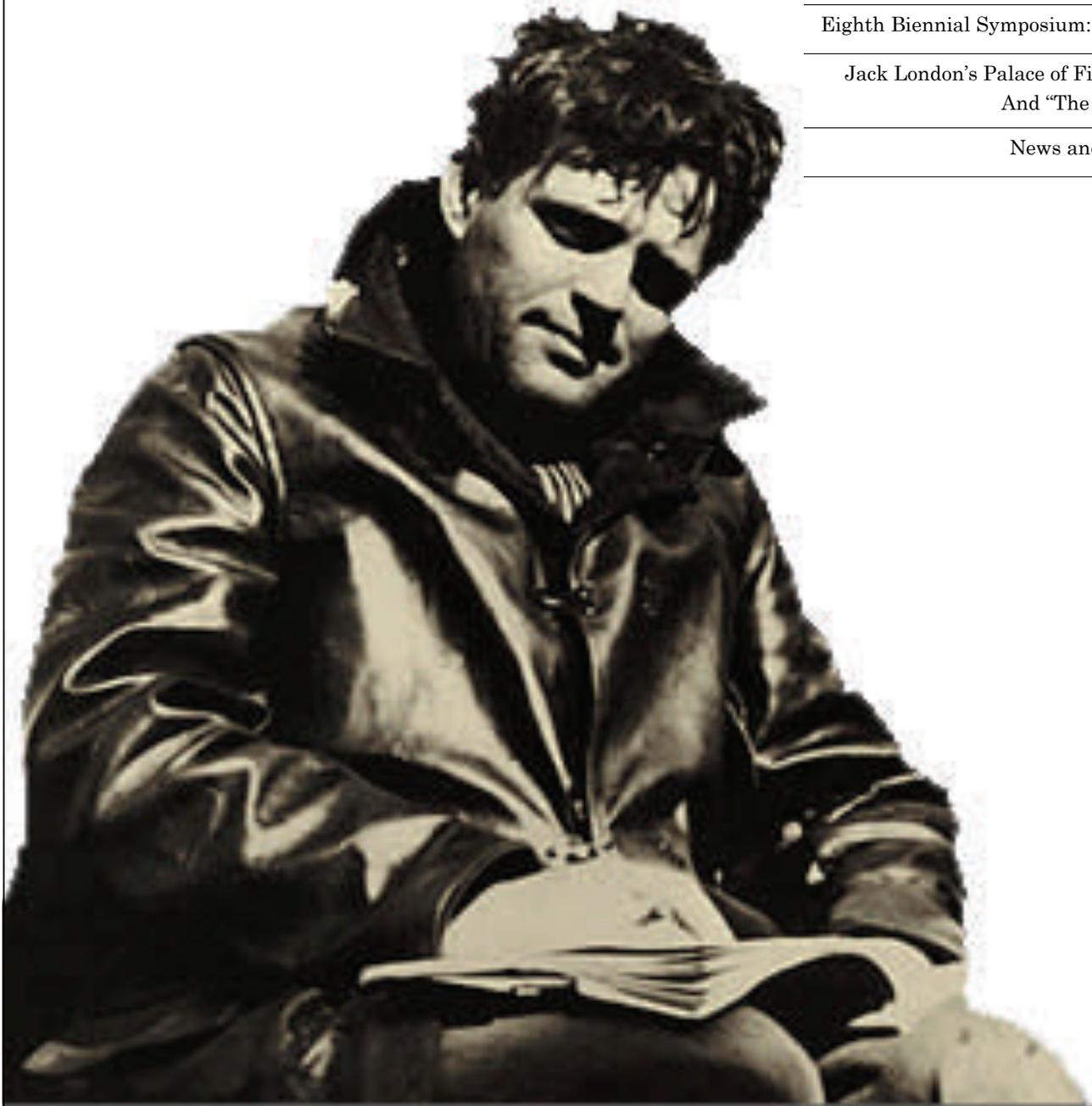


# THE CALL

The Magazine of the Jack London Society

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## A REMEMBRANCE OF WINNIE

GARY RIEDL

No doubt all who knew Winnie will instantly recall with a pang of loss her warm reception not only to her friends but to all visitors, particularly those whose research interests led them to seek out the wonderful resources available in the JL Research Center in Glen Ellen. As we all know, the center was put together by Winnie and her beloved Russ, demonstrating their combined efforts to collect and organize everything they could find on Jack London. In the process, Winnie became an authority on London, his home, his family, his travels, and his place in the literature of California and the world. Everyone who visited the little Research Center will recall a sense of surprise at the vast amount of information—all of it useful to people trying to understand an author whose work has fluctuated between world-wide accolades and nominal acceptance. Thanks though in no small part to the efforts of the Winnie and Russ, over the last 30 years London has emerged as the important artist he knew himself to be.

Winnie lived and worked in an atmosphere of friendly clutter, surrounded by books (many of them first editions); miscellaneous artifacts; file cabinets packed with information; and photos of (and by) Jack, Russ, and friends—all illustrative of the responsibility she accepted as a legacy after Russ passed away in 1993.

But there was a lot more. Winnie knew local Glen Ellen folks of course, but she had intimate connections with people all over the world—from the East coast of America, to Japan, to Russia, and to many points in between. I have never met anyone who didn't love Winnie or benefit from the material she oversaw at the research center. She treated everyone with kindness and solicitude. I recall one summer in Glen Ellen particularly. My colleague, Tom Tietze, and I were gathering material for a paper on Jack's ideas of socialism. Almost every day for five weeks we occupied the back room of the bookstore, poring over Russ's thousands of note cards and his collected materials on London. Winnie would check on us often during the day, offering suggestions of where to look and generally serving as a font of information. About lunch time, she would often maternally remind us that there was food and beer in the refrigerator.

