

# THE CALL

The Magazine of the Jack London Society



**Gary Riedl, JLS President Thomas Tietze Memorial • Anita Duneer, Margaret West and the “sea of contradictions” in *The Mutiny of the Elsinore* • Jay Willams, What Did Jack London Earn? • Registration for the JLS 2010 Biennial Symposium—Sonoma Valley!**

**Merely to say I knew Tom** or was his friend cannot come close to defining our relationship. We met on Friday, September 3, 1971, the last day of teachers' workshop at Wayzata High School. I remember the date exactly because the first thing Tom ever said to me (after "hello") was, "So you're the one who got my job."

As it happened, we were both up for the position, but since I could coach cross country and track, I got the job. Tom was hired the last day of workshop because another, long-time teacher had abruptly resigned. We bonded when we both decided to teach a British survey course, or as Tom put it, "stuff written by dead white guys." We found that our teaching styles matched and soon began coordinating our curricula. We gave our students *Beowulf* with a smattering of Old English. We went far beyond the prologue of the *Canterbury Tales*. We had our students explore most of Shakespeare's sonnets. I'm sure that our seniors were the only ones in America who studied *Areopagitica* and *Comus*. We both loved Dr. Johnson and so taught long passages from Boswell's Life. We adored the Romantics. We taught a lot of Tennyson and Browning and Arnold. In short, we had a great time together.

What brought us closest though was our love of the movies. Tom decided that we should develop a film history class. We centered it upon American narrative films with the idea of teaching films from the standpoint of reading them as one might read a short story or novel. The course became immensely popular with students. Tom decided that we should screen the movies in the school auditorium with a theater-size screen. At one point we had three classes of 80 students each. In 1972, we had perhaps the only high school film study class in the nation.

All of which brings me to London. In 1989, Tom's wife Kathy came across a copy of *Martin Eden* at a garage sale. Tom read it during the summer and was captivated. Yes, he had read a little of London as a lad. The usual stuff. But something about this novel bit at him. He said to me, "You've got to read this. It's brilliant!"

When Tom found that Earle Labor was going to teach a seminar on London sponsored by the NEH, he applied. That's when the love affair (the one with London, I hasten to add) began in earnest. Tom decided to teach a high school course in American naturalism with a focus on London. I took Earle's seminar in 1993. Now I was hooked. The next summer we landed an NEH grant to study Jack's socialist writings. For almost three months we huddled in Winnie's back room reading, discovering arcane notes, and generally having the time of our lives.

In 1995, Tom, Milo, Earle, and I were sitting in Milo's house drinking perhaps too much scotch when Milo said, "I think you boys should edit an edition of the David Grief stories." We did. Oklahoma Press published it. Nobody read it. Not having learned our lesson, Tom proposed an edition of London's South Sea stories. We wrote it. New Mexico published it to similar success.

We were planning a more ambitious project when, in the summer of 2003, Tom was diagnosed with cancer. After surgery the doctor told Tom he had perhaps two years. Having lost none of his sense of humor, Tom told me later that he offered to double the doctor's fee if he gave him four years.

And this defines how Tom led his life. I never heard him complain. Though the surgery and chemotherapy left him with a panoply of difficulties, including poor circulation to his extremities and almost constant pain, Tom never lost his sense of humor. He continued to read voraciously and pound away at a second edition to his biography of Mina Crandon entitled, Margery.

About a week before Tom entered the hospital, I visited with him for an afternoon. We laughed, watched a bit of a Gene Autrey movie, ate lunch, and talked a bit about going to California this spring. The last thing I said as I walked out was, "I'll call you Sunday. I love you, pal."

Tom was blessed not only with humor, a great intellect, and good friends. Tom also had the great sense and luck to marry Kathy. He always remarked that Kathy was much too smart and good looking for him. Sometimes I agreed. Tom also leaves three wonderful sons, John, Sam, and Hugh.

Tom's memorial service was crowded with former colleagues and students. Messages were received from around the world from people who knew Tom.

A last note: I'll leave it to you to guess where Tom's ashes are spread.



