

Nature-Society Dialectics and Class Struggle in Selected Works of Jack London

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ABSTRACT: The production of nature literature in geography has proven to be a valuable analytical tool for several reasons, not least because it highlights Marx's dialectical concept of the metabolism of nature and society. Neil Smith's work in particular shows that the ideological function of nature in Western thought is that it collapses external nature into universal nature, thus abstracting and generalizing class interest. The purpose of this paper is twofold. The first and foremost purpose is to sharpen and clarify this literature by applying it to the tension in Jack London's literary oeuvre between his staunch socialism and his social Darwinism. Doing so helps tease out analytical distinctions between, for example, nature-society interaction and dialectics or between naturalism and materialism. The second purpose is to lend insight into this alleged contradiction in London's work. The fact that he tried to marry the ideas of Spencer and Marx is a normative contradiction, but ontologically it reflected a material conception of history characteristic of Engels more so than Marx. This is shown by relating London's familiar literature on wilderness adventure to his less familiar literature on Progressive Era socialism and, in some cases, bloody revolution. More specifically, the former genre is read as a spatial metaphor for the historical transition to capitalism, and the latter is read in terms of how the concept of "strength" in London's work becomes a proxy for "value." This enables an investigation into the ideological function of nature in London's literary corpus.

Keywords: production of nature, Jack London, naturalism, material conception of history, dialectics, metabolism

Introduction

Jack London's work is relevant to historical geography because the underlying structure of his narratives can shed light on the politics of the Progressive Era. His work ranges from well-known tales of wilderness adventure, to less well-known expositions of socialist politics infused with Social Darwinism, to early twentieth century poverty journalism. Much of his literature describes the spatiality of empire as a proxy for his particular "material conception of history."¹ London himself was implicated in the creation of that empire both materially and symbolically: as a sailor he participated in seal-hunting ventures near Japan, searched for what he considered "untouched" Indigenous populations in the South Pacific, and participated in the Klondike Gold Rush of the late 1890s. Most of his stories are informed by his ventures at the edge of empire, and invariably posit the enduring rule of natural law in all human affairs; he was an unflinching socialist who nevertheless situated value in nature. London's life and work wraps the spatiality of empire and the temporality of capitalism together in narrative form.

Academic treatment of London himself varies wildly. Biographer Earle Labor argues that his reputation as a sexist, racist, pugilistic, and plagiaristic drunk is a distortion of the "real" London.² Other renderings of London reverse that logic, arguing that he was "the most-read revolutionary Socialist in American history, agitating for violent overthrow of the government and

the assassination of political leaders – and he is remembered now for writing a cute story about a dog.”³ His unsavory views on race are well documented, and as a self-educated proletarian who enjoyed a meteoric rise to literary fame, his penchant for self-promotion and vanity are obvious in his work.⁴ However, this paper is not so interested in Jack London the person, but rather the material conception of history that made his work popular.⁵ He was deeply impressed with Herbert Spencer, but sought to use literature to show how Spencer’s philosophy would ultimately vindicate Marx. This putative contradiction has been at the center of critique of London’s work. Some have explained it as confusion on London’s part in that he “wrote better than he knew.”⁶ Others have argued that despite his revolutionary rhetoric he was intellectually conditioned by the petty bourgeois class he found himself in as a professional writer, or by the Taylorist fascination with efficiency of motion in a rapidly expanding industrial society.⁷ For his part, London said that early in his career he transitioned from a belief in Nietzschean individualism to socialism on account of his experience “tramping” across the United States.⁸

Yet another explanation is that perhaps his naturalism and his socialism are often seen as a contradiction in the context of efforts among twentieth-century western Marxists, such as Lukács, to rid Marxism of any and all naturalism.⁹ I think such efforts are entirely laudable, and in that sense London’s work embodies a *normative* contradiction. But *ontologically*, the contradiction is only between London and, for example, Lukács, but within London’s work I think it reflects the multiplicity of Marxist strains of thought. While London revered Marx, his work had a decidedly Engelsian bent, in the sense that it often conflated materialism and naturalism. Using naturalist philosophies toward socialist ends was much more commonplace in London’s time.¹⁰

Jonathan Berliner offers an interesting reading of London’s work towards resolving its central contradiction. He does this primarily by reading London’s depiction of material history and class struggle as “a dialectical one, with the social processes supported by the natural one.”¹¹ In short, London saw the brutalities of unbridled capitalism as physically shaping a proletariat he regularly termed the “abysmal brute,” which would pit a kind of primitive, “natural” strength against bourgeois strength towards an inevitable revolution. London saw the coming revolution as “violent and thoroughly rooted in biology.”¹² When read in light of Marx’s prediction that capitalism would turn “the worker into a crippled monstrosity” it is easy to read London’s work as dialectical.¹³ However, I argue that reading dialectics into London’s work becomes very questionable when read in light of the geographic literature on the “production of nature.” I situate my reading of London in this literature by using London’s discourse on “strength” as a proxy for “value.” Marxian dialectics understands use value as rooted in labor’s metabolism of humans and nature, but exchange value as an abstraction arising from the material condition of production known as capitalism. Exchange value fundamentally changes labor’s relation to nature, so while value may be rooted in both labor and nature, in capitalism it is rooted only in labor. Engels, on the other hand, was more directly Darwinian, and saw value even in capitalism as rooted in nature. By comparing London’s wilderness adventure literature with his explicitly socialist literature, I will argue that his conception of strength is more in line with Engels than Marx, and as such exemplifies what Neil Smith called the “ideology of nature.”¹⁴

This paper also adds to recent geographic literature in the domain of geohumanities, recognizing the novel as a “spatial event” that emerges “at the intersection of social practices and geographical contexts.”¹⁵ As such, it helps historicize the particular forms of produced nature in capitalism – particularly the frontier. This literary intervention foregrounds the frontier as a process of domination rather than a place that is constructed, and illustrates how frontiers are “projects in making geographical and temporal experience.”¹⁶ London’s work naturalized an imperial project that in fact had historically and culturally specific motivations.

