On October 4th – 6th, 2012 numerous members of the Jack London Society gathered in Logan, Utah for the 11th Biennial Symposium. There is much to draw one to attend a Symposium: the fascinating lectures, the dozens of likeminded colleagues who are eager to discuss Jack London and sometimes, even the locale. When the brochure arrived and I saw we’d be visiting Logan, Utah for this year’s symposium, my heart sank and I was sorely disappointed. What would we do in Logan, Utah? Leaving Oakland, CA on October 5th, I had low expectations. But, when I arrived, boy, was I in for a surprise!

Logan, Utah was crisp with a fall chill and swathed in a myriad of fall colors the weekend we visited. This college town hosts Utah State University, a sprawling campus that serves over 20,000 students. The town is located in a low-lying Cache valley between sheer-faced mountains that were covered in bold stripes of red maple trees. Once you’ve enjoyed its beauty, the Cache valley stays etched in your mind.

The conference took place at the Marriott Springhill Suites in the Riverwoods Conference Center. Between fascinating sessions, Symposium attendees enjoyed numerous activities including a visit to Sportman’s Paradise, the small, family-owned sport hunting and fishing business in Paradise, where many Symposium attendees tried their luck at fishing for trout (in a stocked stream) and where all gathered to enjoy a feast of fresh, fried trout served banquet-style under the cottonwood trees as the sky darkened above.

Other memorable outings included a tour of the phenomenal special collections at the Merrill-Cazier Library, which hosts the Jack and Charmian London Collection. The tour included a welcome reception that acquainted us with all the library had to offer, tours of the multiple exhibits (one of which included all three of Jack London’s wills) and a frenzy of scholarly joy in the Special Collections where scholars perused the treasures found in the collections including the full set of London’s books inscribed to his wife Charmian. I think just about everyone left the basement of the Merrill-Cazier Library with a treasure. (I left with a photocopy of Jack’s inscription to Charmian in The Valley of the Moon, which Susan Nuernberg and I included in our presentation given the following day!)

After the library tour, Symposium attendees were bussed over to the Logan Golf and County Club, which is situated at the mouth of Logan Canyon and nestled at the foot of the Wasatch Mountains. Attendees took in the spectacular views (reminiscent of Wallace Stegner’s Angle of Repose) at the clubhouse as they enjoyed hors d’oeuvres, wine, beer and enthusiastic conversations about all of the treasures that had been discovered.

But, all good things must come to an end and, even in the beauty of the Cache Valley. On October 6th, the Symposium ended, but, not without another spectacular event. On Saturday evening, attendee Chris Million shared a long clip from his forthcoming documentary, Jack London: Twentieth-Century Man. Attendees enjoyed the screening (which included clips of interviews with many of the Symposium attendees) along with wine and cheese. But Jeanne Reesman stole the show that final night with her clips from Turtleman and his legendary “Call of the Wildman.”

While the next Symposium will be held in 2014 in historic Berkeley, California, this year’s Symposium in the beautiful western landscape of Logan, Utah will be a hard act to follow!

Iris Jamahl Dunkle’s debut poetry collection, Gold Passage, is forthcoming from Trio House Press. She currently teaches writing at Napa Valley College, Clarion University, and Sonoma State University.
I’m honored to become the President of the Jack London Society. When I first joined the Society, I was interested in meeting other Jack London scholars. Now I am happy to meet good friends as well. Thank you very much for appointing me President.

I would like to speak about how the French influenced Jack London’s life and works, and remind you that San Francisco became home for many French immigrants from the mid-19th to the start of the World War I. There were French language newspapers in San Francisco, French businesses, and French social clubs. Many French immigrants were the Republican revolutionaries of 1848, political activists who wanted to escape retaliation by Napoleon III, and radicals avoiding the political repression after “La Commune de Paris.”

It is the French tradition to privilege what we call the values of the Republic over other notions of nationality, community, and religion. For us, that is, one must recognize that the values of the nation where ones live take precedent over the values of one’s own particular religious or cultural group. This is why in Jack London’s California, the French, and their offspring were already on their way to the American ideal. They were already in the melting pot. So there was, for example, a Mauberret hotel, a Mauberret Restaurant, a Mauberret tailor shop, and in the Napa, a Mauberret Ranch. When I was young, some grandsons of the Mauberrets came back to their roots in the summer. One of them spoke to me about Jack London.

It is no surprise that the French played a role in Jack London’s life and were used as a basis for some characters in his novels. Most London scholars know that a Frenchman played a major role in Jack’s life. Of course, I’m referring to French Frank! London’s purchase of French Frank’s boat, the Razzle Dazzle, brought adventure and danger. Reading John Barleycorn, you discover that French Frank is a father figure of sorts, an initiator (in the primitive tribal sense), and full of rich experiences, hard living, hard drinking and hard sailing. After meeting French Frank, Jack went from saving to spending, from the land to the sea, from safety to danger, from his factory job to an oyster “pirate” on the Bay. At this time, London became aware of his power of seduction and the important role a woman can play in a man’s life. Remember the desirable woman called “the Queen of the Oyster Pirates.” Men fought for her attention. Yet, when Jack arrived, she was an easy conquest. Anything Frank could do, Jack could do better. Jack was as good a drinker as Frank, but stronger, smarter, and most importantly, younger. Meeting French Frank showed young London his first pathway in life.

Consider, as well, the French influence from the literary angle. Three kinds of French writers influenced Jack London:

1. Naturalists, such as Zola and Maupassant.
2. The greatest novelist of French historical fiction: Alexandre Dumas (Les Trois Mousquetaires).
3. The poet, novelist, and humanist Victor Hugo (Les Misérables).

Toward the end of the 19th century, public opinion in France was really stirred up by three events. All reflected the same theme: the extreme miscarriage of justice.

The first was La Commune de Paris, the Paris Commune—an insurrection of the people of Paris that ended in fire and blood. The leaders were killed or exiled to Algeria or New Caledonia without real trials. During the end of the 19th century, “La Commune” was the great political reference for the radicals throughout the world. This French event was a model for Jack London’s The Iron Heel.

The second event was the Affaire Dreyfus, the infamous Dreyfus Case. An innocent man, a French military officer, was convicted and sentenced to French Cayenne—Devil’s Island—and France was bitterly divided on the issue. Emile Zola, the novelist of Germinal, put his reputation at stake to defend Dreyfus with his famous newspaper headline: J’accuse.

The third French influence is the work of fiction Les Misérables by Victor Hugo. In Hugo’s novel, Jean Valjean has been sentenced to prison for stealing a bread loaf. At one point in the story, another man is about to be sentenced to death because of a mistaken identity. Valjean bravely gives himself up and the innocent man escapes the guillotine.

These three stories highlight the incapacity of the French justice system at the time to “render justice fairly.” The country of the Great Revolution and Declaration of Human Rights was in all these cases the setting for extreme examples of injustice and punishment. World opinion must have been struck by this French hypocrisy, as was Jack London, which is why he wrote “The Chinago” and made Ah Cho the hero.

Poor Ah Cho is in the same position as the leaders of the Commune, or Dreyfus, or Valjean. He—and we—are absolutely certain of his innocence and certain he will be condemned. London’s narrator in the story is in the position of Hugo or Zola. Zola, the master of naturalistic writing, clearly influenced Jack London. Hugo’s expression “La Misère” is quoted in French by London himself in The People of the Abyss. La Misère is of course the root noun for the word Misérables.

In “The Chinago,” London provides a brief picture of Tahiti, the colonial French island where the plantations are strictly run by an English company employing German overseers. The workers, however, are all Chinese—the Chinasos. Two characters represent harsh colonialism: Cruchot, the gendarme and Schemmer, the overseer. The inevitable process that leads Ah Cho to his death is shown by London with bitter irony. Ah Cho is mistaken for Ah Chow, the murderer. It was commonly thought, of course, that “all Chinese look the same.” However, so as not to disturb order in the colony, everyone accepts his death: After all, “He is only a Chinago.” In this story, the French are there above all as colonizers. The English are the background administrators, the
Germans are Prussian martinets. For London, the French are a strange mixture of Cartesian logic and the human futility a colonizer invariably faces in the tropics (with a very formal system of justice and a rigorous administration in a totally crazy situation). The French administration wavers; at one moment, it doesn’t matter to them whom they hang, and at another moment they are touched by justice.

London portrays a policy of France already condemned by his mentors Zola and Hugo: colonialism. When colonialism and injustice join, the results are terrifying. France, England, and Germany were busy carving up the world, and Jack London unites them in this story to condemn them with black humor. He shows the French gendarme as a stereotype of blind and stupid obedience. Cruchot is, as his name suggests (literally ‘Water Jug’), an empty soul.