**Thomas R. Tietze, Jr.**  
**1947-2009**

## The Jack London Society

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Savannah College of  
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—Gary Riedl

## Margaret West and the “sea of contradictions” in *The Mutiny of the Elsinore*

Anita Duneer

**On the surface,** the characters and love story of John Pathurst and Margaret West in *The Mutiny of the Elsinore* (1913) seem similar to those of their counterparts, Humphrey Van Weyden and Maud Brewster in *The Sea-Wolf* (1904). Both Humphrey and Pathurst are “gentlemen” displaced from over-civilized “feminine” society into brutal “masculine” worlds of the Age of Sail. Each encounters at sea a highly capable female character, who both challenges and aids in the male protagonists’ development of manhood.

However, Margaret is not a simple reincarnation of Maud. A consideration of the ambiguities of Margaret’s character complicates a reading of this problem novel: how to interpret London’s attitude toward his characters in a world “gone wrong”—especially through the eyes of Pathurst, an unlikable and unreliable narrator, who falls in love with the cold-hearted Margaret. Margaret exhibits the best and the worst characteristics of her real and literary predecessors: she encompasses the gentility of Maud, the callousness of Larsen, and the seafaring expertise of London’s “perfect Mate,” his wife Charmian. She is refined and athletic, genteel and heartless. Like Humphrey, Pathurst has difficulty separating his sentimental views of womanhood from his perception of the active, seafaring woman. Margaret’s problem character embodies London’s anxieties of race and gender—issues of current interest in London scholarship.

The novel is narrated by the unsympathetic Pathurst, a remarkably unlikable character from the very beginning. He is of the same literary social class as Humphrey—a playwright and poet—and, although he voluntarily books passage around Cape Horn on a windjammer, he is clearly out of his element at sea. We might expect that, like Humphrey, Pathurst would acquire a more sophisticated social understanding during his seafaring experience. However, his nautical education under Margaret exacerbates the worst inclinations of his elitist attitude. Margaret is the product of generations of aristocracy hardened to the plight of the worker. She is both seductive and dangerous. Her physical strength and fearlessness simultaneously interests and intimidates Pathurst. Tony Williams characterizes her as “an ideological vampire” (“*Mutiny*” 29), a fitting description for a love interest who drains the protagonist of whatever small amount of sympathy he might have held for his fellow human beings.

The plot and love stories of *The Sea-Wolf* and *The Mutiny of the Elsinore* would seem to suggest a similar thematic purpose, but London presents a world turned upside-down in the melodramatic burlesque of *The Mutiny of the Elsinore*. Like Humphrey and Maud, Pathurst and Margaret come together to defend themselves against their antagonist(s): in place of Wolf Larsen, the mutineering crew. But instead of the philosophical dialogue between the idealist Humphrey and the pragmatist Wolf Larsen that drives *The Sea-Wolf*, *The Mutiny of the Elsinore* is told through a blend of burlesque, parody, and satire. The tone of the novel is a departure for London: in addition to romance and realism, he gives us hyperbole and cynicism.

Margaret and Pathurst set themselves up as a class apart from the ethnically diverse—and to their minds, degraded—crew. The novel riffs on the philosophical debates central to *The Sea-Wolf*: specifically, subverting the most compelling part of Wolf Larsen’s philosophy that it is better to “stand on one’s own legs” rather than “on dead men’s legs.” On the *Elsinore*, class privilege is challenged by the crew’s rebellion, but the aristocracy ultimately reigns. Pathurst and Margaret’s indifference toward the crew’s suffering parallels Larsen’s cold-bloodedness, and the self-centered relationship between Pathurst and Margaret is a travesty of the compassionate romance of Humphrey and Maud.

*The Mutiny of the Elsinore* has presented a challenge for the few critics who have attempted to deal with the novel. That interest in the novel has been slight, for readers and critics alike, is indicated by its omission in the “Chronology” of London’s life and publications in the 1982 Library of America anthologies, *Novels and Stories*

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and *Novels and Social Writings*. And more recently, the novel’s title does not even appear in the index of the excellent 1996 collection of critical essays, *Rereading Jack London*. Nevertheless, in *Sea-Brothers: The Tradition of American Sea Fiction from Moby-Dick to the Present*, Bert Bender contends that it is “a far better sea novel than is generally recognized,” despite that “it is usually dismissed as an example of London’s racism” (90). Alan Kaufman, in “We’re Saxons . . . and Not Dagoes”: The Role of Racism in Jack London’s Late Novels,”

characterizes the novel as “simply a highly concentrated, extended xenophobic harangue” (102). Bender, however, further asserts that, although “[t]he novel does reflect the glare of Darwinian race theory that troubled the time . . . , [i]t is certain, at least, that in *The Mutiny of the Elsinore* [London] came to express a very jaded view of the biological destiny that such theories projected for his race” (90). There is something to be said for both Kaufman’s and Bender’s assessments. The slipperiness of the text is symptomatic of the ambiguities in London’s personal social philosophy.