Another aspect of Winnie's casual kindness was reflected in the very architecture of the JL Research Center itself. It jutted out—with its own separate entrance—from the wildly chaotic and consequently wonderful interior of the bookstore. The place was purposely built for the comfort of Becky London, whom Winnie and Russ had lovingly taken in and housed for the last years of Becky's life. This was perhaps the finest act of the many, many acts of kindness she and Russ extended to everyone in the London field.

More than sweet kindness and genuine warmth, Winnie also brandished a keen wit and a mind that embraced a thorough knowledge of the literature of the era, London's contemporaries, and the contents of the files that lay at her fingertips.

Many people had the great good fortune to know Winnie better than I, but everyone who knew her at all felt very special. I, along with hundreds of others, will sorely miss her.

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## WINIFRED KINGMAN DIES AT AGE 85

DALE WALKER



Winifred Eileen Kingman, widow of London biographer and authority Russ Kingman, died in San Rafael, California, on September 21, 2006, at age 85.

Mrs. Kingman, a beloved figure among Jack London scholars and aficionados, continued to operate the Jack London Bookstore in Glen Ellen (est. 1971) after her husband's death in November, 1993. The store on Arnold Drive in Glen Ellen, near the entrance to the Jack London State Park, closed in 2004.

Mrs. Kingman was a native of Ontario, Canada, whose family settled in northern California in 1925. She graduated from Alameda High School in 1939, married Russ Kingman, a Navy petty officer, in 1941, and accompanied him on his assignments, from Philadelphia to Guam, during WW2 and his subsequent Naval service. After years in Florida and Texas, during which time her husband earned a master's degree in

theology and served as a Baptist minister, the Kingmans returned to California where Russ engaged in church work and public relations and became Executive Director of the Jack London Square Association in Oakland — the origin of their abiding interest in London's life and literary works.

The Kingmans established the Jack London Foundation in 1976 to promote research in London studies and welcomed students, scholars, and writers to use their extensive archives in the Foundation headquarters at the bookstore.

Mrs. Kingman designated as her favorite charities local animal shelters and the Jack London Foundation. The Foundation remains active under the direction of Rudy Ciuca and Joe Lawrence at P.O. Box 337, Glen Ellen, CA 95442.