In “The Pearls of Parlay,” this crazy universe and the traders who rule it are destroyed by a terrible hurricane. This apocalypse is organized by Frenchman, Parlay. In French, “parlez” means “speak.” Injustice is strong, but if you speak about it, or vividly portray it as a writer, such as Zola or London, it will be like Jericho in the Bible.

Very different is the good old French sailor who saves Jack London in his memoir The Road. And very different too is Sainte Maure in the novel The Star Rover. This aristocratic drinker is the embodiment of London’s idea of Freedom. He is willing to risk “his wings” in “the flame of life,” like the heroes of Dumas in Les Trois Mousquetaires. He is a Nietzschean figure willing to fight at all costs for love with style and panache. Like London, he is nobody’s lackey—prefers “to be ashes than dust” and a superb meteor and go down in flames in a duel rather than live a safe, shallow life. He refuses bowing to the Machiavellian machinery of power, which uses men like Gendarme Cruchot.

Similarly, French characters have their role in the stories of the Far North. One of the most fascinating Klondike characters is Smoke Bellew—another Jack London double. He wastes his early life in San Francisco and finds his way and truth in the Far North. He is also the writer looking for his own identity. Interestingly enough, what turns this pale shell of a man into the most of himself is writing—a letter that he receives from Paris. It’s a letter from his friend Gillet Bellamy telling him that San Francisco has no literary movement and desperately needs one. Near my home in French Alps lives a Bellue family; Americans generally transform the French U into a V. The love of life with dark and grating humor. Maupassant was an athlete, a handsome seducer of women, and—like London—he burnt up his life like a comet. He is the perfect double and literary mentor for Jack. So is Bellamy for Bellew. And Maupassant’s interest in the lowest social classes and withering scorn for the bourgeoisie are always present in London’s work. When he wrote Smoke Bellew, Jack did not know that his own life would burn out as quickly as that of his “Bel Ami,” who died at 44. A kind of carefree panache and swash buckling taste for adventure are the character traits given to Bellew. The love of life or “joie de vivre” that flashes from this character is mirrored in his female counterpart Madeline in The Son of The Wolf. Brought up and educated by priests in the Sainte Croix mission, Madeline wins back her husband by her strength of character. For the atheist London, French and French Canadian priests are paragons of virtue. In the Yukon, moral authority is embodied by Father Roubeau. In “The Men of Forty Mile,” he is the one who exposes the vain pride of man. He is so wise and clear-sighted that Lon Mac Fane calls him a “damned Frenchie” while asking him to say a mass for his eternal soul. This extraordinary priest did exist. He was the author of the first Innuit grammar book. London saw him as a generous, compassionate, patriarchal figure. He is the earthly representative of God the Father, a good and understanding yet inflexible god as is seen in “The Priestly Prerogative.” In a universe of the “wild” with neither law nor morality, where law must be made, Roubeau is the incarnation of that natural morality most dear to Voltaire and Diderot as much as he is the incarnation of Christian principles.

However, his authority needs a secular arm—this is the role of the Malemute Kid. If the world remains subject to moral law, it is thanks to Roubeau and the Kid who team up to form a pair, which is well known in medieval literature—the saintly priest and the brave knight. One of London’s nicknames was the Frisco Kid. It is curious to see how effectively the Malemute Kid teams up with Father Roubeau and how Kit Bellew, a Frisco kid/kit manages to leave his cramped and confined universe thanks to Bellamy/Bel Ami. Roubeau is the white angel of the wild where you can find many black angels, including another sort of Frenchman, Black Leclère, the owner of the dog Bâtard. When you are a bâtard (The French noun means a boy with unknown father), which Jack was, you especially need a white angel. But sometimes there are only black ones on your way. In French, Leclère means the clear, the white. The oxymoron “Black Leclère” contains both possibilities. But the poor dog Bâtard is like the young Jack London, he needs love and can find none. So he becomes black, like his owner. Jack had more luck in his life and found a few white angels on his path.

If we consider French characters in Jack London’s works, they are generally shown as positive and “free” characters. Leclère, though, is a notable exception. The French are generally examples of joyful yea-saying rather than negativity or mean calculation. They spend their lives generously and usually say “To Hell” with penny-pinching. Jack wanted to be a superb meteor rather than a sleepy planet. And he was, which is why most of his French characters share this ideal. Literature always benefits when cultures co-operate.

“The Call: Jack London, Photographer” Traveling Exhibition

Sara S. “Sue” Hodson

An exhibition based on the book, Jack London, Photographer, is currently traveling to museums in California. The volume, written by Jeanne Campbell Reesman, Sara S. “Sue” Hodson and Philip Adam, and published in 2010 by the University of Georgia Press, reproduces about 200 of London’s original photographs, from the collections of The Huntington Library and the California Department of Parks and Recreation. Maggie Walton, curator of exhibitions at the Maritime Museum of San Diego, created the exhibition and it ran from January through December, 2012, on board the historic sailing vessel, the Star of India.
JACK LONDON AND KING HENDRICKS
AT UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY

EARLE LABOR

My first visit to the London Ranch in November 1963 changed the course of my life forever. I was serving in an administrative/teaching role at Adrian College in Michigan at the time, and the National Council for the Teachers of English was holding its annual conference in San Francisco in November. A month or so earlier I received a phone call from Lawrence Perrine, distinguished author of the best-selling college textbook Sound and Sense.

"Are you planning to attend the NCTE meeting this year?" he asked.

"I haven't made up my mind yet," I answered. "How about you?"

"I think it's going to be a good conference. Would you like to share a room?"

Of course I accepted. Professor Perrine had been my favorite mentor at SMU, and a friend for nearly twenty years.

He was right. It was a good conference—but not the highlight of my first trip to California. A few weeks before flying out I wrote to Irving Shepard, manager of the Jack London Ranch, asking if I could might drop by for a visit while in San Francisco. "I will be here on Friday the 29th or Wednesday 27th," he replied. "If you could come any one of those two days, I would be glad to see you."

I rented a car and drove up Friday morning.

"I'll give you this morning," he said when I arrived. "I'm going pheasant hunting this afternoon."

Give me the morning he did, providing a guided tour of both the Ranch and what had recently become the Jack London State Historical Park. After our tour we enjoyed a late coffee chat in the Shepard home during which Mr. Shepard told me about the volume of London letters that he and King Hendricks were editing for the Odyssey Press.

Professor Hendricks was Head of the Department of English and Journalism at Utah State University. In 1920, he had met Emery Ranker, a fellow student on the Utah State Debating Team. Emery, the brother of Irving Shepard’s wife Mildred, subsequently invited him to visit the Jack London Ranch, where he also met Jack’s widow, Charmian.

This was the start of a lifetime friendship with the Shepards as well as with Charmian, who left the London Estate in Irving’s hands when she died in 1955. As a result of this friendship, Mr. Shepard donated four large groups of London memorabilia to USU between 1964 and 1971. In addition to London’s letters, the two men would also collaborate on a collection of Jack’s non-fiction, Jack London Reports (1970).

In the early 1960s, Jack London was still regarded as an Untouchable by most members of the academic establishment. I mention this because King Hendricks was a major pioneer in what I call "The Great Awakening" that took place in the past half-century. I should also mention that Professor Hendricks was not an American literature specialist. He had established a distinguished academic career as a philologist, Anglo-Saxon expert, MLA Regional President, NCAA Vice-President, and Director of the USU Library. What had drawn him
to London was that first visit to the Ranch and his close relationship to the family (in fact, he and his wife, Barbara, had been Charmian’s traveling companions on her European tour during the 1930s).

When I got back to Adrian from my California trip, I sent Professor Hendricks a brief letter about my visit to the Ranch and my interest in his project with the London correspondence. I included an offprint of “Jack London’s Symbolic Wilderness,” which had recently appeared in Nineteenth-Century American Fiction. Returning the favor, he sent me a copy of his monograph Creator and Critic: A Controversy Between Jack London and Philo Buck, Jr. and a complimentary note on my article, which he praised as “the best critical analysis of London that has been done to date.” This initiated an exchange that flourished in the following years, maturing into a warm friendship that was both personal and professional.

Letters From Jack London (1965) was widely praised, including reviews by prominent authors such as Anthony Burgess and Malcolm Muggeridge. This was a wake-up call to the academic establishment (followed the next year by Hensley Woodbridge’s monumental bibliography and Franklin Walker’s Jack and the Klondike). My own response in The Saturday Review elicited a surprise invitation from Hendricks.