The ensuing section reviews the production of nature literature in terms of how it understands nature-society dialectics in terms of Marx's concept of metabolism. The section transitions into a brief discussion of Neil Smith's meditations on the "ideology of nature" and how this relates to value. Section three begins with a discussion of London's short story "The Strength of the Strong" in order to establish strength as a proxy for value in his material conception of history. It then splits into two subsections, one on his work in the genre of wilderness adventure, and other on his work as a socialist agitator.¹⁷ Here I focus on his distinction between primitive and bourgeois strength, and how London's obsession with the return of primitive strength in socialist revolution evinces the "ideology of nature."

Dialectics and the production of nature

Noel Castree points out that while Marxists have long been opposed to naturalism, eco-Marxists have a strong naturalist bent.¹⁸ Eco-Marxist naturalism is often based on a reading of Marx that conflates naturalism and materialism. Ted Benton, for example, argues that Marx and Engels "thought of their work as naturalist and materialist," but that they did not extend their naturalism to the capitalist economy out of a need to distance themselves from physiocrats such as Malthus.¹⁹ Part of the reason for confusion is that materialism is sometimes thought of as a trans-historical causative force. This confusion is, to some degree, a consequence of Engels' need to connect Marx's posthumous work back to Darwinian evolution in order to translate them into the popular literature.²⁰ Geoff Mann argues that much of what is called Marxism today is actually Engelsian, and that Marx himself was much less committed to strict materialism.²¹

In *Dialectics of Nature*, Engels applied dialectics to the natural world thusly: With men [sic] we enter *history*. Animals also have history, that of their derivation and gradual evolution to their present position. This history, however, is made for them, and in so far as they themselves take part in it, this occurs without their knowledge or desire. On the other hand, the more that human beings become removed from animals in the narrower sense of the word, the more they make their own history consciously, the less becomes the influences of unforeseen effects and uncontrolled forces on this history...If, however, we apply this measure to human history, to that of even the most developed peoples of the present day, we find that there still exists here a colossal disproportion between the proposed aims and the results arrived at, that unforeseen effects predominate, and that the uncontrolled forces are far more powerful than those set into motion according to plan. And this cannot be otherwise as long as the most essential historical activity of men, the one which has raised them from bestiality to humanity and which forms the material foundation of all their other activities, namely the production of the requirements of life, that is to-day social production, is above all subject to the interplay of unintended effects from uncontrolled forces....And what is the result? Increasing overwork and increasing misery of the masses, and every ten years a great collapse. Darwin did not know what a bitter satire he wrote on mankind, and especially on his countrymen, when he showed that free competition, the struggle for existence, which the economists celebrate as the highest historical achievement, is the normal state of the *animal kingdom*.²²

Two things are of note here. First, Engels sees human history in terms of a separation from natural law, one that is instigated by the social relations of production. But what creates the human experience of misery, for Engels, is that this separation has not gone far enough, and in fact that

what Darwin accurately presaged was that an economy based on the self-regulating market was doomed to failure because it was based on the laws of the animal kingdom.²³ Second, while Engels' desire to transcend natural law is in line with Marx, his use of dialectics (or lack thereof) is not. Marx's description of the human relation to nature was based on the metaphor of metabolism largely absent in Engels' work, and in fact Marx never directly cites any particular causal agent of history.²⁴

In contrast, the production of nature literature understands nature-society dialectics in terms of Marx's concept of metabolism. The metaphor of metabolism has gained significant currency in recent years, because it captures the dialectics of nature and society more precisely than simply saying nature and society "interact."²⁵ In discussing the labor process, Marx states,

Labour is, first of all, a process between man [sic] and nature, a process by which man, through his own actions, mediates, regulates and controls the metabolism between himself and nature. He sets in motion the natural forces which belong to his own body, his arms, legs, head and hands, in order to appropriate the materials of nature in a form adapted to his own needs. Through this movement he acts upon external nature and changes it, and in this way he simultaneously changes his own nature.²⁶

In recognition of this, Smith argues that "elements of first nature...are subjected to the labor process and re-emerge to be the social matter of the second nature."²⁷ First nature is what Marx referred to as external nature – a nature prior to human contact that nobody has ever experienced. Second nature is the metabolic outcome of the human use of nature as both nature and humans change in form.

To see nature-society metabolism dialectically precludes the mistaken claim that Marx saw nature as the source of value as much as labor. When discussing the use of nature to create use-values, Marx states that across all societies labor "mediates the metabolism between man and nature, and therefore human life itself."²⁸ Marx says nature is a limiting factor, but this is in the creation of "real wealth," which derives only from use values. In a capitalist society, wealth derives from exchange values. Rather than overreacting to physiocrats, Marx was offering a materialist reading of history in which human labor metabolizes use value, which yields a pragmatic form of wealth. Another dialectical process further spirals out from there: money mediates the exchange of use values, leading to exchange value, which is an abstraction of material value. Labor is the source of value in a capitalist system, not universally across time.²⁹

Smith's production of nature thesis has been critiqued for re-inscribing nature-society dualisms by supposing that only under capitalism is second nature produced.³⁰ As Michael Ekers and Alex Loftus point out, however, Smith argues that second nature has always been produced metabolically, but that the *form* of this production changed under capitalism. They argue that "the key is to historicize the specific forms that the making of nature takes, and to be able to do this in geographically situated ways."³¹ Smith's work details not only the production of nature, but also the production of space itself under capitalism, arguing that "the romanticization of Nineteenth Century America was a direct response to the successful objectification of nature in the labor process."³² By this he means that the imperialist expansion into peripheral regions, such as the very Klondike Gold Rush in which London participated, was driven by a material reality – the capitalist growth imperative. However, it had to be disguised as something driven by ideational motives, such as the triumph of the spirit showcased in *The Call of the Wild*.³³ Such idealist accounts by their nature abstract and universalize class interest, which for Smith is the

very definition of ideology. Romantic literary tales such as *The Call of the Wild* thus, on one level, serve an obvious ideological function with very material consequences: the capitalist production of space otherwise known as the “frontier.”