**The challenge is how to read a novel with such a carnivalesque atmosphere.** As Williams puts it, London’s “method is one of excess, hyperbole, delirium, and above all—ironic parody” (“Jack London” 132). Pathurst tells us, “everything on board the *Elsinore* is superlative. I find myself continually combing my vocabulary in quest of just and adequate words” (102). Pathurst finds certain words—*ridiculous*, *lunatic*, *grotesque*, and *ludicrous*—apt for a number of situations. For example, to set the scene for the eruption of mutiny and the events that follow, he reemphasizes what he has been telling the reader all along, that the “whole atmosphere of [the voyage] was all wrong” (51): “Get the picture and the situation in all its ridiculousness” (289). He has repeatedly described the crew as “lunatic” and “grotesque” and now the *Elsinore* “drifts a lunatic course” (310); “it was all grotesque” (325); and “the whole thing was ludicrous” (326). With characters and situations distorted and blown out of proportion, it is difficult to know what to take at face value.

The first line of the novel sets up the inauspicious beginnings of a voyage in which inconvenience will turn into a burlesque nightmare: “From the first the voyage was going wrong” (1). The

tugboat that was to have conveyed Pathurst to the *Elsinore* was delayed four hours, leaving him to wait in a freezing Baltimore taxicab on a “bitter March morning” (1). Other factors contributing to Pathurst’s “growing irritation” (1) reveal his character as anything but sympathetic—from the reader’s or London’s perspective. First, he complains about the “yelping, yapping” two-month old puppy that a friend had shipped to him the night before, without his prior knowledge or consent: “His unceasing plaint and movement were anything but sedative to my jangled nerves. . . . I was uninterested in the brute. He meant nothing to me. . . . And with the advent of the terrier the trouble had begun. . . . Damn the dog, anyway!” (1-2). Next, he recounts that Captain Nathaniel West, to his astonishment, had declined his offer of a thousand dollars to give up his personal living quarters to Pathurst for the voyage—“Naturally, I had resolved that the bathroom and the big brass bed should be mine” (3). And to top off his irritation, his “stipulat[ion]” that “no captain’s wife was to come along” (7) was undermined by the unanticipated embarkation of the captain’s daughter, Margaret. “The last thing under the sun I desired in the pent quarters of a ship was a woman. . . . For two cents I was ready to throw the voyage over and return on the tug to Baltimore” (7).

### ***The Mutiny of the Elsinore* was inspired in part by Jack and Charmian’s own voyage**

on one of the last working windjammers around Cape Horn in 1912 from Baltimore to Seattle. This first chapter alone suggests that, despite the autobiographical sources of London’s writing, his characters do not necessarily reflect the attitudes of the author. The fictional puppy is named Possum, after the dog that Jack and Charmian took along with them around the Horn. London’s personal fondness for dogs is legendary, and he certainly had no objections to sailing with a woman on board. Pathurst’s assumption that money can buy privilege under any circumstances mirrors Humphrey’s attempt to pay Wolf Larsen to return him to San Francisco. But whereas Humphrey simply tries to buy himself out of a bad situation (little does he know how bad), Pathurst tries to appropriate the best accommodations for himself, which he feels he deserves because of his superior social standing. Overall, Pathurst’s attitude of superiority over what he considers nuisances—dogs, women, and social inferiors—reveals him as a character London would not have respected. Through the course of the novel, like Humphrey, Pathurst revises his attitude toward women (and even toward the dog). Yet, whereas Humphrey learns the satisfaction of “standing on his own legs,” Pathurst’s social philosophy never evolves from the notion that the foundation of one’s character is one’s hereditary lineage. In contrast with the protagonists’ positive development in the *The Sea-Wolf*, Pathurst, with the help of Margaret, degenerates to an ethical level even lower than London imagines for his most despised “mongrel” characters. What is “wrong” about the beginning of the voyage, in one sense, is Pathurst’s surly state of mind, but Margaret’s social indifference represents the amoral state of society gone “wrong” as a whole, leading to mutiny on this “tiny floating world” (143), thus boding ill for a harmonious future for American society or the world.