## RECENT LONDON PUBLICATIONS

DALE WALKER

Yukon Territory journalist Dick North has chronicled his search for the Yukon cabin Jack London occupied in the winter of 1897 in *Sailor on Horseshoes: Tracking Jack London's Northern Trail*. The book was published in July by Harbour Books (P.O. Box 219, Madeira Park, B.C. V0N 2H0; ISBN 978-1-55017-384.0) as a trade paperback priced at \$19.95.

North not only solves the mystery of the whereabouts of the London cabin but traces to the Yukon settlement of Mayo the slab of wood from the cabin on which London wrote his name and identified himself as "miner, author." North provides a succinct recounting of London's gold rush year in the Yukon and introduces a possible photographic image of London, taken at Sheep Camp on the Chilkoot trail in September, 1897, by pioneer cameraman, Frank LaRoche.

A publisher called Leonaur has issued a three-volume set of London's science-fiction & fantasy works under the general title, *The Collected Science Fiction & Fantasy of Jack London* with the separate books as follows: Vol 1: *Before Adam & Other Stories*; Vol 2: *The Iron Heel & Other Stories*; and Vol 3: *The Star Rover &*

*Other Stories*. These are well-printed volumes in large-size paperbacks, unfortunately with no supporting material (Introductions, Forewords, etc.) added. An easy way to order is through amazon.com, which charges \$15.99 per volume.

An excellent new collection of London stories is *Tales of Cannibals & Headhunters: Nine South Sea Stories by America's Master of Adventure*, edited by Gary Riedl and Thomas R. Tietze and published by the University of New Mexico Press. This is also a trade paper edition and is priced at \$18.96 through Amazon. It is an extensively and expertly annotated, introduced and afterworded collection of nine of London's South Sea stories.

A new printing of *Martin Eden*, annotated by Dennis Hensley, English professor at Taylor University in Fort Wayne, IN., has been published by Taylor University Press. The 603-page large-size paperback is available at \$23 postpaid from Dennis Hensley, 6824 Kanata Court, Fort Wayne, IN 46815-6388.

## EIGHTH BIENNIAL SYMPOSIUM: ALASKA

### DONNA CAMPBELL

Twenty conference participants and assorted guests met on June 30-July 7, 2006 for the eighth biennial Jack London Society Symposium, which was held aboard the *Mercury* during its week-long cruise to Alaska. Conference activities, including an informal gathering, a reception, and the business meeting, took place from June 30 through July 2.

The conference segment of the cruise included twelve presentations, some focusing on the Klondike novels and stories and others on South Seas fiction and biography. In “*Burning Daylight* and the Business of Redemption” Donna Campbell discussed *Burning Daylight* as a business novel and showed clips from the 1928 silent film adaptation of the work, while Kenneth Brandt, in “The Problem of Agency in *Burning Daylight*,” analyzed London’s sophisticated use of landscape imagery and point of view to represent the relationship between Dede Mason and *Burning Daylight* in the book. Substituting for Gayle Labor, Earle Labor presented a paper on “Teaching ‘To Build a Fire,’” showing how well it worked when taught in tandem with a parody of the story, “To Distill Some Water,” which was written by a NASA scientist. Sanford E. Marovitz’s “‘The Sun-Dog Trail’: A Stereoscopic View” compared London’s story to its original source, “On a Frozen Trail,” a newspaper clipping recently discovered in London’s notebooks. In “Jack London’s Palace of Fine Arts and ‘The Hussy,’” Joe Johnson showed that this often-dismissed story is actually one of London’s paired stories; written a few days before “The Red One,” “The Hussy” strikingly anticipates its plot and themes.