But on another level, narratives that abstract material realities into idealist motives are based on what Smith calls the “ideology of nature,” which is a conflation of “external” and “universal” nature.³⁴ External nature refers to non-human nature, while universal nature refers to there being a “natural” order of things. What is included in universal nature varies from materialism to naturalism to psychoanalysis to metaphysics. Smith argues that westward expansion across North America involved discourses of conquest, which extended external nature into universal nature. In other words, universal nature—a broad abstraction of the “order of things”—arises out of material practice, and comes to mean that social relations are guided by a foundational ontology indistinguishable from ecological laws. This is how materialist explanations come to be misunderstood as naturalist. Quite apart from suggesting that only under capitalism is nature produced, Smith was critiquing this very notion in Alfred Schmidt’s reading of Marx.³⁵ Smith argues that Schmidt assumes universal nature as anything prior to the bourgeois era. This non-dialectical reading of history assigns to nature its own metaphysical existence independent of its *metabolic* relations with humans. Per Smith, Engels’ very attempt to distil a dialectics of nature itself in *Dialectics of Nature* commits the same false assumption.³⁶

Jack London’s “The Strength of the Strong”

Characteristic of Schmidt’s readings of Marx, discussed above, London’s narratives promote a clear sense of material foundation to history constituted by natural law. It is a historical ontology, which recognizes rupture, but nevertheless presumes that if nature creates value at any point in history, it remains a source of value at any point thereafter. While London could not have been influenced by Schmidt, he did read Marx, Spencer, and Darwin, and almost certainly Engels.³⁷

In 1914 London penned a short story called “The Strength of the Strong,” which serves as one of the clearest parables for what London saw as the evolution of civil society out of the state of nature.³⁸ The story is set in a mythical, pre-modern land populated by warring fish-eaters and meat-eaters. The former exist only as an aggregate of in-fighting families with no social structure beyond the family unit. Eventually they are attacked and driven to a new valley by the meat-eaters. From this event they decide that their strength exists in the creation of a set of rules whereby they create law, government (a chief), division of labor including agriculture and border defense, and private property. Then comes money fashioned by women from sea shells and the rise of a feudal structure in which the men who own the land, control the fish traps and livestock, and determine the money supply by exacting a tax of one third of the food produced. They live fat and happy while others suffer. When the others protest, the feudal aristocracy pays them a small wage to become guards against the meat-eaters, and promotes pro-fish-eater nationalism so that fish-eaters forget how hungry they are. With the wage relation comes capitalism, a market develops, and fish are thrown back into the sea and corn is left to rot in order to drive up prices, while people starve. Unemployment rises and the capitalist class hoards money. A character called “the Bug” is employed by the capitalist class as a singer of songs, each of which directs community anger at rabble-rousing individuals who point out the corrupt system. Said rabble-rousers are accused of wanting to go back to the pre-modern ways of living, and are thus stoned to death even by hungry villagers. The Bug’s music represents the function of culture as an oppressive force designed to obscure the prevailing conditions of oppression, mostly by branding dissenters as endangering the group from the meat-eaters.

The story is quite in line with the extended quote from Engels discussed previously. Engels understood historical materialism as “man” raising itself from bestiality to humanity through the creation of systems of production. Engels’ diagnosis of the problem, however, is that the baser laws of nature still dictate social outcomes because natural law has not been transcended *enough* so long as markets are unregulated (that is, they are regulated by natural law). This happens in “The Strength of the Strong” to the extent that the fish-eaters do create more food, but suffer extreme inequality as their own legal institutions are usurped by the powerful.

According to Smith, Schmidt’s reading of Marx presumes that second nature is produced only under capitalism, and that it represents a rupture from a pre-capitalist unity of people and nature. While that presumes a historical ontology different from that of Engels, in many ways this concept of rupture is reflected in “The Strength of the Strong.” The last of the rabble-rousers makes an impassioned plea that there were in fact two different types of strength, one good and the other evil. He argues that cooperation, the creation of law, government, and division of labor were all a good kind of strength because it made life materially better. He argued that the wage relation was an evil type of strength based not in muscles or will to labor, but instead in the control of property, capital in the form of fish traps and sea shells, and labor (he is also stoned to death). The idea that “strength” as culturally defined (by the Bug) in capitalism can be wholly different than “strength” in pre-capitalism, parallels the idea that value comes from labor in capitalism only, even if it also came from nature in pre-capitalism. This reading of the story thus recognizes its implicit rupture in the nature of value, vis-à-vis strength, but also, contra Schmidt, that the metabolic production of second nature pre-exists capitalism, as people labor within nature to create use value early in the parable. However, particular *forms* of second nature, such as the concept of modernity or fish-eater nationalism, are particular to capitalism.

This very theme of naturalist ontology manifesting itself in class struggle is persistent in London’s work, only in different ways. His wilderness adventure literature is ostensibly a spatial metaphor to describe historical transition. Perhaps reflecting his cynicism regarding the futility of socialist politics, London ended “The Strength of the Strong” without narrating any meaningful resistance. His earlier work in the theme of Progressive Era socialist politics was different however, often demonstrating the return of natural law, in the form of “good strength” re-manifesting in capitalism to counter “evil strength.” The remaining sections will demonstrate how this reflects the “ideology of nature” in London’s work.

London as wilderness writer

London’s *The Call of the Wild* tells the tale of Buck, a St. Bernard and German Shepherd mix who is stolen by a desperate house servant (Manuel) from a California ranch and sold into the black market for sled dogs (to facilitate the Klondike Gold Rush). As London puts it, Buck is “jerked from the heart of civilization and flung into the heart of things primordial,” indicating that the story is both an adventure to the margins of empire and a metaphor for transition backward through time.³⁹ Most of London’s work in this genre reads as a narrative of ruptures as one moves from modernity to pre-modernity or vice versa. However, certain elements of his work illustrate both transitions in the material foundations of society as modes of production change and the abstractions emanating from those material foundations. Perhaps the clearest example is London’s description of how Buck regains his lost instincts – his “ancient song” – as he travels further and further into wilderness:

Thus, as a token of what a puppet thing life is, the ancient song surged through him and he came into his own again; and he came because men had found a yellow metal in the North, and because Manuel was a gardener’s helper whose wages did not lap over the needs of his wife and divers [sic] small copies of himself.⁴⁰

What puppeteers Buck's transition is the capitalist profit motive and class struggle; what results from it is that Buck re-connects with his pre-modern, instinctive self. Buck regaining his "ancient song" can be read as the integration of external and universal nature in pre-capitalist times (the "ideology of nature"). Examples of this abound in *The Call of the Wild*. London describes Buck's beating into submission by a man with a club as his "introduction to the reign of primitive law."⁴¹ When Buck learns to kill rival dogs in the sled team in his struggle for supremacy, London states that "mercy was a thing reserved for gentler times."⁴² The idea of mercy was an abstraction appropriate only in a condition of material comfort characteristic of what London calls the Southland, or the spatial equivalent of the bourgeois, capitalist era. Primitive law refers to a lack of abstract systems of ethics in pre-capitalist times, when "ethics" and "survival" are indistinguishable, as both are rooted in nature. London explains that as Buck learns to steal meat from other dogs in the sled team, he had no time for morals in the Northland and that it was his innate nature to survive. The connection between his reversion to a cruder moral code and the deep historical past is emphasized as this natural drive is explained as a form of species memory "howling down through the centuries and through him."⁴³ The "ideology of nature" is present here as the pre-capitalist past is characterized as a time when nature and ethics were one and the same thing. The fact that it was capitalism that drove this reversion to an amoral system of ethics is a commonplace trope of London's work.

