who watch him die, and the determined Mexican fights "for all of Mexico" (309).

(2) Confused Silence and the Enemy's Language

When "the Chinago" Ah Cho hears Chung Ga murder Ah San, he and four other "coolies" run to the spot slightly ahead of the "brutish brute" and "primeval" ("Chinago" 153) German overseer, Karl Schemmer. "French devils" have hired Schemmer to squeeze every last flicker of energy out of 500 coolies who work on an English cotton plantation in Tahiti for "fifty cents Mexican a day" (152). Despite only two stab wounds and no evidence, the "French devils" beat and convict all five innocent Chinese men for the murder. Arbitrarily sentenced by the healing of their various wounds, Ah Chow will be guillotined, Ah Cho will serve twenty years in New Caledonia prison, Wong Li twelve years in prison, and Ah Tong ten years in prison. None of them are allowed to speak. The Chinago is as confused by the absurd trial as the accused man in Franz Kafka's *The Trial* (1925). To the Chinago, stupid Anglos are untrustworthy, foreign enemies.

The Chief Justice, bleary-eyed and hungover from a dinner party with French dignitaries, omits the final "w" in Ah Chow's name on the death order he hands to "slow-witted and stupid" gendarme Cruchot for the twenty-mile, mule-cart trip to the execution. When Ah Cho finally protests that he is shorter than Ah Chow and "I am not Ah Chow," Cruchot silences him by yelling "Shut up! . . . After that they rode along in silence" (158). Cruchot "knew that he had the wrong man beside him on the seat" but "(i)t was only a Chinago" (159). The plantation managers also realize the mistake, but they don't want to lose downtime for the 500 workers assembled to watch the beheading if they wait while Cruchot retrieves Ah Chow. An hour or two of work money is much more valuable to them than an innocent Chinago's life. Reesman notes that "London's insistence on having linguistic confusion twice condemn Ah Cho makes his irony inescapable." (*Critical Companion* 56). London emphasizes the power of words for those who are authorized to speak and the vulnerability of those who are silenced. Yet, for the reader, the Chinago's disciplined silence subverts the arrogant power of the white talkers.

Language holds the power of socio-political transformation and cultural understanding, but language differences also can create horrible misunderstandings. Riedl and Tietze delineate eight different languages in "The Chinago" (Reesman, *Racial Lives* 145)—thereby multiplying the potential for

London morphs Jack Johnson into the lonely Latino underdog Felipe. As a black man living in a social hierarchy defined by whites, Johnson fought for money, social status, and self-respect. As an immigrant living in a colonial hierarchy defined by whites, "The Mexican" fights for money, social status, self-respect—and the junta.

linguistic confusion by a factor of eight. Because the Chinago workers "could never understand the white dogs" (160), "all the coolies had agreed secretly not to testify against one another" (151). On the other hand, their Caucasian oppressors probably wouldn't listen to them even if they did speak.

Waiting for his white opponent in the climactic boxing scene, the Mexican reveals in a flashback that he was silenced "like some hunted coyote" when Diaz's *rurales* threw his murdered parents onto "the flat cars, piled high with the bodies" ("Mexican" 305). Known as "the Unknown" by the junta, the "expressionless" Mexican "never talked, never inquired, never suggested" (293). Yet, he spoke with "something forbidding, terrible, inscrutable" in his "snakelike" black eyes that "burned like cold fire, as with a vast, concentrated bitterness" (291). As the "breath of death" with "no heart" (294), the Mexican "is power—he is the primitive, the wild wolf—the striking rattlesnake, the stinging centipede" who represses "the insatiable cry for vengeance that makes no cry but that slays noiselessly" (295). Like the Chinago, his silenced dialogic voice from the margins actually subverts dialogues of the more powerful colonial whites. When "(t)he Revolution [hangs] on the balance" with no weapons to recapture Mexico from Diaz and his imperial capitalists, the Mexican scrub-boy and typesetter launches "one last heroic effort" with three simple words expressed to his comrades: "'Order the guns'" (296-7).

London creates dramatic irony by revealing what the Mexican never reveals to the other characters: the Mexican has earned money for the junta revolutionaries as a sparring dummy, absorbing blows from older, stronger, white fighters. When fight promoter Kelly can't find a replacement for injured Billy Carthey to fight renowned Danny Ward of New York, "(h)ate that was malignant was in Rivera's eyes, but his face remained impassive. 'I can lick Ward,' was all he said" (297) in "hostile silence" (298). The usually silent Mexican also insists "'(w)inner takes all'" in the "dead silence" where "Rivera stood alone" with a "calculated look of hatred" (301-2).