Even the name of the vessel, as Williams notes, suggests the idea of “something rotten in the state of Denmark.” According to Pathurst, there is something “wrong” with both the crew and the officers. Although he describes himself as “not to be taken [as] a vacillating type of man” (9), Pathurst’s perspective of the men and conditions on the ship wavers throughout the novel as he attempts

to locate the root cause of the discrepancy between what he has read about the romance of sail and what he observes on board. As the sixty-nine year old first mate, Mr. Pike, tells Pathurst, “The merchant service is all shot to hell. There ain’t no more sailors. They all died before you were born even” (11). Of the “sailors,” Pathurst observes, “There was something wrong with all of them. Their bodies were twisted, their faces distorted, and almost without exception they were under-sized. . . . They were sad and lifeless. There was no vim, no go, no activity” (29,37). Pathurst assesses the men from the stance of a disinterested observer, with less sympathy

than curiosity about what forces degraded them to such a deplorable condition. In several instances, London draws on imagery and comparisons from *The People of the Abyss* (1903), his exposé of the inhumane conditions of the poor in the East End of London. In his chapter, “Frying-pan Alley and a Glimpse of Inferno,” London describes “a mass of miserable and distorted humanity, the sight of which would have impelled Doré to more diabolical flights of fancy than he ever succeeded in achieving” (39). Pathurst similarly comments, “Doré could never have conjured a more delectable hell’s broth” (28). The comparison between the abject poor in the East End and the crew of the *Elsinore* calls attention to the need for socialist reform. But the narrative undercurrent of socialist ideology competes with Pathurst’s yearning for the preservation of an idealized past. As the last of the working sailing ships around the Horn, the *Elsinore* symbolizes the glory days, while the men “for’ard” are poor substitutes for what Pathurst imagines of “real” sailors, as he remembers from classic literature of the sea.

What Pathurst imagines of ideal womanhood is similarly shaped by the novels and poetry in his library and it is through this romantic lens that he views Margaret. Her lack of concern for the sailors gives no suggestion of the sensitivity that Pathurst imagines. What disturbs him most is not her view, like her father’s, in which the sailors are invisible, but his wish that she had not been exposed at all to the “brutes” beneath her. The irony here is that Margaret’s hardness is more characteristic of an unfeeling brute than of a sensitive woman.

Pathurst vacillates between agreeing with Margaret’s solipsistic worldview and questioning her callous attitude. He admits that he doesn’t understand her priorities. The physical condition and morale of the sailors are no concern for Margaret. However, she gives specific instructions to the steward in the care of the chickens, and when a non egg-producing hen is sacrificed for dinner, she chooses to eat canned chicken over the fresh meat. When Possum becomes ill, she takes him into her cabin and nurses him carefully back to health. Here is the irony, according to Pathurst:

She is essentially the life-giving, life-conserving female of the species . . . . And yet—and this is so curious it gives me pause, she shows no interest in the sick and injured for’ard. They are to her cattle or less than cattle. As the life-giver and race-conserver, I should have imagined her a Lady Bountiful, tripping regularly into that ghastly steel-walled hospital room of the ’midship house and dispensing gruel, sunshine, and even tracts. On the contrary, as with her father, these wretched humans do not exist. (117-18)

There is no support in the text for Margaret as “life-giving” other than her biological potential as a “nest-making, planet populating” reproductive female (101). Pathurst’s conception of the nineteenth-century female reformist, spreading health, cheer, and religion to the downtrodden has no relation whatsoever to Margaret’s character. More appropriate is Pathurst’s imagination the of *Elsinore* as a slave plantation: “Miss West is the lady of the plantation .

. . . and the sailors are the *Elsinore's* field slaves" (118).

Given such an unflattering portrait, Pathurst's attraction to Margaret might seem unlikely. However, there is something of the seduction and danger of the femme fatale in Pathurst's conception of women in general. Until now, he has likened himself to Odysseus standing firm against the lure of the song of the Sirens: "I remember at least several women, superior to Miss West, who trilled their song of sex and failed to shipwreck me" (101). Naturally, he applies this idea of the dualistic nature of womanhood to Margaret:

Woman, the love-seeker, obsessing and possessing, fragile and fierce, soft and venomous, prouder than Lucifer and as prideless, holds a perpetual, almost morbid, attraction for the thinker . . . . No; there is no escape from woman. Always as a savage returns to a dark glen where goblins are and gods may be, so do I return to the contemplation of woman. (54)

Pathurst's obsessive "contemplation" of the "everlasting mystery of woman" (54) culminates in the "sea of contradictions," in which "all deep thinkers are drowned" (120).