Buck is eventually rescued from an abusive situation by his final owner, John Thornton. Thornton and his friends strike gold in a remote part of the Yukon, and while they spend the summer mining it, Buck is allowed to roam freely. Buck feels two competing forces on his attention: the "call of the wild," which is his instinct to hunt, and his "love" of John Thornton. Again, the former represents his pre-capitalist universal nature, and the latter represents an ideational motive characteristic of the bourgeois era. The narrative plays out: the call of the wild is stronger than love, Buck takes off hunting for several days, and in his absence Thornton is killed by a band of Native Americans (Buck typically served as protector of the group).⁴⁴ The gold nuggets mined by Thornton and his friends are described as the book closes as washing back into the stream from which they came.

On one level the metaphor is obvious: pre-capitalist universal nature trumps bourgeois abstraction, and consequently the capitalist enterprise collapses as its ultimate symbol (gold) reconnects with nature. On another level, however, the notion that capital *could* re-connect with nature in its destruction highlights the conditional possibility of its very existence. In other words, the otherwise obvious metaphor suggests that for London the transition to capitalism happens as universal nature is replaced by nature-society dualism (cf. Smith's critique of Schmidt). The narrative is decidedly materialist, but not Marxist. Marx saw nature and society as operating in a metabolic relationship even prior to capitalism. The gold flowing back into the river is not a metaphor for this metabolism as it only happens after, and as a consequence of, a violent rupture in which nature seeks its revenge over capitalism. In *The Call of the Wild* the source of value is nature in the form of gold, with labor, in the form of placer mining, dog sledding, etc., coming into play only later in modernity.

White Fang has virtually identical themes, but works in the opposite direction, and nature does not triumph over capital in the end.⁴⁵ White Fang is born a wolf cub in a den in the Yukon – his mother is half dog, half wolf, and his father is entirely wolf. The story of White Fang's conception is related by London as the "sex tragedy of the natural world," as three wolves fight to the death for the privilege of mating with White Fang's mother.⁴⁶ This is clearly the primordial nature described in the beginning of "The Strength of the Strong" and the end of *The Call of the Wild*. From White Fang's birth forward, he experiences shifting material foundations and pursuant abstractions as he moves from pre-capitalist universal nature to bourgeois capitalism.

For example, as a puppy he is captured by a Native American band, domesticated, and eventually incorporated into a dog sled team. He comes to think of humans as gods whose power is absolute. The sled dogs are competitive with each other, each challenging White Fang for status as lead dog, while the “gods” simply have to lash White Fang to get the entire team moving forward. This is the first development in the story of a capitalist class extracting labor value from workers. Docile but not affectionate toward his master (Gray Beaver), White Fang as lead dog learns to apply an amoral natural code to the other dogs under his supervision:

He was a monstrous tyrant. His mastery was rigid as steel. He oppressed the weak with a vengeance. Not for nothing had he been exposed to the pitiless struggle for life in the days of his cubhood, when his mother and he, alone and unaided, held their own and survived in the ferocious environment of the Wild. And not for nothing had he learned to walk softly when superior strength went by. He oppressed the weak, but he respected the strong....His outlook was bleak and materialistic. The world as he saw it was a fierce and brutal world, a world without warmth, a world in which caresses and affection and the bright sweetnesses of the spirit did not exist.⁴⁷

White Fang’s vision of a cruel and oppressive world reflects London’s Social Darwinism. But in terms of how London’s work constructs a time-space nexus, another question emerges: Does this simply reflect the pre-capitalist universal nature, given that White Fang is still in the Yukon and in the possession of Native Americans? After all, the overtly racist London collapses Native Americans into nature by calling them “man-animals.” Or does it reflect the continuation of what Engels saw as “the normal state of the animal kingdom” in free-market capitalism?⁴⁸

I argue that it is the latter for the following reasons. First, if one assumes *The Call of the Wild* as a template for material history in reverse order, then Buck’s transition from working in a dog sled team to roaming wild marks the transition from capitalism to pre-capitalism. Buck did not entirely hear the “call of the wild” until his dog-sledding days were over and Thornton let him loose. White Fang actually oscillates between wildness and laboring under a capitalist master, but nevertheless his position in the mode of production marks the transition to capitalism. One could argue that because Native Americans were described by London as “man-animals,” this dog sled team marks the transition to feudalism before the eventual transition to capitalism. However, in *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels were clear that the transition from feudalism to capitalism was marked by the replacement of guilds with a hierarchy between owners of capital and labor.⁴⁹ The metaphor of the dog sled team more closely resembles capitalism because of the hierarchy of Gray Beaver (capitalist), White Fang (foreman), and the other dogs (proletariat) than it does a closed guild. Second, it is within dogsledding that White Fang learns abstract concepts like justice and the value of property, which are abstractions created out of material practice that do not exist in pre-capitalist universal nature. Finally, London emphasizes that White Fang learned as a cub in the wild to eat small things and fear big things, but then applied these natural laws in the dog sled team – a context in which he is made docile by his master and turned against his fellow workers. London describes White Fang’s primordial nature as clay that is molded into form in the organized environment of the dog sled team. To this point in the narrative, then, *White Fang* parallels an Engelsian reading of material history, in which capitalism is universal, primordial nature in a different form.