“I read with much interest and delight your review of Letters from Jack London in The Saturday Review,” he wrote on September 23. “If it could be arranged, would you be interested in teaching five weeks on our campus next summer? We might set up a seminar in which you could deal with Jack London or an authors course open to graduates and undergraduates and some other course you would be interested in teaching. It would give you an opportunity to work in the materials that we have here at Utah State. You would find much original material of London here to work on, not as much as at the Huntington but more than any other place I know of. Again, thanks for an excellent review.”

Surely I was interested—a golden opportunity to initiate a college-level course on Jack London. I could use my Great Short Works of Jack London (Harper Perennial Classics Series), as our text. As my second course I could offer a graduate seminar in Literary Criticism, using A Hand-

If I were limited to one word in describing his character, I would choose “gentilesse,” for he was truly a noble man, well-named: King of London scholarship in fact as well as in name, a man for many academic seasons. Jack would undoubtedly have approved not only his versatility but also his kindliness, integrity, and grit.

book of Critical Approaches to Literature (enhanced by the addition of coauthor Jeanne Campbell Reesman in 1992 and destined throughout a half-dozen editions to become acclaimed as a “classic among college textbooks”).

The summer of 1966 was one of the best in the lives of the Labor Family. As those attending the 2012 Jack London Symposium witnessed, the location of Utah State University is one of the most spectacularly beautiful in the country: a mile high at the foot of the Logan Canyon looking down at the Cache Valley below and up at crystalline sapphire blue skies above. King arranged housing for us in one of the dormitories with kitchen facilities and double bedrooms, ample room for our family of six. He also arranged my schedule so that we had long weekends for touring such famous sites as Yellowstone National Park, the Grand Tetons, Bryce Canyon, Zion National Park, and Grand Canyon. We also discovered the pleasures of driving up north to enjoy picnic lunches and swim in the turquoise-blue water of Bear Lake.

Beyond meeting students in my two favorite courses, the best part for me as a scholar/teacher was working with King and sifting through the memorabilia from the London Estate: original manuscripts and notes, correspondence, and much more, including Magazine Sales No. 1 and No. 2, which documented Jack’s submissions, rejections, and acceptances from 1898 until 1903. Of course there was no way of checking all of this treasure-trove during my five weeks that summer. But King and I did discover the 1902 issue of Youth’s Companion in which the first version of “To Build a Fire” was published. Because the titles of this and the world-famous story were identical, scholars thought the two were probably quite similar if not the same. Only with the publication of Letters From Jack London did evidence
of the difference become widely available. On December 22, 1908, while in Sydney, Australia, recovering from his several tropical ailments, London responded to a complaint from R.W. Gilder, Editor of Century Magazine that the same story had already been published. Jack explained that he had written the earlier story “for boys merely” and the later one “for men” and that he was “absolutely confident that beyond the motif itself, there [was] no similarity in treatment whatever.” It took only a quick reading for us to see that he was right. Because the 1902 version has not been available, King and I decided to publish it again along with a critical comparison between the two stories. Sixty-five years after its initial appearance, the 1902 “To Build a Fire” appeared in Studies In Short Fiction. And here I should mention something about King’s character. When I sent him a copy of the manuscript for our article, he wrote:

I think the write-up is excellent and I have only one suggestion to make: that you invert the names of the writers so that it will read “Earle Labor and King Hendricks.” I don’t think I should be named first because you’ve done most of the work on the preparation of the manuscript and you’ve given me plenty of credit in the bibliography.

If I were limited to one word in describing his character, I would choose “gentilesse,” for he was truly a noble man, well-named: King of London scholarship in fact as well as in name, a man for many academic seasons. Jack would undoubtedly have approved not only his versatility but also his kindliness, integrity, and grit. By nature a man of action, he fought the last years of his life against considerable odds. When I first met him in the summer of 1966, he had already suffered a massive coronary attack, followed by a bleeding ulcer, which had sapped his vitality for several months before it was properly diagnosed and treated. By all logic he should have been a bedridden invalid, too weak to stand. But he did stand; moreover, he walked. Every morning, and sometimes again in the afternoon, he drove to the campus, then carefully walked the hot quarter-mile from the parking lot to ask me how the new Jack London course was going and to see if I needed help in working through the great stack of uncatalogued London materials donated to the Library. During those weeks he and Barbara also became hosts for Betty and me, introducing us to several members of the USU faculty. Most notable among these was William Carigan, a retired WWII Air Force colonel who had earned his M.A. under King’s direction and subsequently become a full-time Instructor in the USU English Department. He and his wife “Mary E” would become close family friends during the ensuing years.

King and I corresponded regularly after that summer, keeping each other apprised of the growing field of London scholarship. Following my recommendation, Steven Dhondt, one of my brightest Adrian students, worked with King as his mentor in earning his Master’s Degree in English, writing an original thesis and publishing several articles on London’s satire. Forty years afterward, after retiring from a successful business career, he devoted his creative energies to poetry and novels—most notably When God Laughs, a fictional memoir with special tributes to Jack London, King Hendricks, and Utah State.

My family and I returned to Logan in the summer of 1968, and I continued sorting through the London collection with King. He was still a bit frail but stronger than he had been two years before. He and Barbara were putting the last touches on the manuscript for Jack London Reports, the edition of London’s nonfictional articles that would be published by Doubleday two years later. No rooms were available on campus, but to the delight of our children, the Carigans invited us to stay in their rustic cabin located beside the white waters of the river ten miles up Logan Canyon. We would become regular occupants during our visits those next couple of decades.

I was planning another visit to Logan during the summer of 1970, but in late March, I got a phone call from King’s research assistant, Diane Price. Hardly able to talk over her tears, she told me that he had died from a massive heart attack. A month later I received a letter from Milton Abrams, Director of the Library, assuring me that the London collection was being properly cared for. “Our commitment to it is considerable,” he wrote. “You are invited to maintain your interest in it and if your interest should draw you back to Logan, we will be looking forward to providing you with the best service possible.”

Dr. Abrams’s promise has been underscored consistently over the past four decades. During that period I have returned to Logan a dozen times and have always been provided with not only “the best service possible” but also the best of friendships. Before leaving USU to pursue further graduate studies at Washington State in 1973, Diane Price
kept me up to date on the London collection while answering my queries and sending me Xerox copies of the materials I needed for my London projects. After that, the Director of Special Collections, Jeff Simmonds, and his wife, Jeannie, along with Ann Buttars, kept me in touch. In 1975, having painstakingly inventoried the archival treasure-trove donated by the Shepards, they published an invaluable guide for all London scholars: *Register of The Jack & Charmian London Collection*.

One incident is particularly worthy of citing. In 1981, Bob Leitz and I were busily putting what we hoped were the finishing touches on our edition of London’s letters for the Stanford University Press. A significant number of Jack’s letters had been written to Anna Strunsky. All of these were on file at the Huntington Library—all, we thought, except for one. We knew Jack had written this because he had referred to it in subsequent correspondence—and, most notably, it referred to the abrupt end of their romance. In our Introduction we acknowledged this hiatus and could only speculate about the cause. A few days before our departure, Jeannie called and left a message for me with my wife. “You and Bob are invited to dinner with Jeff and Jeannie,” Betty told me when I got home from my workout at the “Y” that evening. “She also said they had another Jack London letter you might be interested in.”

Having read more than five thousand Jack London letters, I was more interested in one of Jeannie’s state-of-the-art steak dinners. My attitude changed dramatically when Bob and I arrived at USU and saw the letter on display: a five-page autograph letter dated August 25, 1902, written while Jack was in London at work on *The People Of The Abyss*. We learned from this letter that Anna had broken off their affair after discovering that his wife Bessie was pregnant with their second child.

Jeannie informed us that their agent was able to acquire this precious document at an auction by Sotheby’s in London. She also told us there was a second missing letter written by Jack three days after this one; however, USU’s agent had not been authorized with sufficient funds for its purchase as well. I resolved to contact Sotheby’s as soon as I got back home to see if that second letter was still available—but never followed through on that plan. At the invitation of my friend and bookseller, Maurice Neville, Bob and I stopped in Santa Barbara on our way down to the Huntington from the Ranch.

When I told Maurie about the two missing letters and my plan to check on the second one, he replied, “Don’t bother. I bought it and will make a copy for you while you’re here.” Thanks to USU and Maurie, we finally had the assurance of knowing we’d seen all of Jack’s letters to Anna and had included the most significant ones in our edition.

Although Jeff Simmonds died several years ago and his widow Jeannie transferred from Special Collections to the USU Financial Development office, not only I but also many other Jack London scholars have continued to receive the best service possible from the congenial Special Collections staff at the Merrill-Cazier Library. This has been most clearly manifest in the recent Jack London Symposium. I am personally indebted for the support I’ve received from Ann Buttars, Peter Schmid, Stephen Sturgeon, and Bradford Cole. Recently Brad provided additional accurate information for this tribute, enabling me to fill in some data missing from my own files. I’m sure that Jack himself would applaud both the efficiency and the camaraderie I’ve enjoyed over the past five decades, which participants at the 11th Biennial Jack London Society Symposium have likewise had the good fortune to appreciate.