Research and biography were also well represented. Sara S. Hodson’s “The Call of the Files” provided a wealth of research information about the collection at the Huntington Library, and Hodson illustrated her talk



#### HUBBARD GLACIER

with slides of rare pictures and documents. A forum on “Twain and London: Recent Biography” featured London biographer Earle Labor and Twain biographer Lawrence Berkove discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the biographies on each figure as well as the pitfalls and discoveries that attend writing a biography. In a later session, Berkove described London’s scientific beliefs in “What Kind of Darwinian was London?” Marinelle Ringer drew on theories of autobiography in analyzing *John Barleycorn* in “‘In After-Wisdom Spoken’: *John Barleycorn*.” Finally, London’s time in Hawai’i was the subject of an illustrated presentation by Tammi Andersland and John Lydgate of the Kaua’i Historical Society, who provided insights into the real-life figures whom London had learned about or known while there, among them the real-life Ko’olau, the naturalist Wilhelm Hillebrand, and John Lydgate’s grandfather, the Reverend Lydgate, whom London visited during one of his visits to the islands.

At the Advisory Board meeting, Kenneth Brandt was

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*Eighth Biennial Symposium: Alaska, continued from page 4*

nominated to a position on the Executive Board and Tom Tietze was nominated as Vice President. During the business meeting on July 2, at which Jeanne Campbell Reesman presided, the following items of business were discussed:

- *The Call* will now be edited by Kenneth Brandt and published by the Savannah School of Art and Design, which will be giving a new look to the publication.
- The Jack London Society will look into helping to place a plaque in the area designated in London's honor on Kauai.
- The former *Dreiser Studies* has become the journal *Studies in American Naturalism*. Also, a new publication, *American Naturalism Newsletter*, will be published twice a year with announcements, calls for papers, and bibliographic information for the various realist/naturalist author societies.

The conference concluded with hearty thanks to

## JACK LONDON'S PALACE OF FINE ARTS AND "THE HUSSY"

JOE JOHNSON

While the title story in the collection *The Red One* has received a fair amount of attention from London scholars, its predecessor in composition, "The Hussy," has received little to none. Its placement immediately following the more celebrated story in that volume may have contributed to its neglect. Indeed, at first glance it might appear that London has resorted to reusing some of the plot elements of "The Red One." In both stories a white western male is a racial and cultural outsider in a dangerous and disease ridden foreign land, and is loved by an indigenous woman who dies, defying societal dictates, to lead him to what he wants. For Bassett it is the Red One, and for Julian Jones in "The Hussy" it is gold.

The shared plot elements, however, may be less an indication of lack of originality than they are an indication of London's ability to compose dissimilar or opposing variations on the same theme even as he recycles ideas. For example, two earlier works, *The Call of the Wild* and *White Fang*, use a common plot device:

Jeanne Campbell Reesman for making this conference a reality.

After the symposium activities concluded, many participants took advantage of the shore excursions in Juneau, Skagway, and Ketchikan to explore wilderness areas and glaciers as well as such London-related locales as the Chilkoot Trail and the site of the now-abandoned Gold Rush town of Dyea. Several also took the excursion train on the White Pass and Yukon Railway, built in 1898 shortly after London left the Yukon, which on its trip to the summit affords excellent views of Dead Horse Gulch and the Yukon Trail.



"HE SAW DEDE COMING OUT OF THE DOOR"

Illustration from *Burning Daylight* (1910)

Buck is rescued by John Thornton and White Fang by Weedon Scott, both at

moments of great peril. The trajectories and ultimate effect of the stories are in opposite directions, though, from the domestic to the wild and vice versa.

Similarly, shared plot elements of "The Red One" and "The Hussy" provide a framework for stories that dramatically oppose one another. While Bassett's scientific pursuit of knowledge leads him to the "Medusa, Truth," and death, the nonintellectual Jones' passivity and lack of self-awareness allow him to be led to safety and domesticity. These differences are apparent in the stories' opening lines. In "The Red One" the reader is immediately brought into Bassett's sensory world: "There it was! The abrupt liberation of sound, as he timed it with his watch, Bassett likened to the trump of

-Continued on page 6

*“The Hussy,” continued from page 6*

an archangel” (1). The beginning of “The Hussy” takes the reader in an entirely different direction:

There are some stories that have to be true – the sort that cannot be fabricated by a ready fiction-reckoner. And by the same token there are some men with stories to tell who cannot be doubted. Such a man was Julian Jones, although I doubt the average reader of this will believe the story Julian Jones told me. Nevertheless I believe it. (51)

We are not simply immersed in a story as we are with “The Red One.” We are reminded that it is fiction, a work of art, a man-made illusion or reconstruction of reality. It is no coincidence then that Jones tells his tale at the Palace of Fine Arts in San Francisco during the Panama-Pacific International Exposition.