The next significant rupture in London’s portrayal of material history is White Fang’s battle with a bulldog named Cherokee. At this point White Fang has gained regional notoriety for thrashing to death all opponents in a regional dog fighting ring. But Cherokee wins by gaining

hold of the loose flesh of White Fang's neck and methodically strangling him. Before White Fang dies and bets are settled, however, White Fang's final owner, a wealthy geologist named Weedon Scott, steps in and rescues him. Cherokee represents modernity because he comes from the Southland. In some ways Cherokee could be read as a classic example of produced nature, because the creation of bulldogs as a breed exemplifies nature-society metabolism. Part of the point of this paper, however, is that London's narratives of material history are *not* dialectical and not entirely Marxist. Thus Cherokee, being of altered, non-wolf form, represents merely modernity. His death duel with White Fang is a clash between pre-modernity and modernity, but is stilted by Scott's human compassion. Scott then adopts White Fang and takes him to live on his affluent ranch in California; modernity wins.

White Fang's transition to his final home in California helps show why it matters for this analysis whether Cherokee, and the world into which White Fang is now entering, represents modernity rather than the Marxist production of nature. At the California ranch he develops a love for Weedon Scott that competes against his baser instinct to kill the other animals (chickens, dogs, etc.). Contra *The Call of the Wild*, the ideational concept of love wins out over the call of the wild as White Fang obeys Scott's injunction not to kill. The rupture between bourgeois capitalism and pre-capitalist universal nature is not complete however: the domesticated dogs have their own instinct, such as a collie's instinct to chase White Fang away from the other animals. White Fang has completed his ascendancy to the leisurely spaces of the capitalist class, but even here, as Engels suggested would be the case, natural law plays a role in the protection of property. The collie instinctively protects property from White Fang. White Fang wants to kill anything and everything, but learns to distinguish those domesticated animals that have sworn allegiance to the gods, which by this point in the narrative represent the capitalist class, and those wild animals that have not done so. This implies a universal nature still manifesting in capitalism that disciplines life outside the capitalist system, and protects the mode of production within it.

London's overlap with Engels is therefore clear. If *White Fang* evinced a historical materialism in concert with Marxist dialects of nature and society, it would not illustrate such a naturalistic, chronological reading of material history, where if nature creates value ever, it must create it always. Working with this narrative as a metaphor, then, nature and labor both determine value in capitalism for London, while only labor does for Marx. Moreover it is universal nature – White Fang's instinct – that allows him to create value for the capitalist, as his wolfish nature is used to protect property and allows him to kill a human intruder in the end. The fact that as the story concludes White Fang is pronounced entirely wolf and not dog only secures the parable that much more bluntly: universal nature disciplines unruly labor.

To put it another way, in Marx's view of capitalism, nature and society are governed by exchange value, which is an abstraction of material practice. On the California ranch, life is also governed by abstraction, but it is the echoes of primordial nature that enable the system to continue, which implies that the struggle to transcend natural law is not complete (per Engels). This is the dualism of the ideology of nature, not dialectics. While normatively speaking it is in conflict with his socialist politics, ontologically it is consistent with the material history embedded in his more blatantly socialist literature.

London as Progressive Era socialist

London's wilderness adventure literature was ostensibly about nature, but implicitly political; his socialist literature was the reverse. For example, in *The People of the Abyss*, a nonfiction account of living conditions in London's East End, London relates the tale of a young boy who is jailed for stealing from an old woman because he was afraid of being jailed for begging. Having regularly described the East End as "wilderness," London describes the boy in terms nearly

identical to White Fang's, as a "young cub seeking his food in the jungle of empire, preying upon the weak and being preyed upon by the strong."⁵⁰ His analysis of poverty in the East End was an attempt at political economy heavily influenced by Herbert Spencer's Social Darwinism. In his semi-autobiographical *Martin Eden*, he states that Spencer served as his "compass and chronometer" chiefly for his capacity for "reducing everything to unity."⁵¹

Though Spencer repudiated socialism, London appropriated his monist vision toward advocating socialism, chiefly by arguing that natural laws of mutualism would render obsolete the "normal state of the animal kingdom" in laissez-faire politics, as Engels put it.⁵² In *War of the Classes*, London writes:

The weeding out of human souls, some for fatness and smiles, some for leanness and tears, is surely a heartless selective process – as heartless as it is natural. And the human family, for all its wonderful record of adventure and achievement, has not yet succeeded in avoiding this process. That it is incapable of doing this is not to be hazarded. Not only is it capable, but the whole trend of society is in that direction.⁵³

That the selective process is rooted in nature but that "man" can extract himself from it is a normative contradiction for sure. Ontologically speaking, London at least iterates a mechanism for how "man's" escape from nature is in fact rooted in nature. Essentially it involves the brutality of class struggle driving the "abysmal brutishness" of the working class to overcome the cultural power of the bourgeoisie. In other words it is everything that did not happen in "The Strength of the Strong": "good strength," rooted in the use of muscle power toward the common good, comes back to displace "evil strength," rooted in the control of exchange value toward domination. London's mechanism thus reflects the manifestation of pre-capitalist universal nature in the Bourgeois Era characteristic of *The Call of the Wild* and *White Fang*. How exactly this happens is elucidated in *The People of the Abyss*, *The Iron Heel*, and *Martin Eden*.

As pointed out by Ronald Paul, London's analysis of poverty in *The People of the Abyss* reflects an incongruity between his Nietzschean superman ideal and his socialism.⁵⁴ On one hand, London repeatedly questions the mental and physical capacities of London's working class. Upon meeting a couple of would-be revolutionaries in the East End, London states that despite his "evolutionary belief in the slow development and metamorphosis of things," he lacked faith in their agency, and characterizes them as such: "Poor fools! Not of their sort are revolutions bred."⁵⁵ On the other hand, the broader context of the book situates their lack of agency in the effect of industrial capitalism on the makeup of their bodies. London states that:

Class supremacy can only rest on class degradation; and when the workers are segregated in the Ghetto, they cannot escape the consequent degradation. A short and stunted people is created – a breed strikingly differentiated from their masters' breed, a pavement folk, as it were, lacking stamina and strength. The men become caricatures of what physical men ought to be.⁵⁶

To be sure, London's analysis is patriarchal, classist, and pseudo-scientific. When he wrote this book in 1903, he yet believed that revolutions were led by the transcendent Nietzschean superman, which the abyss could not produce. Only later did he abandon this idea in favor of a theory of the return of abysmal brutishness in the Bourgeois Era.