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The Jack London Society 12th Biennial Symposium Will be Held in Berkeley, California October 2014
Jack London State Historic Park has been a living testament to Jack London since 1959 when 40 acres were set aside as a State Park. The State of California purchased additional acres in 1977, the same year the non-profit organization Valley of the Moon Natural History Association (VMNHA) was established to support educational, volunteer and interpretive studies at three Sonoma Valley parks including Jack London, Sugarloaf and Annadel. For 34 years VMNHA and Jack London State Historic Park existed side by side with the State running the park and VMNHA providing support and enhancement for the park restoration projects and overseeing important fund raising projects to improve the park. But in 2011 they reached a crossroads. The State of California announced that due to a budget crisis, sixty of the state parks, including all three in the Sonoma Valley would close. Although tragic for any treasured natural resource and significant community open space, losing Jack London Park was even more unthinkable. As a historical monument to a man, an adventurer, an innovator and important writer—the place he lived, loved and considered his inspiration—had to remain open.

VMNHA stepped up to take over management of Jack London Park becoming the first non-profit organization to save a State park from closure. With that history to bolster their passion for Jack London’s legacy, VMNHA looked forward with vision to the future.

That future and more importantly the present are now very bright at Jack London Park. With a new Executive Director focused on operations and new ideas, Jack London Park is re-energizing as an integral community resource and revitalized travel destination.

There is much to work do. Currently two main initiatives include the Trails Project and creating new events at the park. “The back country of Jack London Park is a phenomenal resource for locals and visitors from all over the world. Jack and Charmian London regularly traversed these trails, and they are prominently features in Jack’s books about the Sonoma Valley. Keeping the trails in pristine condition is a real priority,” said Chuck Levine a VMNHA Board member and regular equestrian at the park. Many trails were closed during the state’s tenure due to budget strains, but with the support of passionate volunteers, VMNHA has been able to maintain a thriving and functional Mounted Assistance Unit of 80 volunteers who provide thousands of hours of assistance, trail maintenance and support to visitors on the trails. Last year the 5,000 volunteer hours were the equivalent of 2.5 Rangers working on the trails full time. “We are working to clear, improve, and shore up favorite trails, as well as opening new trails with the support of the Sonoma Trails Council,” Chuck continues. “Historic trails around Fern Lake are now open and we will soon open the North Slope trail which goes from the Hayfields trail near the summit of Sonoma Mountain all the way down to Sonoma Mountain Road. As we complete our various current projects we will add more than 3 miles of new trails to the park.”

The opportunity to explore new parts of the park, as well as continue to experience existing favorites promises to be a pivotal aspect of the diverse Event Calendar created for 2013. Tjiska Van Wyk, the new Executive Director clarifies a re-imagined park experience: “Parks in the past have been viewed as places that you come to view beautiful, pristine wilderness areas. But I think that parks are actually a natural venue for gathering community.” Piano concerts, lectures, outdoor movies, “picnic till sundown” days, an ongoing Broadway Under the Stars summer performance series, Art in the Park, puppet shows, photography and painting workshops and themed nature hikes will all be offered at the park this year. Since Jack London envisioned ongoing parties for guests to enjoy his “Beauty Ranch,” it seems he would have approved of the “new Jack London Park.”

For more information visit:
www.jacklondonpark.com

Eliza London Shepard researcher seeks data and photos for short, accurate biography. Please contact Elisa Stancil elisastancil@gmail.com Fax 707-935-7097. Cell 415-902-6230 2221 London Ranch Road, Glen Ellen, CA 95442
"Have you read my ‘Christ’ story?": Mary Austin’s *The Man Jesus* and London’s *The Star Rover*  

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On October 26, 1915, Mary Austin, the author of *The Land of Little Rain* and a host of other books, had started to worry that her work was disappearing from print almost as soon as it had been published, and that readers had failed to understand her latest book. For consolation, she wrote to an old friend whom she had known since their days in the artists’ colony at Carmel. She told him she was tired of being called “the greatest American stylist,” even if it was a compliment that H.G. Wells placed her “on a lonely pedestal alongside Stephen Crane.” What’s more, critics and the reading public readers had misunderstood the message of her most recent book, *The Man Jesus: Being a Brief Account of the Life and Teaching of the Man of Nazareth*: “Nobody seems to have discovered that I have said that Christian banking should be administered on behalf of those who serve rather than those who own. I thought that was a fairly suggestive conclusion—that a man could borrow money on his capacity to serve society rather than on his wife’s diamonds” (*Letters III*: 1514).

If Austin was looking for soft commiseration, she wrote to the wrong person, for Jack London, her correspondent, took a different approach to the question of audiences. “The majority of the people who inhabit the planet Earth are bone-heads,” he wrote in response. “I have read and enjoyed every bit of your “Jesus Christ” book as published serially in the *North American Review*. What if it does not get across? I have again and again written books that failed to get across” (*Letters III*: 1513). He told her that *The Sea-Wolf* was an attack on, not praise for, the Nietzschean super-man; that *Martin Eden* was another attack on the super-man that no one understood; and that he has had to be content “to be admired for my red-blood brutality and for a number of nice little things like that which are not true of my work at all.” But the question of being misunderstood had clearly touched a nerve for London. “Heavens, have you read my ‘Christ’ story?” he continues. “Said book has been praised for its red-bloodedness and no mention has been made of my handling of the Christ situation in Jerusalem at all” (1514).

With few exceptions, modern critics, like London’s contemporaries, have focused on the sensational Darrell Standing prison-torture plot. Susan Gatti reads the novel’s ironic humor as a means of fostering community among the prisoners, and Christopher Gair, in a Foucauldian analysis, sees a subversion of the systematic management popularized by Frederick Winslow Taylor. More recently, Jason Haslam also uses Foucault to argue that London uses the prison as a “synecdoche for the ideological deadening of each citizen . . . to State-sponsored hegemony” (243). London was interested in the prison angle, but despite his protestations, was bothered by the critics’ failure to understand his Christ story. That Austin, a mystic who believed she was in touch with Indian spirits, and London, an avowed materialist, should have written Christ stories at all seems unusual, but that both should express such concern over the reception of their stories deserves further investigation. To consider *The Star Rover* in the context of Austin’s *The Man Jesus* raises several questions. First, how did London and Austin fashion their Christ stories to fit a popular audience? Second, how were their versions of the Christ story fashioned, if at all, to reflect progressive social politics? Third, what did London see in Austin’s “Christ story” that made him turn to it first in the *North American Review*?

London’s “Christ story” is the penultimate episode of his 1915 novel *The Star Rover*. Based in part on the experiences of real-life prisoners Ed Morrell and Jacob Oppenheimer, *The Star Rover* is the story of Darrell Standing, a former professor serving a life term in Folsom Prison for murdering a colleague. Standing irritates the prison guards when he criticizes “the motion-wastage of the loom rooms” (9) and is beaten for his trouble; after being branded an incorrigible, he tells off Warden Atherton and is placed in solitary confinement. When an informer implicates Standing in a plot to blow up the prison, the authorities refuse to believe that he does not know where the package with thirty-five pounds of dynamite is hidden. Since the dynamite does not exist, Standing can tell them nothing, so they trust him up in a straitjacket for days to force him to reveal where it is hidden. In the extreme double confinement of jacket and cell, Standing discovers a perverse form of freedom when Morrell teaches him the trick of willing a physical near-death in
order to free his consciousness to roam through time and space. He travels through past lives and past identities, including those of Count Guillaume Sainte-Maure, who dies in a fencing match; an Egyptian hermit; Jesse Fancher, a nine-year-old boy who dies in the Mountain Meadows Massacre in 1857; Adam Stang, a seventeenth-century sailor who marries into the royal family of Korea but ends up a beggar; Ragnar Lodbrog, a Norseman turned Roman citizen and legionnaire, who narrates the “Christ story”; and Daniel Foss, a nineteenth-century sailor shipwrecked for eight years on a rocky island.

Each period of punishment in the straitjacket brings with it another adventure for Standing in time-and-space travel to past lives, so he taunts the warden by encouraging longer, harsher levels of punishment for himself. Plotting revenge on the man who had fabricated the story of the dynamite, Standing escapes into the prison yard, too weak for anything but a symbolic gesture of defiance. In his extremity, he strikes a guard and is sentenced to death, but he does not fear it. Given his experiences in star-roving, Standing is calm and unafraid because he has concluded that “Life is spirit and spirit cannot die.” In writing about the effect of this passage, the reviewer for The Living Age commented in 1915, “Jack London has for so long been known as an apostle of physical strength . . . that his message . . . that the spirit is the only real thing and cannot die, has peculiar weight” (Living Age 25 December 1915: 821).