This World’s Fair ran for most of 1915 in the area now known as the Marina District, its grounds constructed on landfill (in part using wreckage from the 1906 earthquake) over what was originally marshland.

The attraction to gold is what brings the narrator and Jones together, but in keeping with London’s theme, they meet viewing facsimiles of gold nuggets, which are on display at the Fair, a man-made environment rather than a natural one. While viewing a replica of the largest nugget ever discovered, Jones tells the narrator of the existence of a nugget “bigger than the whole blamed exhibit of them put together, and then some” (54). As Jones narrates his story, which focuses on a nugget in the upper reaches of the Andes, his wife Sarah focuses her vision on The Tower of Jewels, the tallest and one of the most celebrated structures at the Fair. Decorated with over 100,000 pieces of cut glass of various colors and lit by electricity at night, this structure is the antithesis of the Dark Tower of Browning’s Childe Roland referred to by London in “The Red One.” Sarah’s periodic interjection, “The hussy!,” will undermine the reader’s immersion in Jones’ tale, shifting attention back to the Palace of Fine Arts, and thus amplifying the narrator’s insistence on identifying it as a story. This insistence is reinforced by clues that the

narrator is, in fact, London himself as a character in his own story.

In talking about his first day on the job as a railroad engineer in Ecuador, Jones describes a world very different from that of the Fair. A ferryboat sinks due to exploding boilers, and an angry mob responds to the loss of transportation by shoving into the water on top of the sunken ferry “every flat-car, box-car, coach, asthmatic switch engine, and even hand-car” (61). London symbolically inverts the construction of the Fair: humans throw the products of civilization into the water after technology fails instead of building landfills after nature erupts.

This different relationship with nature is apparent in

**If Vahna’s symbolic association with moonlight and night conforms to Jones’ need to hide unacceptable romantic or sexual feelings for her, sunlight now threatens exposure and punishment.**

the manner in which Jones meets the “hussy,” the Indian woman named Vahna.

Although working on a run “so dangerous the trains didn’t run nights” (59), Jones and his fireman are moving a locomotive on a moonlit night but are forced to suddenly stop upon seeing a woman on the tracks, who

“stood there no more afraid than nothing, her arms spread out to stop the engine. She was wearing a slimsy sort of garment wrapped around her that wasn’t cloth but ocelot skins, soft and dappled, and silky. It was all she had on. . . . Her eyes were shut tight. She was trembling that violent that you could see it by the moonlight. And she was barefoot, too.” (66 – 67)

In the contest, then, between a locomotive and a bare-foot woman in a trance with outstretched arms, it is the woman who wins.

Jones is clearly attracted to Vahna, who, garbed in ocelot skins, is associated with the animal, in contrast to Sarah, whom London repeatedly describes as bird-like. Sarah’s interjections of “The hussy!” not only sexualize Vahna, but also provide an ironic reference to Sarah herself in the role of housewife, as made clear in the description of her as “pert as a bird” (77). London’s use of the name “Vahna,” possibly a variation on “Venus,” and also the word for gold in Khmer, is

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*"The Hussy," continued from page 7*

highly suggestive. In "The Hussy," Vahna's arms outstretched to embrace a locomotive combines sexual symbolism with the notion that, as Jones puts it, "Maybe she was trying to suicide," and prefigures her pose when killed (68). London enriches this symbol by using it in conjunction with that of decapitation used in "The Red One." Earlier in the story, Jones comments:

"the conductor and the Superintendent of Rolling Stock (who happened to be running down to Duran to meet his bride) had their heads knifed off by the Spiggoties and paraded around on poles." (63)

Synergy between intellect and passion is no more allowed than the marriage of male and female. Instead, the penetration of the head by a pole, an advertisement of death, takes the place of the potentially fruitful penetration of sexual union.