(3) Alone in a Crowd

A colonial perspective denotes a macro-political viewpoint of group confrontation; but London's decolonial perspective of the Chinago and the Mexican portrays a more individual struggle for personal survival, despite the public spectacle of an execution or boxing match. Only one Chinago is executed, among 500 other coolies silently watching. The Mexican also fights alone, surrounded by a crowd of hateful whites screaming for the white fighter to kill the Mexican. In both situations, the foreign individual fighting to survive lacks personal identity for the white colonials. The Mexican actually "despised prize fighting" because "(i)t was the hated game of the hated Gringo" (London, "Mexican" 303), but he fights with amazing resilience and fierce determination to win $5000 that will buy guns for the Mexican Revolution. Even his own entourage of handlers are "Gringos and strangers" and "the dirty driftage of the fight game, without honor" (303). When the Mexican finally drops Danny with a punch, "the audience did not cheer" in the "tense silence" (307) and "(t)here were no congratulations for Rivera" (313). Nobody in the crowd mourns a Chinago's death or cheers a Mexican's victory.

(4) Freedom's Dream

The Chinago and the Mexican both dream of freedom, much like the economic, social, and political freedom enjoyed by their white oppressors. The Chinago silently dreams that he might someday "return home" as a rich man and "never have to work again" (London, "Chinago" 153). He would be "content with little things and simple pleasures" (153) in his "Garden of the Morning Calm" (156). The Mexican's nightmares include "blazing and terrible visions" of six thousand starving workers, little children working to death in factories, perambulating corpses, and "the death-spitting rifles" of the soldiers of Porfirio Diaz (304). He fights for his dream of freedom in Mexico. Faced with seemingly insurmountable obstacles and frustrations, both men patiently work hard to achieve their dreams—the Chinago a coolie and the Mexican a fighter. Neither man expects help from someone else in the crowd of people around them.

Struggling for survival with admirable self-reliance, the Chinago and the Mexican both exemplify London's advice to an aspiring writer: "You've got to lick yourself into shape. Nobody can do it for you. . . . Buck up! Kick in! Get onto yourself! Don't squeal! . . . Be a man. Kick in. Kick out. Go through. Do it yourself" (London, *No Mentor* 222-3).

In her chapter on "Jack London, Jack Johnson, and the "Great White Hope," Jeanne Campbell Reesman connects Jack London's newsreporter coverage of real fights to his fictional fight stories (*Racial Lives* 177-205). For example, London wrote twelve articles covering the 1910 World Heavyweight Championship fight in Reno, Nevada between brutish, brusque, white James Jeffries and gregarious, sophisticated, black Jack Johnson. Admiring Johnson's cool demeanor and repartee while he defeats Jeffries in the ring, London suggests that Johnson "played and fought a white man in a white man's country, before a white man's crowd" (198). In "The Mexican," London morphs Jack Johnson into the lonely Latino underdog Felipe. As a black man living in a social hierarchy defined by whites, Johnson fought for money, social status, and self-respect. As an immigrant living in a colonial hierarchy defined by whites, "The Mexican" fights for money, social status, self-respect—and the junta. In the 1908 championship fight, Tommy Burns was guaranteed $30,000 win or lose but Johnson received only $5000 when he won (186)—the same amount Felipe Rivera wins in his fictional fight.

In a letter published in the *Los Angeles Citizen* on February 11, 1911 and addressed to Mexican revolutionaries, London wrote "We socialists, anarchists, hobos, chicken thieves, outlaws and undesirable citizens of the United

States, are with you heart and soul in your effort to overthrow slavery and autocracy in Mexico" (*Letters* 980-81). "The Mexican" likewise will buy guns for "adventurers, soldiers of fortune, bandits, disgruntled American union men, socialists, anarchists, rough-necks, Mexican exiles, peons escaped from bondage, whipped miners from the bull-pens of Cœur d'Alene . . . all the flotsam and jetsam of wild spirits from the madly complicated modern world" (296). London expressed his sympathy and underdog solidarity with Chinago and Mexican immigrants by narrating the silent but subversive thoughts of powerless people. The Chinago and the Mexican both see "white devils" as foreigners. Both men represent immigrant dreams of freedom and of social acceptance. Both struggle to survive.