Reviewers treated the “Christ story” as a tale of its Norse hero, Ragnar Lodbrog, and it is consistent with the pattern of others in the novel. The episodes in The Star Rover alternate between those of a character confronting a life-threatening situation, like Jesse Fancher or Daniel Foss, and those faced with more complex options than survival, such as the choice between love and duty. At least two, Lodbrog’s and Strang’s, are structured as captivity narratives, in which Standing’s alter ego must confront an alien, sometimes savage, culture and negotiate his place within it without destroying his physical integrity and sense of national identity. In a nod to psychological verisimilitude, all of Standing’s alter egos bear traits that he exhibits in the main narrative, including a sense of superiority to their surroundings and, in the case of Adam Strang, the ability to be patient in the service of revenge. But the “Christ novel” plot differed from the others, too. As Jeannie Campbell Reesman has written, this was the novel that London “labored intermittently for most of his writing career” (Reesman 74). In his extensive investigation of the origin, sources, and significance of The Star Rover, James Williams argues that London’s work on the “Christ novel” coincided with periods of his intense interest in socialism, and that London worked on the “Christ novel” during three distinct periods of his life between 1899 and 1901, during which his conception of the Nordic hero took shape; in 1906 and 1907, when his reading of Ernst Haeckel encouraged him to see “the socialistic nature of Jesus’s message” (27); and 1911 through 1913, when his rereading of Renan’s Life of Christ and Antichrist gave him more detailed material.

Had he chosen to use them, London had other models available as well for his “Christ story.” In the early nineteenth century, novels such as William Ware’s Julian: or, Scenes in Judea (1841) and Joseph Holt Ingraham’s The Prince of the House of David (1855) had hewed close to the Biblical narrative in their retellings, as London apparently planned to do originally. By the time he wrote The Star Rover, however, London instead chose the method used by authors later in the nineteenth century, having a main character moved to belief through incidental encounters with Jesus. This method had been highly successful in General Lew Wallace’s immense bestseller Ben-Hur (1880) and Marie Corelli’s Barabbas (1893), the latter an acknowledged source for London. Given the popularity of such novels, London could rest assured that the combination of adventure and religious representation would have posed no problems for censorious reviewers. As Paul Gutjahr notes in his analysis of Ben Hur’s reception, the popularity of Wallace’s novel derived from a combination of historical accuracy and melodramatic romance, a combination that confirmed readers’ “biblically based conceptions of reality” while it satisfied their need for emotional release (Gutjahr 63).

London’s incorporation of the Christ story within a “red-blooded” adventure tale drew on the same formulas that Wallace and others had used successfully, but in keeping with his interests in northern “races,” his hero, Ragnar
Lodbrog, is a Norseman (a Dane). Born on shipboard in a howling gale and dunked into a tub of mead, Lodbrog grows to adulthood, becomes a “sweep-slave” in the Roman galleys, and ascends to the position of “freeman, citizen, and soldier” in command of a company of Pilate’s troops. Significantly, London chooses not to tell his captivity story, instead having Lodbrog declare that it is “too long” (231). The elision of this narrative is a telling choice for London because the hero’s triumphant ascension from low beginnings to a high position through his strength and intelligence is a staple plot in London’s fiction. As in other London works, such as “Samuel,” the story that London chooses not to tell should therefore alert the reader about the importance of the story that he does choose to tell.

One reason that London does not tell the captivity story is that he wants the reader to attend to something quite different: philosophy, not action, is the key to Lodbrog’s story. The bulk of the text consists of a series of philosophical conversations between Lodbrog; the Jewish woman Miriam (based on Anna Strunsky), with whom he falls instantly in love; and Pontius Pilate, whose tragedy is that he understands intellectually the political and religious forces that cause him to act but is unable to stop himself from catering to the priests. At first, the conversations between Lodbrog and Miriam are like flirtatious courtship debates. For example, Lodbrog describes his mead-hall vision of Valhalla with Miriam, who holds out for a mystical, spiritual heaven. Their debates turn more serious, however, as they discuss the application of general principles to particular instances: abstract concepts of the law as applied to individual cases of transgression; the jurisdiction of civil versus religious authority; and the perennial conflict between love and duty. Norseman and Roman, captive and citizen, captain and soldier, Lodbrog exists between identities, and by virtue of his position between worlds, he brings what he considers the bracing cold light of Northern rationality to his judgments of the people of warmer countries, such as the Romans and the Jews. He considers himself a Roman and expresses pleasure that only auxiliary troops, not Romans, participate in the persecution of Jesus, yet he also realizes that allegiance to Roman law forces Pilate, who “thought and acted in governmental abstractions” (London 241), to turn Christ over to be crucified.

London creates Lodbrog as a man of action, yet paradoxically places Lodbrog in a story in which his role is not to act but to be acted upon. As Pilate is about to pass judgment, a “mangy, bearded, long-haired fanatic” leaps forward to affirm that “Tiberius is emperor; there is no king” (254). Outraged by the insult to Jesus, Lodbrog grinds his foot into the man’s and sees Pilate’s similar fury. Both are stopped from retaliation by the power—which London, following Renan, calls the “charm”—of Jesus, who wordlessly makes them understand that what follows is inevitable. Later, when the now-converted Miriam begs Lodbrog to rescue Jesus from crucifixion, Lodbrog again refuses to act. Miriam taunts him with being a “slave of Tiberius,” yet his refusal is conditioned not by duty to Tiberius but by the recognition of inevitable fate that he had seen in Jesus’s eyes. Two features are especially noteworthy here. The first is that the effect that Jesus has on the eminently rational Lodbrog has nothing to do with Lodbrog’s faith, for he is not a believer when he first sees Jesus; rather, the effect arises from a powerful charisma that leaves Lodbrog free to act but desirous of doing Jesus’s bidding. The second feature, one that London’s initial readers seem to have missed, is that London creates an action hero not in order to show “red-blooded brutality” but to present as heroic a character who restrains himself.

Others in _The Star Rover_ practice patience only in the service of ultimate revenge, but Lodbrog restrains himself as an act of resistance to revenge. He is the inverse of his modern avatar Darrell Standing, for his restraint comes entirely from interior spiritual forces rather than exterior material ones.

Austin’s _The Man Jesus_ reaches similar conclusions, but its form differs greatly from London’s book. Austin rose to fame in the same year as London, 1903, when her book _The Land of Little Rain_ established her as a popular writer. Like London in his Northland stories, she chose the borderlands of an inhospitable nature and its Native American inhabitants as her subject matter, using a naturalist’s eye to describe the vegetation and topography of the Southwestern desert that she, like London with the Yukon, knew intimately from personal experience. Yet Austin was a self-professed natural mystic whose experiences paralleled those of London’s Darrell Standing, without the need for either a Strait-jacket or knuckle-rapping star-rover lessons transmitted from another inmate to instruct her. According to her biographers Susan Goodman and Carl Dawson, Austin believed that she could “adopt the character of another person, an Indian woman, for instance,” and Austin herself describes “sending my subconscious self at night to try and find the facts I wanted” (Goodman and Dawson 41). Influenced by a Paiute healer named Tinnemaha and also by her reading of William James, whom she visited
when he came to San Francisco, Austin described herself as a religious “pragmatist” who “demanded that something more should come out of mystical experience than the mere ecstatic notice of its taking place” (Goodman and Dawson 40). The result is that, like Darrell Standing, who believes that “spirit cannot die” (329), Austin believed that the world “evaded the best of logic; it had to exist on faith” (40).

Austin’s The Man Jesus is far from a mystical document, however; its rational tone and careful evaluation of the facts suggests instead Jack London at his most logical. Published in the North American Review from June through November 1915 and thereafter in book form, The Man Jesus generated letters from readers praising her account for being “refeshingly independent of convention” (“Praise of ‘The Man Jesus’” 791) and deriding it as “blasphemous” because it neglected to emphasize that Jesus was “God himself” (“Mrs. Austin’s Psychogeny of Christ” 954). It is, in fact, not far from the sort of “great man” biography so common in the Progressive Era, a form best exemplified by the work of Rose Wilder Lane in fictionalized as-told-to works such as Henry Ford’s Own Story, Charlie Chaplin’s Own Story, and, most infamously after London’s death, Life and Jack London, which infuriated Chariman London and Eliza London by its inaccuracies. The Man Jesus is Austin’s attempt to render a Christ in human terms, one whose extraordinariness relies less on his recognition of his own divinity than on his coming to terms with the divinity that exists within him as in every man. Accordingly, she presents extended descriptions of the regions and terrain that he inhabited to explain his character traits, since Austin believed regions shaped the character of communities and the people within them.