This symbolism underlies another possible interpretation of

**The nugget's symbolism and the narrator's eagerness to pursue it suggest that the art of the storyteller, and art in general, have the potential to give us a glimpse of the natural and bring a hint of the subconscious to light.**

Vahna as a diminutive form of Vanessa, a name devised by Jonathan Swift by rearranging parts of Hester Vanhomrigh's name. While London's theme of the natural vs. the man-made is reflected in the "manufactured" origin of the name, Vanessa is also a genus of butterfly, evoking the image of a pinned creature with spread wings, and recalling Bassett's initial quest in "The Red One." Bassett needs to penetrate the butterfly he seeks with "a dose of shot" from a "twenty-gauge shotgun" (13). The "naturalist" ironically kills the natural in order to study it, in the same way the "devil-devil doctor" Ngurn eventually severs and shrinks Bassett's head in order to share "wisdom" with it. A man not enchanted with women, Bassett is instead lured by the sound of the Red One, which is made by a giant king-post that "like a battering ram . . . could be driven end-onward against the mighty, red-iridescent sphere" (37). The sexual imagery mirrors Bassett's desire to penetrate the secrets of the Red One, but also exposes that desire as a substitute for interest in a real woman. Balatta, being "merely a woman, a woman

merely and only and undesired," is of use only as a means of getting to the Red One (49). Similarly, Vahna (who comments that "gold is the love of your heart, and women don't count much") is Jones' means of getting to the nugget (79). The nugget's egg shape suggests a shared sexual symbolism with the Red One.

Vahna agrees to lead Jones to the nugget in the hope that he will stay rather than return to Sarah, and the two travel at night for a week to avoid detection. But to reach the final peak they travel in daylight, and are discovered and attacked. Light and darkness have reversed roles since the beginning of Jones' story when safety required traveling by daylight. If Vahna's symbolic association with moonlight and night conforms to Jones' need to hide unacceptable romantic or sexual feelings for her, sunlight now threatens exposure and punishment.

An older authority figure with an "eagle beak" and

a backing of younger men, kills Vahna, "spread-eagled on top of the nugget" with a "thin

sharp sliver" of a knife, while Jones is thrown from the peak "like so much carrion" (81-2). The butterfly is pinned, crucified by an eagle defending the golden egg, while Jones survives his fall and awaits a future with the bird-woman Sarah since, as he puts it, "the buzzards didn't get me either" (82).

Jones, who had been pierced in the skull in the fight on the nugget, finds that his "head was queer" (83). Unlike Bassett, Jones keeps his head but is "a man without a mind" who remembers nothing of his time in Ecuador (85). He eventually is found and returns home to Nebraska to marry Sarah, but two years later, on a moonlight evening, Sarah hands him a piece of gold from the nugget she has found in his trunk. After Jones sits "looking at the chip in the moonlight," he can recall what happened in Ecuador, but nothing of what came later: "When Sarah said I was her husband, I wouldn't listen to her. Took all her family and the preacher that'd married us to convince me" (84). The sunlit conscious and moonlit unconscious in Jones can switch roles but not integrate. This is more than a partial psy-

*-Continued on page 8*

*“The Hussy,” continued from page 7*

chological “decapitation,” though. In either state of amnesia, the part of his life forgotten – either his time in Ecuador or his marriage to Sarah – is no more than a story he has been told. If fiction is a taming or domestication of reality, Jones’ domestication is nearly complete.

With wonderful irony, London as narrator emphasizes his role as storyteller by asking if the premise of “The Red One” could also be the premise of this story: “How do you account for such a mass of gold being there?” I queried of Julian Jones. ‘A solid-gold meteor that fell out of the sky?’” (86). Jones replies that the Indians brought the contents of what was to become the giant nugget in pieces: “And then of course melted all the gold, or welded it, or smelted it, all into one piece” (87).