The contradictions Pathurst contemplates in Margaret mirror other crucial tensions, such as between the novel's implicit critique of the callous exploitation of an elite social class over the working class and London's racist characterizations of the workmen of the forecabin. London simultaneously celebrates the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race and critiques the feudal ideology that has not progressed from the days of slavery. The crew's mutiny does nothing to overturn the ship's hierarchy, and Pathurst, the privileged passenger on this "voyage gone wrong" around the Horn, seems satisfied that he and the captain's daughter Margaret are destined to rule over their dominion from "the high place" (377). Pathurst conflates manifest destiny and race pride in his musings on the romantic associations of Margaret's name:

Margaret West! What a name to conjure with! A name provocative of dreams and mighty connotations. The history of our westward-faring race is written in it. There is pride in it, and dominion, and adventure, and conquest. When I murmur it I see visions of lean, beaked ships, of winged helmets, and heels iron-shod of restless men, royal lovers, royal adventurers, royal fighters." (201)

In her most impressive moment, Margaret leads Pathurst on a climb up the rigging during a gale—just for the thrill of it—while the sailors are fighting to reef the foresail in order to maintain control of the ship while making headway around the Horn. In this scene, London juxtaposes the leisure couple ascending the rigging purely for the exhilaration of the adventure and the sailors fighting for their lives against the elements. At the same time, nothing insidious is suggested in Pathurst's description of the graceful athleticism of Margaret's descent:

Again she laughed deliciously, though the wind tore the sound away as she swung out into space, muscled herself by her arms while she caught footholds beneath her which she could not see, and passed out of my sight under the perilous overhang of the top. (227)

The sheer exuberance with which London writes this description

reflects his admiration for strong women. London does not subordinate his seafaring heroine to the protagonist in order for him to prove his manhood. Margaret is certainly more of a "seaman" than Pathurst. Later, when the crew mutinies, she instructs Pathurst on how to command the ship—what course to set and how to trim the sails. Margaret does not challenge Pathurst with the intent to dominate him; neither does she defer to his judgment during their struggle to maintain control of the crew. Ethics aside, like Maud, Margaret works and fights alongside her lover as an equal partner.

The problem London creates with such a physically active female character is that the reader wants to cheer her on as an exemplary woman of the future. In this later attempt at giving life to a strong female character at sea, London was able to draw on his experience of sailing with Charmian across the Pacific Ocean. Charmian was an active crewmember, taking her turn at day and night watches. Thus, London understood the capabilities of a strong seafaring woman, and recognized the romantic potential of a partnership on the water. As unconvincing as the romance between such unlovable characters as Pathurst and Margaret, London's belief in romance cannot be overlooked. His personal romance with his perfect mate, Charmian, clearly made it into his idea of Pathurst and Margaret working together like Humphrey and Maud: "It is surely romance, watch and watch, for a man and a woman, who love, to relieve each other's watches . . . Never was there wooing like it" (336).

Pathurst and Margaret plan to marry in Valparaiso, where they will replace the mutineers with a new crew. Their honeymoon at sea will be the "beginning [of] a new voyage" (377), but there will be nothing new about the structure of power on the ship: "The Wests had cleared from Baltimore for Seattle with the Wests in the high place . . . and the *Elsinore* would arrive in Seattle with a West still on board" (377).

London's nostalgia for the romance of the sea is bound up with the yearning for the days of Viking heroism. London's own infatuation with the vampish allure of his fictional seafaring mate-woman interferes with the socialist underpinnings of the novel. In the end, the ideological ambiguities remain unresolved. The ending does not suggest a hopeful future, as in *The Sea-Wolf*; rather, Margaret and Pathurst's honeymoon plans evoke the tragic romance of a bygone era. *The Mutiny of the Elsinore* may be an elegy for the Age of Sail, but one which uncomfortably acknowledges the brutal realism beneath the surface of romance.