In her historical retelling of the Gospels, Austin peppers her text with qualifications and objections to the details of the Biblical account. She consistently downplays the miraculous and sensational, even preferring to call Jesus “Joshua” or “the carpenter” to deemphasize his divinity, and she repeatedly resorts to phrases like “according to the historical record.” For example, she challenges the historicity of the place of Jesus’s birth, saying “there is a tradition that he was born in Bethlehem” but that this could not be considered fact because he “never referred to the place and never visited it” (942). Similarly, all that is “historically admissible” (480) in the last supper is the ritual meal itself, during which Jesus suggested only that the apostles think of him at Passover, not that they institute a sacrament of communion. In examining the idea that Christ rose after three days in the tomb, she subtly challenges the idea that Jesus died during the crucifixion, noting that he was “a man of great hardihood” and that his body “was not broken” except for the nail holes in hands and feet “and possibly a spear prick in the side” (633), which is, she states, only a later story and not an eyewitness account. “All the God-tales come straight out of the heart of man,” Austin editorializes, adding that “there is a part of us which lies remote from the region of material sense” (944). The story of Jesus in this book is the story of his becoming aware of his powers as a mystic, which are gained through growth and development much as every other person’s are without the perfect foreknowledge that characterizes divinity. Indeed, her Jesus is a somewhat ordinary but progressive thinker. She specifies, for example, that he does not invent the phrase “Kingdom of Heaven” but he does preach “acceptance of all women in the Father” despite Paul’s later “prejudice” against them (470).

What may have interested London most is the political edge that Austin gives to Christ’s life. Austin downplays the usual interpretations of stories that might suggest a division of wealth or socialist ideals; she dismisses that the Sermon on the Mount preaches a “proletarian heaven” and carefully explains that Jesus proscribed the attachment to possessions, not the possessions themselves, in his parable of the camel and the needle’s eye. For example, she challenges the historicity of the place of Jesus’s birth, saying “there is a tradition that he was born in Bethlehem” but that this could not be considered fact because he “never referred to the place and never visited it” (942). Similarly, all that is “historically admissible” (480) in the last supper is the ritual meal itself, during which Jesus suggested only that the apostles think of him at Passover, not that they institute a sacrament of communion. In examining the idea that Christ rose after three days in the tomb, she subtly challenges the idea that Jesus died during the crucifixion, noting that he was “a man of great hardihood” and that his body “was not broken” except for the nail holes in hands and feet “and possibly a spear prick in the side” (633), which is, she states, only a later story and not an eyewitness account. “All the God-tales come straight out of the heart of man,” Austin editorializes, adding that “there is a part of us which lies remote from the region of material sense” (944). The story of Jesus in this book is the story of his becoming aware of his powers as a mystic, which are gained through growth and development much as every other person’s are without the perfect foreknowledge that characterizes divinity. Indeed, her Jesus is a somewhat ordinary but progressive thinker. She specifies, for example, that he does not invent the phrase “Kingdom of Heaven” but he does preach “acceptance of all women in the Father” despite Paul’s later “prejudice” against them (470).
rupt elite had been disrupted by Jesus’s action of scattering the moneylenders, she sees a “thoroughly modern situation” in his arrest: “a representative body, in the main, well-intentioned, manipulated by a group within the group whose spring of action was illegitimate profit” (628), as if they were union members being led astray by political bosses. This episode, which stands out in the narrative precisely because of its use of modern terms, constitutes the message Austin mentioned in her letter, that “Christian banking should be administered on behalf of those who serve rather than those who own.” Similarly, Austin’s Pilate is a modern figure, not a sensitive intellectual like London’s but a buffoon, a “comparatively honest and tactless Procurator” who, like witless contemporary politicians listening to a powerful interest group, tires of the whole controversy and delivers Jesus to be crucified. If London presents an historical Jesus with a modern—materialist, rationalist—foil such as Lodbrok, Austin makes Jesus himself a modern man, uncertain at times of what is to happen to him but retaining his integrity in the face of a corrupt political system.

Despite the writers’ dissatisfaction about the reception of their works, the “Christ stories” of Austin and London were part of a larger public discourse about, and apparently interest in, the life of Christ. Shortly after Austin’s book appeared, the North American Review published an essay called “Was Jesus a Non-Resistant?” that concluded he would not have supported the current war in Europe. While not commenting directly on the war, London’s Christ story asks a similar question about the same concepts of individual conscience versus civil authority. Moreover, in creating a rational character who nonetheless “bows to the gods, all gods” (259) and accepts the will of a powerful, charismatic leader, London offers up an alternative vision of what could happen if a less benign master were to exercise a similar sort of “charm.” It is not difficult to read The Star Rover and muster outrage for the tortures that Standing and the others were forced to undergo and to conclude that prison reform is necessary. London’s “Christ story” and its moral complexities, though, required a level of engagement with the episode’s subtleties that readers searching for “red-blood brutalities” may have simply overlooked.

\(^1\) In fact, Corelli’s first novel, A Romance of Two Worlds (1886), features a character who experiences divine visions and travels to other worlds.

Works Cited

Jack London and Ross River Disease on the *Snark* Voyage

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After his discharge from St. Malo Hospital in Sydney, Jack London called off the *Snark* voyage on December 8, 1908, and left Australia by steamship on April 7, 1909: “The Australian specialists agreed that the malady was non-parasitic, and that, therefore, it must be nervous . . . I reasoned that in my own climate of California I had always maintained a stable nervous equilibrium. So back I came” (339).¹ London was not affected by mental health problems, but infected by a mosquito bite containing Ross River Virus, which produced a rash and painful swelling of the joints.

On December 6, 1907, the *Snark* had arrived at *Nuku Hiva* (the Marquesas Islands), stayed in *Tahiti* (until April 4, 1908), and then set sail for *Raiatea* followed by *Bora Bora*, where they sailed via *American and German Samoa* to Fiji and Vanuatu. The civilized Vanuatu was followed by the savage Solomon Islands, which were, according to Charmian London, “inhabited by the most bloodthirsty and treacherous of any known savages—head-hunters who prowl for prey by night, on land and sea… And this is going on to-day.”² Another ship they used for an excursion to Malaita was, London noted, “too accessible to boarders. So brass stanchions were screwed into the rail and a double row of barbed wire stretched around her from stem to stern and back again” (266).

Pathogenic organisms such as plasmodia, bacteria and viruses, with arthropods (like anopheles)—which cannot be repelled by barbed wires and rifles on board—entered their ships and bodies almost invisibly. In the Solomon Islands, close to the equator, infections were and still are more common and dangerous than elsewhere in the South Seas. London was driven out of the region by a then unknown disease.

This archipelago is the same sailing area where, in November 2010, our crew of 12 German sailors on the 20-meter catamaran *Bamboo Free* crossed the wake of *Snark* while touring the eastern Solomon Islands Tikopia and Anuta (Fig. 1, down right). The supply of these remote islands relies to a large extent on transport links. In 2009, the well-known German sailor Klaus Hymphendahl, in cooperation with the English catamaran builder James Wharram, donated two typical Polynesian catamarans to the islands.³ In 2010, our task was to bring the Polynesian sailors modern, state of the art navigation equipment because they had been rigorously demanded by the government of the Solomon Islands. The second task was to give medical assistance especially in the therapy of a widespread skin disease.

As a medical doctor, I was faced with a startling number of tropical diseases on board the
Bamboo Free. With the benefit of hindsight, a surprising number of cases could be understood by reading The Cruise of the Snark. As London declared, “the history of the Snark in the Solomons has been the history of every ship since the early discoverers” (327), and he summed up that “the Solomon Islands are not as healthy as they might be. . . . Some day I shall write a book (for the profession), and entitle it ‘Around the World on the Hospital Ship Snark’” (332).