Berliner sees the connection between the return of abysmal brutishness in bloody revolution and the afore-quoted effects of class degradation as an indication of a dialectical understanding of nature and labor. While below I argue to the contrary, there is at least some evidence of this. Marx

and Engels had argued that “not only has the bourgeoisie forged the weapons that bring death to itself; it has also called into existence the men who are to wield those weapons – the modern working class.”⁵⁷ Later they state that “the modern labourer...instead of rising with the progress of industry, sinks deeper and deeper below the conditions of existence of his own class...what the bourgeoisie therefore produces, above all, are its own gravediggers.”⁵⁸ Even if his driving mechanism was a Social Darwinism disdained by Marx and Engels, London’s narratives of class struggle match that of *The Communist Manifesto*. This is particularly clear in a short story called “The Apostate,” in which a young boy must work brutally long hours in a jute mill to help support his working class family.⁵⁹ The boy is described as becoming “an appendage of the machine.”⁶⁰ He is in perfect rhythm with the looms he works and becomes the quickest worker in the factory, at least until he lies down in a box car and decides to go “tramping.” He is an “apostate” because he has forsaken the religion of wage labor. The story potentially implies the metabolism of the boy into capital and the jute into rope. However, I argue that when read within London’s overall body of work, the assimilation of the boy into the rhythms of the machine reflects London’s Spencerian mechanism for bringing about the socialist revolution.

This is most clearly illustrated in London’s dystopic articulation of revolution, *The Iron Heel*. Written in 1908, *The Iron Heel* relates the story of two failed attempts at violent revolution against a brutally oppressive oligarchy, nicknamed The Iron Heel, between the years 1912 and 1932. London’s literary mechanism is a three-fold narration of this period. The story is told from the perspective of Avis Everhard, who writes this manuscript on the eve of the second failed revolution, but through most of it she is discussing the actions and theories of her husband, socialist revolutionary Ernest Everhard. The book also begins with a prologue by (imaginary) historian Anthony Meredith, who is discussing the historical significance of the manuscript roughly seven hundred years after the second failed revolution. Meredith’s commentary is also found throughout the manuscript. Meredith lives in a futuristic, socialist utopia called The Enlightened Age, in which cultural forms like selfishness, vanity, and ethical delusion are banished along with the material order from which they would otherwise arise. Meredith states in the beginning that the second failed revolution was followed by many more such failures over the next three hundred years (he is writing four hundred years into The Enlightened Age), which he characterizes as necessary stepping stones in a biologically inevitable progression toward socialism.

London’s teleological view of the biological inevitability of modernity is evident throughout the narrative. For example, early in the book Ernest Everhard gives a speech at a dinner of a Philomath Club consisting of wealthy capitalists. Everhard thrashes the Philomaths in his oration, insults their morality, and warns them of the coming bloody revolution. Avis Everhard describes the rumbling that arises from the Philomaths: “It was the forerunner of the snarl...the token of the brute in man....It was the growl of the pack, mouthed by the pack, and mouthed in all unconsciousness.”⁶¹ That the capitalist class is described as having primitive, animalistic motives indicates that they represent the “normal state of the animal kingdom.” For Marx, exploitation is inevitable in capitalism. As Everhard eviscerates the Philomaths, however, he accuses them simply of mismanagement of the economy, as if piecemeal technocratic solutions would have avoided the creation of abysmal brutishness. Capitalist exploitation is understood here as a random accident on the way to modernity, not as inevitable.

In a later meeting with a group of small business owners, Ernest Everhard accurately describes Marx’s theory of surplus value, and invokes the distinction between good and evil strength made in “The Strength of the Strong.” Everhard argues:

There is a greater strength than wealth, and it is greater because it cannot be taken away. Our strength, the strength of the proletariat, is in our muscles, in our hands to cast ballots, in our fingers to pull triggers. This strength we cannot be stripped of. It is the primitive strength, it is the strength that is to life germane, it is the strength that is stronger than wealth, and that wealth cannot take away.⁶²

It is that primitive strength that London – via Everhard and quoting Marx – feels will sound the “knell of private capitalist property.”⁶³ The strength of the capitalist class, as depicted in *The Iron Heel*, is its ability to dispose of surplus capital in the funding of the arts, architecture, construction of new cities, etc. This becomes the mechanism through which the Iron Heel can monopolize culture, creating a sense of moral self-righteousness amongst the capitalist class, and is the role played by The Bug in “The Strength of the Strong.” The narrative ends with a scene of utter chaos in Chicago as revolutionists, the Iron Heel, and the “abysmal brutes” (the poor), come together in a violent struggle and the second revolution is quashed. The revolutionists’ strategy was to tap into the primitive strength of the poor, described by Avis Everhard as:

Concrete waves of wrath, snarling and growling...drunk with hatred, drunk with lust for blood—men, women, and children, in rags and tatters, dim ferocious intelligences with all the godlike blotted from their features and all the fiendlike stamped in, apes and tigers, anemic consumptives and great hairy beasts of burden, wan faces from which vampire society had sucked the juice of life.⁶⁴

Here is illustrated London’s mechanism for the inevitable downfall of capitalism. Labor is molded into a beast devoid of moral rules; as Avis Everhard puts it, “it is the beast of [the oligarchy’s] own making.”⁶⁵ The “law of club and fang” in Buck’s Yukon experience, which came to destroy the pursuit of gold in *The Call of the Wild*, comes back to wage war on the capitalist oligarchy. Pre-capitalist universal nature manifested on the California Ranch in *White Fang* toward the protection of private property; here it does so in the name of its destruction.⁶⁶

But does this distinction between different types of strength, one born of nature and the other of abstraction, imply a dialectics akin to different kinds of value, one born of labor and the other of exchange? After all, Marx and Engels had argued that “in Bourgeois society...the past dominates the present; in Communist society, the present dominates the past.”⁶⁷ By this they mean that only in Communism does society escape from natural law. This is implied in *The Iron Heel* inasmuch as life under the capitalist oligarchy is ruled by the clash of bourgeois and primitive strength, whereas life in The Brotherhood of Man, as characterized by Meredith, exists in total peace and masters the past as an object of knowledge.