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*The Mutiny of the Elsinore* Frontispiece

# Jack London Society 10<sup>th</sup> Biennial Symposium

November 4-6, 2010

Hyatt Vineyard Creek Hotel and Spa  
Sonoma Country  
170 Railroad Street  
Santa Rosa, CA 95401  
(707) 284-1234

The Symposium returns to Jack London's beloved Sonoma Valley to celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Society. The Hyatt Vineyard Creek is offering a discounted room rate of \$160 double or single. Reservations should be made by calling 1-800-233-1234 before the cut-off date of October 1, 2010. Be sure to mention that you are with the Jack London Symposium. Symposium registration will be \$125, \$85 retiree, and \$50 graduate student. Events will include a picnic and tour of the Jack London Ranch on Friday afternoon and a visit to Kenwood or Benziger Winery. On Thursday, Friday, and Saturday we will hold regular sessions including panels of paper, roundtables, films, and other formats. Thursday evening we will have a cocktail reception, and on Saturday a luncheon.

The Mediterranean-style Hyatt Vineyard Creek is a five-star luxury hotel on 9 acres along the banks of Santa Rosa Creek; historic Railroad Square is 1 block away, downtown is a 3-block stroll, and Sonoma County wineries are within 6 miles. The restaurant at Hyatt Vineyard Creek Hotel & Spa spotlights fresh seafood with a country French influence. The spa offers Sonoma-inspired treatments, and the garden complex features a lap pool and a water-wall fountain. In the spacious guestrooms, beds are topped with fluffy duvets and partial canopies, and bathrooms are marble.

Proposals for papers, panels, or other presentations should be sent either by email to Jeanne Reesman ([Jeanne.reesman@utsa.edu](mailto:Jeanne.reesman@utsa.edu)) or by regular mail with the attached form by the deadline of July 15, 2020. Papers are 15 minutes in length. Proposals should include a 200-word synopsis of the presentation, names and affiliations of all participants, full address and email information. All a/v requests must come in with the original proposal.

Symposium attendees should plan to rent cars to travel to the Jack London Ranch and wineries. On Friday, November 5, participants should meet at the Hyatt Vineyard Creek at 11:30 a.m. to caravan to the Ranch. We will first arrive at the picnic grounds just inside the gate to the right at the Jack London State Historic Park. A good place to pick up a sandwich for lunch is the deli inside the Glen Ellen Village Market just at the base of Jack London Ranch Road on Arnold Drive.

All other events will be held at the Hyatt Vineyard Creek.

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# What Did Jack London Earn?

Or, We Know He Bought Multiple Houses and Boats, but How the Hell Did He Pay for Them?

Jay Williams

Last spring, while revising my list of everything Jack London wrote arranged by date of composition, I began totaling the amounts of money he received for each item. Because his sales notebooks are complete (as far as I can tell), I realized one could come up with a precise annual income for the author. Here then is a chart showing his earnings from the beginning of his authorial career in 1893 through 1902, dates I chose because (1) they total the nice round figure of ten and (2) his earnings in 1903 began to be determined more by the fame of *The Call of the Wild* than by any other factor (yet even that fame's power diminished, and a subsequent study will show when and how):

Year	Income	In 2008 dollars
1893	\$20.00	\$500
1894-98	\$0	\$0
1899	\$358.75	\$9614.00
1900	\$2545.00	\$67313.00
1901	\$3131.52	\$81836.00
1902	\$4429.75	\$114338.00

Before I make a few general observations about these numbers, let me explain how I arrived at the numbers in the third column. I simply used a web-based calculator that takes into account the Consumer Price Index. Other indices may be more useful for other purposes, but the CPI seems to be in common usage, and, as Dan Wichlan pointed out to me, it tends to be conservative. Roberta Wirth and my good friend and banker Hugh Zurchulian pointed out that perhaps the most accurate conversion or way of showing the value today of turn-of-the-century dollars would be to compare London's actual earnings with, say, other authors or comparable culture workers of his time. Hugh suggested that I find out what a reporter for the *San Francisco Chronicle* would have been making, and I have yet to locate that information (help is welcomed in this matter). The U.S. embassy in Germany (of all things) has a chart showing average income for many occupations in 1900, but not writers, reporters, or editors.<sup>1</sup> Still, it is somewhat useful. ("Facts").

Occupation	Income
Average of all Industries	\$ 438/year
State and Local Government Workers	\$ 590/year
Public School Teacher	\$ 328/year
Building Trades	37 ¢/hour
Medical/Health Services Worker	\$ 256/year
<b>Working week: 48.3 h.</b>	

So, apparently, in 1899, when he could have been bent under a sack or two (or more? who knows how much mail was circulating then) of mail, making his rounds as a mail carrier in the Bay Area, earning something like \$590 a year, London instead earned what a teacher would have made (will America ever pay its teachers top dollar?). We don't know what the hourly wage comparison would be because it would be impossible to quantify the amount of time London devoted to writing and gathering material for his writing every day. If I had to guess, I would say London worked a seventy-two-hour work week as a writer in this period.