The explanation of the size of the nugget accords it primary symbolic importance. It is the man-made as opposed to the natural, and Jones’ preference for it over Vahna is the parallel of Bassett’s preference for the Red One. Unlike Bassett who manufactures a taboo to avoid marriage to Balatta, Jones accepts the taboo of involvement with Vahna, and the substitute of the nugget is all he will allow himself to try to attain in his relationship with her. And Vahna receives nothing more intimate from Jones than her symbolic encounter with his locomotive engine. Perhaps it is only appropriate, though, that in a story that calls attention to itself as a story the characters’ encounters be of the symbolic kind.

The “melted” and “welded” construction of the nugget also symbolically suggests the ideal of psychological integration. High above ground, round and gold, it recalls the sun London associates with the conscious, while its guarded and camouflaged state simultaneously recalls the hidden subconscious. But the ability of the conscious and man-made to reach some accord with the subconscious and the natural is precisely what eludes both Bassett and Jones. Jones’ amnesia indicates the two realms are at war within him, while Bassett seeks escape from the latter realm, and thus from being human. He is a man for whom “human life had dwarfed to microscopic proportions,” (36) who desires the “intelligence of supermen” (48).

After hearing his tale the narrator agrees to finance the return trip to the nugget Jones desires, but the next day Jones and his wife have checked out of their hotel. The story ends with these lines:



Can Mrs. Jones have rushed him back and hidden him away in Nebraska? I remember that as we said good-by there was that in her smile that recalled the vulpine complacency of Mona Lisa, the Wise. (88)

While the portion of Jones’ life he can’t remember is a story he is told, it is now obvious that the portion he does remember will never be more than a story he tells. Sarah’s complacency and her earlier assertion of getting “so mortal weary,” suggest that Jones’ tale has been told before with the same outcome (56).

The nugget’s symbolism and the narrator’s eagerness to pursue it suggest that the art of the storyteller, and art in general, have the potential to give us a glimpse of the natural and bring a hint of the subconscious to light. The “vulpine” in the victorious Sarah is seen in the enigmatic smile of the Mona Lisa rather than the “serene face of the Medusa, Truth,” and accords her animal rather than bird-like status for the first time, while acknowledging the degree of understanding she has of her husband. The image of “Mona Lisa, the Wise” that concludes the story is the opposite of Bassett’s final vision in “The Red One” of the “artistic perfectness” of Ngurn’s “greatest piece of work,” Bassett’s own shrunken head. Wisdom is not to be confused with knowledge or with the illusion of perfection, and if gazing upon the Mona Lisa leaves us with unanswered questions, we can at least take comfort in knowing that our thoughts have not been turned to stone by “the Medusa, Truth.”

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# NEWS AND NOTES

## ALA Call for Papers Jack London Sessions at the American Literature Association Conference 24-27 May 2007, Boston MA

The Jack London Society invites proposals for papers addressing any aspect of London’s life and career for the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual American Literature Association Conference.

**Conference Information:** The American Literature Association’s 18<sup>th</sup> annual conference will meet at the Westin Copley Place in Boston on May 24-27, 2007 (Thursday through Sunday of Memorial Day weekend). For further information, consult the ALA website at [www.americanliterature.org](http://www.americanliterature.org).

**Location:** The Westin Copley Place  
10 Huntington Avenue  
Boston MA 02116-5798  
(617-262-9600)

**Conference Fee:** For those who pre-register before April 15, 2007: \$75 (\$25 for Graduate Students, Independent Scholars, and Retired Faculty). After April 15, the fees are \$85 and \$35.

**Submissions:** Proposals can be completed papers or 200-word abstracts that address any aspect of London’s life and career. Please send proposals via e-mail to Kenneth Brandt at [kbrandt@scad.edu](mailto:kbrandt@scad.edu) by January 12, 2007.

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