But while in one sense, yes, London creates a mechanism for how capitalism plants the seeds of its own destruction, that much can be taken from Marx without also recognizing his dialectical method. Moreover, there is very little in *The Iron Heel* that is not somehow explained by nature. Even if Meredith states in the beginning that the Iron Heel was not a necessary stepping stone to socialism, he later says that “the capitalist stage in social evolution is about on par with the earlier monkey stage,” and that is how it is characterized throughout the book.⁶⁸ The revolution of the proletariat is equally “natural.” Whereas Marx saw a rupture in the nature of value, from nature and labor to only labor, *The Iron Heel* is patterned on an Engelsian ontology in which the relation of value to nature is trans-historical.

This manifests again in his semi-autobiographical novel *Martin Eden*. Eden’s tale is a proxy for London’s rise to literary fame and transition to socialism. Eden is a working class hero who develops a love interest in a wealthy bachelorette named Ruth. He represents everything London idealizes as “good strength”: his previous sea-faring adventures were raw, unfiltered

experience; his muscles and superior-if-uneducated intellect are constantly gushed over; and his resolve to “conquer” the bourgeoisie by winning the affection of the woman who represents it. Ruth, conversely, has led a sheltered life, her intellect comes from education rather than brains, she is slender, incapable of basic chores, and she sees Eden as wildness in need of taming.

In his proletarian life, Eden works various blue collar jobs, and has a gang of mates and the affection of a working class girl named Lizzie, all of whom see his true value. As he ascends to the bourgeoisie, his energies are directed toward self-improvement (learning manners, brushing his teeth, etc.). Eden struggles in his fledgling career as a writer, consistently turned down by magazines of the day and nearly starving in the process. He feels that the value of his work is greater than Ruth’s college professors and friends simply on its own artistic merits. Ruth, on the other hand, feels that his work is inferior because it has not sold. Value in bourgeois society is therefore equated to exchange, while in proletarian society it is equated to utility. Ruth breaks off the engagement due to her family’s disapproval; Eden becomes a literary trend and strikes it rich; Ruth professes her love but he is no longer interested. Eden longs for Lizzie and his old gang, but feels he cannot go back to them. Torn from everything that was real but lost in a world of individualism, Eden commits suicide in the last paragraph of the book.⁶⁹

One interpretation of *Martin Eden* is that it represents London’s attempt to bury his Nietzschean individualism inasmuch as Eden’s pursuit of individual self-improvement leads to the loss of his vitality and his death.⁷⁰ London’s depiction of the nature of artistic value, however, is more relevant for this analysis. Late in the book, Eden becomes disgusted with the fact that while his work was written but unpublished he starved, but when it was published and he became rich, they suddenly invited him to dinner. He launches a harangue against them:

It was work performed! And now you feed me, when then you let me starve, forbade me your house, and damned me because I wouldn’t get a job. And the work was already done, all done. And now, when I speak, you check the thought unuttered on your lips and hang on my lips and pay respectful attention to whatever I choose to say. I tell you your party is rotten and filled with grafters, and instead of flying into rage you hum and haw and admit there is a great deal in what I say. And why? Because I’m famous; because I’ve a lot of money.⁷¹

That “work performed,” endowed with artistic value regardless of whether it is published, should be just as meritorious, implies use value produced through labor. That he eats too well rather than starves upon the sale of that use value implies the dominance of exchange value in capitalist society. And because here exchange value rules over life and death one *could* argue that a form of value particular to capitalism and independent of natural law has arisen.

I argue against such an interpretation, however, because in London’s work *nothing* is independent of natural law. Just as Ernest Everhard reduces poverty to the poor management practices of the capitalists (not the inherent result of capitalism), Martin Eden attributes the power of exchange value to the bourgeoisie’s internal natures. It is the type of people he puts on trial – the fact that they value only money – not their structural position in society. Ernest Everhard did the same with the Philomaths. Thus the bourgeois laissez-faire politics they represent is portrayed as the manifestation of pre-capitalist universal nature even in capitalism. It is capitalism as “monkey stage” as Meredith put it; the “token of the brute in man” as Avis Everhard put it, or the “normal state of the animal kingdom” as Engels put it. Eden’s sling shot from starving artist to bourgeois dinner parties does not happen because of a historically specific abstraction known as exchange value, it happens for the same reason that White Fang protects property, that the collie chased

White Fang from property, that the Iron Heel crushes the rebellion, and that Buck learns to hunt – because individualism is part of universal nature. Or to put it in Jack London’s terms, because Herbert Spencer said it could be no other way.

Conclusion

The contradiction between Social Darwinism and socialism in Jack London’s work is certainly a normative one, but not an ontological one, at least within London’s literary oeuvre. His work reflected a tendency in the early twentieth century to find a natural basis for socialist policies. London, like Engels, saw bourgeois individualism at the heart of laissez faire politics as form of pre-capitalist, universal nature. London’s work posited a return of a more basic “good strength,” based in muscle power and the will to labor, in socialist revolution. The portrayal of both capitalism and socialism as based in natural law in London’s work is characteristic of what Neil Smith termed the “ideology of nature.”

Moreover, showing London’s intertwining of nature and class struggles as indicative of the “ideology of nature” helps historicize the particular forms of the production of nature implicit in Progressive Era “frontier” ideology. Smith’s point was always that what has changed is *how* nature is produced, and that under capitalism space itself is materially produced. The frontier is less a place innocently constructed than it is a process of domination, and this paper has explored how London’s literary corpus is implicated in that process. London’s prose was sexist and classist, but his ontology was inescapably racist as he equated the space between core and periphery, and particularly between Indigenous peoples and white men, with human evolutionary progress from the state of nature. His work thus weaves through discourses of naturalism, socialism, and the construction of frontier space.