We do have selected cases (though with incomplete data) of certain other writers at the time. For example, Frank Norris in 1900 was making thirty dollars a week in his new position at Doubleday, Page, or \$1560 a year, and that amount is partially credit for future writings (McElrath and Crisler 363). What he was making in royalties from previous books is unknown. Stephen Crane is reported to have owed his London agent James Pinker \$5000 in 1900, and that is probably in 1900 dollars (Stallman 336).

Before we take up the amazing disparity between London's 1900 income and Norris's, let's return to 1899. No wonder his first essay on authorship, "On a Writer's Philosophy of

**The thesis that London produced a single work—*The Call of the Wild*—for a single publisher—George Brett—that resulted in fame and riches simply is not true. London's wealth derived from multiple sources in the first ten years of his career, as it did, incidentally, throughout his career.**

Life" (completed 22 August 1899) sounded such a loud note of frustration. He had just polished off "Old Baldy" (15 August 1899) and sent it to the one exact and perfect outlet for a story about a California rancher/deacon and his balky ox (does anyone know why this story wasn't called "Old Balky"?): the *American Agriculturalist*. The essay begins with a hidden allusion to the story he had just completed: "This [essay]," announces London to his reader, "is for the writer—no matter how much hack-work he is turning out just now—who cherishes ambitions and ideals, and yearns for the time when agricultural newspapers and home magazines [the section of the *American Agriculturalist* in which "Old Baldy" appeared was called "Evenings at Home"] no more may occupy the major portion of his visiting list" (London 7). This kind of newspaper and magazine never dominated London's list of accepting publications, but in August 1899 he felt as if it were the case. Here then we have an author who knows he can produce great work but has yet to break big, at least in terms of income. He didn't have long to wait. It would happen the very next year.

I think this is the most surprising statistic to come out of this table. I expected to see a rather flat level of income from 1893 to 1903 and then a big jump because of his deal with the *Saturday Evening Post* and with George Brett at Macmillan. But, in fact, London, still very new and practically unknown in the publishing world, through multiple and continued submissions and a combination of deals with two different publishers, in 1900 made an equal or greater than (probably greater than) wage than Norris, a well-established Eastern writer. Partly the jump from 1899 to 1900 is attributable to delayed payment for stories written in 1899, so the income he earned in 1899 doesn't match very well to his production (another cause of frustration voiced in "On a Writer's Philoso-

phy of Life”). That is a central caveat for reading this income table. For example, “Through the Rapids on the Way to the Klondike” earned London ten dollars in 1900, but he had written it in February 1899. And of course the final ten works completed in 1899 (ranging from “Housekeeping in the Klondike,” which earned a staggering \$50.00, to “The God of His Fathers,” which earned \$120.00) all paid off in either 1900 or 1901. That represents nearly four months worth of writing.

**The second reason we see a big jump** is that London began earning his advances on *A Daughter of the Snows* from McClure Phillips and Company. As a result of a deal struck in mid-year, London received \$125 a month for the final five months of the year. Further, he earned \$225 in royalties from his first book of stories, *A Son of the Wolf*. In 1901, when his income continued to grow, he added yet another source of income: English rights; he earned \$121.62 from the English rights to *A Son of the Wolf*. Though he did not earn any money from the English rights to separately published stories and essays in 1901, he did in 1902, and plenty. “Nam-bok the Unveracious” (completed 3 August 1901) was the first, earning \$30.00, “The Sunlanders” (completed 9 September 1901), the second, for \$50.00, and so on until English acceptance and payment became routine. In fact he had prepared for this course of events. In August 1900, when he had completed “The Great Interrogation,” he wrote on one side of his sales notebook the title of the story, the number of words, his current rate (4 cents a word), and “American market.” Below came the usual list of outlets to which he sent the story. On the facing page, he wrote “Ditto” (for title) and “English market.”

The real point, then, is not that London’s wage was bigger than Norris’s (or James or Howells or Crane or...) but rather that London brokered multiple, simultaneous business deals that produced multivarious revenue streams without impeding his creativity. The thesis that London produced a single work—*The Call of the Wild*—for a single publisher—George Brett—that resulted in fame and riches simply is not true. London’s wealth derived from multiple sources in the first ten years of his career, as it did, incidentally, throughout his career. It is a fundamental characteristic of his business life.