Therapy of infections in the Pre-Antibiotic Era
The entire crew of the Snark suffered from attacks of malaria, which were treated with Quinine by London, to some extent successfully. The cabin boy, Nakata, came down with severe malignant Malaria. Charmian had “only” quartan malaria (two days without fever, one with). All inhabitants of the Snark suffered from Tropical Sores combined with Erysipelas and Cellulitis, which London called Solomon sores. “And the sores are not nice,” he wrote in The Cruise of the Snark. “They may be described as excessively active ulcers. A mosquito bite, a cut, or the slightest abrasion, serves for lodgment of the poison with which the air seems to be filled. Immediately the ulcer commences to eat. It eats in every direction, consuming skin and muscle with astounding rapidity. The pin-point ulcer of the first day is the size of a dime by the second day, and by the end of the week a silver dollar will not cover it” (262-63). London continued, “From the ‘Sailing Directions’ I quote the following: ‘The crews of vessels remaining any consid-
erable time in the Solomons find wounds and sores liable to change into malignant ulcers’” (327). In 2010, five of twelve crewmembers also suffered from the “immediately eating ulcer.” They were all treated efficiently by modern antibiotics. Through modern medicine we know that there is no mystic poison in the air but a streptococcus group A called *pyogenes*, inducing Erysipelas and cellulitis by multiplication and lateral spread of the bacteria in deep layers of the skin.7,8,9

The *Snark* voyage took place about 25 years before the first attempt with penicillin to treat bacterial infection. In 1908, London had no other means but to apply a very tough substance. “I decided to fight the poison with corrosive sublimate. The very name of it struck me as vicious. Talk of fighting fire with fire!” (315-16). Corrosive sublimate transforms the tissue into a liquid viscous mass, so called colliquative (wet) necrosis, which supports further resorption of sublimate, later being a deposit in the kidney with development of the well-known toxic nephropathy due to mercuric chloride.10 London did not conserve antiseptics, “we retire to a corner and deluge our own sores with corrosive sublimate” (274). The corrosive sublimate became dominant when a new disease arose, whose rash also was worsened by it, particularly on his hands.

The Unknown Disease

On September 18, 1908, the sailors found the Polynesian Ontong Java- or Lord Howe-Atoll, 150 miles north of the central Solomon Islands, after meandering eight days through the South Pacific Ocean. London investigated the genocide committed there in 1875 by the British against 8,000 Polynesians.11 The cruel story would be titled “Yah! Yah! Yah!”12 At this time, Charmian noted the symptoms of a new disease in the *Log of the Snark*: “Jack is a bit shaky with fever, and a peculiar swelling has appeared in his hands, the sensation being similar to chilblains. It hurts him to close them, and the skin peels off in patches, with other skins readily forming and peeling underneath. I do not believe his nervous system was ever made to thrive in the tropics” (448). At the same location, crewmember Martin Johnson also describes London’s condition: “However, worst of all, his hands and feet became extremely swollen and the skin of them hard, thick and pigmented. He was irritable, unsteady on his feet, and had difficulty concentrating. No other members of the crew developed this disease, which made it all the more perplexing.”13 Ten days later in her *Log*, Charmian reported: “Jack's hands have not improved in fact, he is sorely bothered by them even holding a pen is uncomfortable, and a pull on a rope is positively painful” (456). On October 3, 1908 the *Snark* arrived at Niunano of Tasman/Nukumanu Islands, the northernmost destination of the trip. They visited Mr. McNicoll, a sheriff, and also an “amateur doctor,” who told of having suffered from a similar malady which he had recovered from: “As to Jack's hands, he examined the peeling upon peeling that was visible, and the painful, dry, hot swelling, and said he had once had something like it, but had got over it; didn't know what it was maybe the salt, maybe the sun, and that Jack's and his own were the only cases he had ever seen.”14 It is possible to speak of two “published” cases of a then unnamed disease. This may be of interest to specialists of the history of medicine; a first weak indicator of an infectious disease with painful joint swelling, rash, and fever.

On October 6, bound for the central Solomon Islands, London gives a narrow description of the cardinal signs, i.e. swollen painful joints and rash: “As for me, in addition to navigating, doctoring, and writing short stories, I am far from well. With the exception of the insanity cases, I'm the worst off on board. I shall catch the next steamer to Australia and go on the operating table. Among my minor afflictions, I may mention a new and mysterious one. For the past week my hands have been swelling as with dropsy. It is only by a painful effort that I can
close them. A pull on a rope is excruciating. The sensations are like those that accompany severe chilblains. Also, the skin is peeling off both hands at an alarming rate, besides which the new skin underneath is growing hard and thick. The doctor-book fails to mention this disease. Nobody knows what it is” (333).

Back at Penduffryn, three weeks later, they took a steamship, the Snark remaining on Guadalcanal, and arrived in Sydney on November 14, 1908. The hope of diagnosis and treatment of his disease at St. Malo Hospital was dashed. On December 8, he wrote from Sydney to Martin Johnson: "The doctors do not know what it is. The biggest specialist in Australia in skin-disease has examined me, and his verdict is that not only in his own experience has he never seen anything like it, but that no line is to be found about it in any of the medical libraries.”

The famous dermatologist couldn’t subsume the symptoms under a single diagnosis because the disease was not defined at that time and a multitude of factors produced the alterations of the skin. The skin eruptions of the underlying illness were superimposed and obscured by the continuous deluge of his and the crewmember’s sores with corrosive sublimate. Sublimate itself causes colliquative necrosis and peeling of the skin. There was also the daily burden of helming and sailing maneuvers. The exploration and classification of the predominant joint swelling by the doctors in Sydney is unknown.

**Diagnosis: Ross River Disease**

From a contemporary point of view, the doctors of St. Malo Hospital, North Sydney, had no chance of giving the correct diagnosis. Ross River Disease, or *Epidemic polyarthritis*, was unknown in 1908 (even today it is only well-known in the South Pacific area). Twenty years later, it was described first by J. R. Nimmo. An “unusual epidemic,” he called it, with rash and transient Arthritis, which he identified in 105 Soldiers based in the tropical areas of Australia. Now, Ross River Disease appears in 5,000 cases per annum in Australia and in many islands of the Southern Pacific. In 1959, the disease got its actual name, when the viruses (*alphavirus*) were isolated from a mosquito species caught in the mangrove forests of the Ross River near Townsville (Queensland). The first isolation from infected humans was in 1979. The mosquitoes of the genera *Aedes*, *Culex*, and *Manson*ia are active in the daytime; their natural reservoir is macroods such as kangaroos.

People infected with the virus will develop symptoms 4 to 11 days after infection, up to 21 days after exposure. This implies, in London’s case, that he was infected before the passage to Ontong Java—before September 10, 1908, the day the Snark left Ysabel. Today Ross River Virus is still endemic in this region. Usually the onset of the disease is sudden, symmetrically affecting the fingers, toes, ankles, wrists, knees and elbows with pain, swelling and dysfunction. The rash occurs in about half of the cases, with small red spots, sometimes purplish or like bruises, or small blisters similar to chicken pox. Charmian London compared it with little chilblains. The arthritic symptoms may last about six months as in London’s case. In the end, the disease heals without special therapy. After a few months, London’s Ross River disease was gone. On the way back to California, London and Charmian had a stop-over in Guayaquil, Ecuador, including an excursion of several days to Quito. He was feeling much better. The cancellation of the voyage was not essential, but considering his apprehension that he could lose his ability to write, the decision may be understood: “The only way I could have continued [the voyage] would have been by being lashed in my bunk, for in my helpless condition, unable to clutch with my hands, I could not have moved about on a small rolling boat. Also, I said to myself that while there were many boats and many voyages, I had but one pair of hands and one set of toe-nails” (338).
Conclusion

We can safely assume that London’s diagnosis in 1908 was Ross River Disease, a viral infection due to a mosquito bite in the Solomon Islands. His symptoms were typical in regard to joint affection and rash as to the disease’s limited course. It is less safe to assume that the unusually heavy skin rash on London’s hands was caused additionally by mercuric chloride, formerly named corrosive sublimate. For weeks, London did use the substance in toxic quantities, to treat Solomon sores on the Snark (“fighting fire with fire!”). Also treating his crew, most of the sublimate passed through his own hands, which additionally were stressed by continuous helming and setting sail. Corrosive Sublimate is readily absorbed by the body. The kidneys are the primary target organ where inorganic mercury is taken up, accumulated, and expresses toxicity (K. Zalups, 2000).

We can conclude, then, that London’s final uremia was due to toxic nephropathy caused by mercuric chloride.