(5) Narrating a Decolonial Dialogic Silence

London's narrative strategy in "The Chinago" and "The Mexican" is decolonial because the author transcends his own white space of cultural and linguistic power. He resists simplistic impulses of binary confrontation and views life from the perspective of "other" Asian and Mexican immigrants. They appear as human individuals rather than silent foreigners. Mikhail Bakhtin perceived "dialogic" polyphonic voices of characters that subvert authority and destabilize social hierarchies in Fyodor Dostoevsky's novels compared to the monologic authorial voice in Leo Tolstoy's texts. London's narrative viewpoint in "The Chinago" and "The Mexican" also is dialogic because he hears and articulates "other" marginalized and silenced voices of the Chinago and the Mexican.

The interior dialogic voice of the Chinago deplores "white devils" who are "all alike" and act "like wild beasts" with anger that is "always dangerous" (154). London imagines the Chinago's dialogic voice telling how "the white devils" are "gluttons, eating prodigiously and drinking more prodigiously" and how there is a "curtain behind the eyes of the white devils that screens the backs of their minds from the Chinago's gaze" (154). Oppressed by whites and labeled as foreign "Chinagos" by the native islanders (154), the Chinagos see white colonials as "foreign devils" (156). Ah Cho thinks to himself that he "had done nothing of which to be afraid" (151). After the absurd trial, the Chinago's internal voice muses that "(t)he heavy punishment for a crime they had not committed was no stranger than the countless strange things that white devils did" (156).

Employing the same narrative strategy of imagining the internal dialogic voice of the Mexican as he employed to narrate the Chinago's silence, London envisions the thoughts of the young Mexican fighter who sits "back in a corner, silent, immobile, only his black eyes passing from face to face and noting everything" (300) the Gringos say or do while negotiating the fight terms. The Mexican hates fighting, but he began sparring with white fighters "solely because he was starving" (303). Images of past horrors and inhuman cruelty appear within the mind's eye of the Mexican while he waits for his opponent in the big fight. London narrates the Mexican's angry hatred of whites and of the colonial soldiers of Porfirio Diaz, but "he merely hated with his eyes" (305). The Mexican remains silent, while "a vision of countless rifles blinded his eyes" (306), and he remembers that he must win $5000 to buy rifles for the Mexican Revolution.

When the referee gives the white fighter, Danny, the benefit of a long count on a knockdown, London narrates the Mexican's internal voice claiming that "all Gringos were against him, even the referee" (308). When the Mexican is knocked down, "in the soul of him he knew the referee was counting short seconds on him" (309). The white crowd screams for the white fighter to "kill" the Mexican, and "scores of voices took it up until it was like a warchant of wolves" (309). From inside the Mexican's mind, London narrates how "they were the hated Gringos and they were all unfair." The Chinago says inwardly that "every hated face was a gun" for the Revolution (309). Talking to himself, the Mexican knows that his own white handlers are giving him the wrong advice and that his own agent has bet against him. London reveals the Mexican's interior thoughts that "everybody was against him" and that "he was surrounded by treachery" (310). Despite frenetic fighting, the Mexican remains calm inside, planning his opportunity for a knockout punch. For the Mexican, the "collective passion of ten thousand throats, rising surge on surge, was to his brain no more than the velvet cool of a summer twilight" (312). Yet, the Mexican also worries in his own mind because "there were so many ways of cheating in this game of the Gringos" (312)—and the Gringos continue to cheat.

London's Chinago and Mexican protagonists are silent only because they don't understand white culture and language—not because they are simple or inarticulate. Silence also masks their internal frustration and fearful hatred of oppressive white colonials. Unsympathetic whites force the Chinago and the Mexican to remain silent as a form of social control and political hegemony. Whites refuse to relinquish linguistic power. By narrating the internal dialogic voices of the silent Chinago and silent Mexican, London mediates between the private anguish of marginalized people and his readers.

London's decolonial narrative strategy and his dialogic perspective create a composite Chinago-Mexican protagonist from "The Chinago" and "The Mexican" who symbolizes intelligent, articulate immigrants. Linguistic barriers, cultural confusion, lonely individual struggles, disciplined ambitions, freedom dreams, and silenced but subversive voices all represent aspects of marginalized human beings rather than despised foreigners. London suggests that readers should examine their own "foreign" identity when they are viewed from some "other" perspective.

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