Another commonly held thesis is struck down by this income table. Because income earned from writing is the most significant defining characteristic of a professional writer, this income chart speaks to various theses about the beginning date of London’s authorial career. That is, any claim that London’s career began in 1898—or in 1903—is really an aesthetic judgment of the quality of his writing and thus a reaffirmation of London’s own opinion of the quality of his work before that date. It is not an argument based on the activities of a professional writer and then an assessment of what London was doing during those years. Thus, the difference between what he earned in 1893 and what he earned in 1899 is simply quantitative. The fact that he wrote for money for six years—whether he earned it or not is beside the point—before 1898 should cinch the case. And the argument that because his mother helped him in 1893 he was really just a boy doing the work equivalent of, say, mowing lawns does a gross injustice both to the relationship of the mother to the son and to the work and imagination necessary to write “Typhoon off the Coast of Japan.” And if one acknowledges that that story/essay is actually good, then if one is arguing that London’s career began when his work got good, or got good enough to be accepted by notable magazines, then one has to concede that his career began in 1893. The traditional genre called juvenilia—a product of pre-New Historical literary criticism—simply does not apply in his case, especially given the compressed timeline of London’s career.

After 1903, London found four other sources of income to be derived from his writing: translations, movie rights, reprints in an-

ologies, and cheap editions. The variety of income sources will make their bookkeeping a challenging task. Unfortunately, London did not, as far as I know, keep business ledgers. He did keep fairly tidy accounts in his sales notebooks, but it is very likely that his precise income for the years 1903–1913 will never be known. For example, he often received advances when new editions were published, but whether those editions sold enough to cover the advances may not be known. It’s the kind of activity that made a nightmare out of figuring out his total income from *A Daughter of the Snows*, a book that earned him \$1875 in advances but required him to sell certain stories to McClure to cover the book’s losses. But in 1913 London was required to file federal income tax returns, and so I can conclude with yet another statistical tale of London’s business life as an author:

### Gross Income for Jack and Charmian London

Filing Year	Gross Income	Income from profession	Income from trade, rent business, or commerce
1913	27,985.81	25,000	2,985.81
1914	52,571.88	48,143	4,428.88
1915	58,876.94	55,811.85	3065.09
1916	77,573.02	70,728.43	5,344.59

It will take more than a poor humanities scholar to sort out the intricacies of filing for the federal government in these first years of taxation. I do not believe that London’s actual income in 1912 was \$25,000, but why he stated it as such—whether because of the novelty of the activity, the number of possible exemptions, or of other factors—is so far unknown to me. My guess is that his actual income did not vary that much from 1912 to 1915 and that the final number represents more accurately what he did earn for each of these four years. In any case, if he was making \$70,000 consistently from his writing, that means he was earning \$1.5 million dollars a year in 2008 dollars for four years. So that’s how he paid for his houses and his boats. This writer knew how to manage his own career.

#### Notes

1. Unfortunately, the U.S. census from 1900 does not include writers, editors, or reporters either.

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**Correction:** The sentences below were inadvertently deleted from Jay Williams’s “Who the Hell Is Ernestine?: A Possible Source for Ruth Morse” in the last issue of *The Call*:

Certainly they [Mabel Applegarth and Ruth Morse] share some physical characteristics, like that long golden hair. But above all Mabel provided London a mask of sorts to hide his true feelings. London played Mabel in a way that was typical for him. She was simply one more girl to him, and not even the only upperclass or writerly woman that he knew at the time.

Does Ernestine Congham or Nan Bixbie appear in London’s fiction? This kind of question borders on the irresponsible, but it is too tempting not to ask. And so we note that there is an Ernestine in “The Grilling of Loren Ellery.” She lives in San Francisco and has a sister named Lute or Luella. And a man named Loren Ellery comes to know both and woos them both with “a repetition of stereotyped niceties”; that is, our man Jack . . . I mean Loren, uses the same words to woo both women. (London, “The Grilling of Loren Ellery,” *The Complete Short Stories of Jack London*, 1:330). The two sisters discover the trick, and they work together to send him packing. Hmmm. Guilt is a powerful motivator. And then consider the appearance of Jack Coughran (J. C.) in “The Great Interrogation.” First a side note: is not a grilling also an interrogation?