Notes

3 “It is time for us to give something back, this is what the Lapita Voyage is about.” Lapita Voyage (2009) http://www.lapitavoyage.org/en/lapita_voyage.html
5 Sometimes Jack London called them “yaws”. But these, in contrast to local defects (ulcers), are painless nodules, which enlarge and become warty.
6 Similar 2008 Dave Kerr (regular contributor to Cruising Helmsman, Australia), about Solomon Islands: “We met several cruisers with badly infected tropical ulcers.” And the Australian Travel Health Fact Sheet Solomon Islands 2011: “Parasitic infections & tropical ulcers are a concern in both countries.”
7 Oxford Textbook of Medicine Vol. 1. ed. by David Warrell, Timothy M. Cox, John Firth, Edward J. Benz Jr. Fourth Edition (2005): 457-458: (Erysipelas). This is an acute inflammation of the skin with lymphatic involvement. The streptococci are localized in the dermis and hypodermis. . . Cellulitis is commonly caused by streptococci and Staphylococcus aureus. . . Streptococcal cellulitis differs from erysipelas in that the lesion is not raised and the demarcation between affected and unaffected skin is indistinct. . . it may result from infection of burns, mild trauma, or surgical wounds.
8 New Zealand Dermatological Society: “Almost all erysipelas is caused by Group A beta haemolytic streptococci (Streptococcus pyogenes).”
http://www.dermnetnz.org/bacterial/erysipelas.html
10 Heinz Lüllmann, Klaus Mohr, Lutz Hein: Pharmakologie und Toxikologie [Pharmacology and Toxicology]. 2010 Thieme, 563. [1st English edition 1973]
12 South Sea Tales (New York: Macmillan, 1911).
14 Charmian Kittredge London, loc. cit., 456, 465
16 Very similar: Barmah Forest disease, only in Australia
19 Log of the Snark, p. 448.
Jack London’s Sympathetic View of Korea and Koreans

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Jack London made two trips to East Asia and was the only Western journalist to accompany the Japanese army for the entire time that it marched north through Korea to meet Russian forces in southern Manchuria in the winter and spring of 1904 at the outset of the Russo-Japanese War. London’s lengthy feature articles depict little military action, but give a rich description of the land and people that he encountered in his sojourn through Korea and Manchuria. London’s writing is by far the best contemporary coverage of this war and he was probably one of the best-read essayists on Asian affairs at the time. London shows respect and affection for Chinese workmanship and Japanese modernity and meticulousness, but he has mixed reactions for Koreans.

While London shows deep sympathy for the common Korean whom he suggests has been deeply exploited by their nations yangban aristocracy, he also criticizes what he deemed “weak” and “cowardly” about Koreans. Many writers, including prominent Korean scholars, have criticized London for his alleged racial bias, his contempt for Korea and Koreans—and today London is largely shunned in Korea. This criticism is unfair. A closer look at London’s writing and photography shows genuine warmth and sympathy for Koreans in much the same manner as he does for the people of East London in his People of the Abyss.

Many modern writers have roundly criticized London for what they consider his harshly derogatory treatment of Korea in his Russo-Japanese letters and dispatches. In The Call, Korean scholar Young-Hee Chang of Sogang University provides a good example of these attacks on London: “London seemed to harbor a deep contempt for Asians, especially for Koreans. He made numerous disrespectful—to say the least—comments about Koreans…His assessments of Korean characteristics is most pejorative and derogatory, compared to that of the Japanese and the Chinese…London, who was usually quite sensitive to the plight of underdogs, didn't exhibit any pity or sympathetic feelings towards the Korean people victimized by the war—a war between two strong nations they were involved in against their own will” (Chang 10).

London’s comments especially when taken out of context, give credence to Chang’s anger: “The Korean is the perfect type of inefficiency—of utter worthlessness…A stalwart race are the Koreans, well muscled and towering above their masters, the [Japanese] ‘dwarfs’ who conquered them of old time and who look upon them today with the eyes of possession. But the Korean is spiritless…The Korean has fine features, but the vital lack in his face is strength. He is soft and effeminate when compared with the strong breeds, and whatever strength has been his in the past has been worked out of him by centuries of corrupt government. He is certainly the most inefficient of human creatures, lacking all initiative and achievement, and the only thing in which he shines is the carrying of burdens on his back. As a draught animal and packhorse he is a success” (Metraux 297, 199).

When London reached southern Manchuria with Japanese forces in June 1904, he also wrote: “War today is the final arbiter in the affairs of men, and it is as yet the final test of the worthwhileness of peoples. Tested thus, the Korean fails. He lacks the nerve to remain when a strange army crosses his land. The few goods and chattels he may have managed to accumulate he puts on his back, along with his doors and windows, and away he heads for his mountain fastness. Later he may return sans goods…impelled by insatiable curiosity for a “look see.” But it is curiosity merely—a timid, deer-like curiosity. He is prepared to bound away on his long legs at the first hint of danger or trouble…[Koreans] have splendid vigor and fine bodies, but they are accustomed to being beaten and robbed without protest or resistance by every foreigner who enters their country” (Metraux 294-95).

London’s writing here is hardly unique. Other Western writers visiting Korea in this period reported very similar impressions of the “Hermit Kingdom.” Isabella Bird, the intrepid British travel writer who spent the latter part of the 19th century traveling through northern China, Japan, Korea and parts of Siberia, came up with very similar opinions about Korea: “I sat amidst the dirt, squalor, rubbish, and odd-and-endism of the inn yard before starting, surrounded by an apathetic, dirty, vacant-looking, openmouth crowd steeped in poverty. I felt Korea to be hopeless, helpless, pitiable, piteous, a mere shuttlecock of certain great powers, and that there is no hope for her population of twelve or fourteen millions” (Bird 330).

Some of London’s most compelling articles and photographs from the war are of Korean refugees, dressed in white, showing the devastating effects of the war on Korean civilians. One is particularly impressed by a very poignant description of a young girl, perhaps no more than six or seven, carrying her younger sister on her back, a bandage covering the younger girl’s head, a terrible worried expression on her face. London’s photography—mostly published in American newspapers along with his articles—is especially moving.
Bird, like London, placed the blame for Korea’s poverty and the obvious insecurity of its people on their allegedly corrupt and menacing aristocratic yangban class. London and Bird go to great lengths to show how the yangban ruthlessly exploited the commoners, always cheating them out of any wealth they might acquire. They also persecuted the common people, depriving them of any rights and pleasures they might have in life. Bird noted that when she crossed the border from northern Korea into Russian eastern Siberia, she encountered Korean refugee communities that lacked any yangban presence. Here she said the Korean peasantry thrived in relative freedom. They lived in clean prosperous villages and had an air of confidence, pride and security that both she and London found totally lacking in Korea proper. She writes: “Korea is not necessarily a poor country. Her resources are underdeveloped, not exhausted….On the other hand, the energies of her people lie dormant. The upper classes, paralyzed by the most absurd of social obligations, spend their lives in inactivity [exploiting the masses]. To the middle-class no careers are open; there are no skilled occupations to which they can turn their energies. The lower classes know…it is necessary to keep the wolf from their door for very sufficient reasons … [The combination of corrupt aristocracy and ruthless foreigners]…have done their best to reduce Korea to that condition of resourcelessness and dreary squalor in which I formed my first impression of her. Nevertheless, the resources are there, in her seas, her soil, and her hardy population (336).

Like Bird, London, who was very familiar with Bird’s prose, wrote about Koreans’ material poverty. He disliked the yangban aristocracy, which he claimed to be ruthless in its suppression of the Korean people. He says the well-behaved Japanese military would pay for food and supplies acquired from a Korean village. The local yangban, Pak Choon-song, collected the money from the Japanese on behalf of the villagers, but only gave them a quarter of the take, pocketing the rest for himself. London went to Pak’s house and angrily accused him of abusing the peasants, noting that the misery, poverty and insecurity of the common Korean.

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London’s comments on Koreans may sound unkind, but they are an accurate reflection of what he saw and experienced. It is the same with his photography. London readily captured the poverty of the land and the misery of its people. There is little difference between his depiction of Korea and Koreans and that of Bird and the few other Western or Japanese writers who traveled through Korea at this time. Life at that time was indeed wretched for all but the wealthiest Koreans. It is ironic that London is praised for his exposure of the miserable state of life in parts of London, then said to be the wealthiest city in the world, but is condemned as a racist by so many for saying much the same about contemporary Korea.

London was very sensitive to Koreans’ plight. Having read Bird’s book before going to Korea, he knew what to expect. Yet he reaches her same conclusions as to the cause of the misery of the Koreans, their exploitation by the dominant aristocratic class. His conclusions are his own, based on his own experiences. The common man in Korea led a miserable and exploited life; Seoul and other towns throughout Korea were impoverished and filthy; the commoner in Korea had a deep ingrained sense of insecurity that caused him or her to flee any potential trouble. London’s depictions of Korea are as honest and forthright as those of the downtrodden folks of London’s East End.

London once again a decade later brings us his views of Korea in one of his last major novels, The Star Rover. Several critics, noting London’s more positive views of Korea and Koreans in this novel, feel that London has reversed his earlier views of Korea. But while London does indeed demonstrate a more positive view of Korean history and culture, especially in the virtuous character of the heroine, Lady Om, we also get the same kind of scathing view of Korea’s aristocracy we got a decade earlier.

Many critics have depicted London as racist, but while he may have harbored some racist views prevalent in the West at the turn of the last century, he also harbored a great deal of respect for all the people of East Asia. He very accurately depicted their hardships and misery, but was not necessarily trying to single them out for criticism.

Works Cited