NOTES

- 1 This is evident in his work, but for more on London and empire see Donald Pease, “Psychoanalyzing the Narrative Logics of Naturalism: The Call of the Wild,” *Journal of Modern Literature* XXV (2002): 14-39.
- 2 Earle Labor, *Jack London: An American Life* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2013).
- 3 Johann Hari, “Jack London’s Dark Side” in *Slate* (15 August 2010): Available at: http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/books/2010/08/jack_londons_dark_side.html
- 4 Paul Horowitz, “Introduction,” in *Works of Jack London*, ed. Paul Horowitz (New York: Avenel Books, 1980), 7-14; Jeanne Campbell Reesman, *Jack London’s Racial Lives: A Critical Biography* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009).
- 5 He was also the most popular foreign author in Russia, at least until Stalin’s regime, according to Jonathan Berliner, “Jack London’s Socialistic Social Darwinism,” *American Literary Realism* 41, no. 1 (2008): 52-78.
- 6 In the sense that his writing skills were in advance of his intellectual skills, not that he underappreciated his own writing. This is according to Earle Labor, “Introduction,” in *The Portable Jack London*, ed. Earle Labor (London: Penguin, 1994), xiv.
- 7 On his bourgeois influences, see Jonathan Auerbach, *Male Call: Becoming Jack London* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996). Regarding his Taylorist fascination, see Mark Seltzer, *Bodies and Machines* (New York: Routledge, 1992).
- 8 Jack London, “How I Became a Socialist,” in *The Portable Jack London*, ed. Earle Labor (London: Penguin, 1994), 458-461.
- 9 Gyorgy Lukács, *Writer and Critic, and Other Essays* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1971).
- 10 For example Peter Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (London: Heinemann, 1902); Also see Michael Taylor, *The Philosophy of Herbert Spencer* (London: Continuum, 2007).

- 11 Berliner, "Jack London's Socialistic Social Darwinism," 61.
- 12 Ibid., 60.
- 13 Karl Marx, *Capital, Volume I* (London: Penguin Books, 1976 [1867]), 481.
- 14 Neil Smith, *Uneven Development, 3rd edition* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008).
- 15 On geohumanities, see Stephen Daniels, Dydia DeLyser, J. Nicholas. Entrikin, and Douglas Richardson, eds., *Envisioning Landscapes, Making Worlds: Geography and the Humanities* (London: Routledge, 2011); Michael Dear, James Ketchum, Sarah Luria, and Douglas Richardson, eds., *Geohumanities: Art, History, Text at the Edge of Place* (London: Routledge, 2011). Quotes are from Sheila Hones, "Literary Geography: The Novel as Spatial Event," in *Envisioning Landscapes, Making Worlds*, eds. S. Daniels et al., 247-255.
- 16 On frontiers as places of domination, see Patricia Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest* (London: W.W. Norton, 1987). Quote is from Anna L. Tsing, "Natural Resources and Capitalist Frontiers," in *Contested Grounds: Essays on Nature, Culture and Power*, A. Bavisar (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 137.
- 17 The fact that these were written for young adult audiences only foregrounds the importance of understanding their underlying ideology.
- 18 Noel Castree, "Marxism and the Production of Nature," *Capital and Class* 24 (2000): 5-35.
- 19 Ted Benton, "Marxism and Natural Limits: An Ecological Critique of Reconstruction," *New Left Review* 178 (1989): 53.
- 20 Engels' work consequently influenced a generation of Russian Marxists, including Lenin, perhaps more than did Marx's. See Paul Thomas, "Engels and 'Scientific Socialism,'" in *Engels After Marx*, eds. Manfred Steger and Terrell Carver (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 215-232.
- 21 Geoff Mann, "Should Political Ecology Be Marxist? A Case for Gramsci's Historical Materialism," *Geoforum* 40 (2009): 335-344.
- 22 Friedrich Engels, *Dialectics of Nature* (New York: International Publishers, 1940), 18-19. Italics in original.
- 23 Karl Polanyi also demonstrates how the ideal of the self-regulating market extends from Townsend's mythical tales (though told as if they were real) of dogs and goats in conflict on a Robinson Crusoe-esque island. See Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1944).
- 24 Timothy Luke, *Social Theory and Modernity* (London: Sage, 1990). Luke argues that while Marx never specifies it, he implicitly suggests that technology is the driving agent, but I believe Luke's argument is weak in this regard. Also, the inability of a class analysis to explain the course of history is one of Karl Polanyi's critiques of Marx; see Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*.
- 25 For example, Jason Moore, "Environmental Crises and the Metabolic Rift in World-Historical Perspective," *Organization & Environment* 13, no. 2 (2000): 123-157; Scott Prudham, "Pimping Climate Change: Richard Branson, Global Warming, and the Performance of Green Capitalism," *Environment & Planning A* 41 (2009): 1594-1613; John Bellamy Foster, Brett Clark, and Richard York, *The Ecological Rift* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2010).
- 26 Marx, *Capital*, 283. Also quoted in Smith, *Uneven Development*, 54.
- 27 Smith, *Uneven Development*, 68.
- 28 Marx, *Capital*, 133.
- 29 This is based on my reading of *Capital*, but is also argued by James O'Connor, *Natural Causes* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1998); Geoff Mann, *Disassembly Required* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2013); and others.
- 30 Castree, "Marxism and the Production of Nature."

- 31 Michael Ekers and Alex Loftus, "Revitalizing the Production of Nature Thesis: A Gramscian Turn?" *Progress in Human Geography* 37 (2013): 237.
- 32 Smith, *Uneven Development*, 25.
- 33 Jack London, "The Call of the Wild," in *Works of Jack London*, ed. Paul Horowitz (New York: Avenel Books, 1980).
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 Alfred Schmidt, *The Concept of Nature in Marx* (London: New Left Books, 1971).
- 36 Smith, *Uneven Development*. It should also be noted that this non-dialectical reading of history is the temporal version of the conflation of external and universal nature that Smith calls the "ideology of nature."
- 37 Mary Lawlor, *Recalling the Wild: Naturalism and the Closing of the American West* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000).
- 38 Jack London, "The Strength of the Strong," in *The Portable Jack London*, ed. Earle Labor (New York: Penguin, 1994), 200-213.
- 39 London, "The Call of the Wild," 24.
- 40 London, "The Call of the Wild," 28-29.
- 41 Ibid., 20.
- 42 Ibid., 36.
- 43 Ibid., 28.
- 44 Called the Yee-hats. London made them up.
- 45 Although this theme is tucked into the beginning as two working-class men with a dog sled team are paid by a wealthy patron to escort a body in a casket out of the frozen Yukon in winter. They remark that only the wealthy could afford to worry about something like proper burial. They are pursued by wolves, one of which is White Fang's mother, who eventually eats all of the sled dogs and one of the men. The other man survives out of sheer luck.
- 46 Jack London, "White Fang," in *Works of Jack London*, ed. Paul Horowitz (New York: Avenel Books, 1980), 99.
- 47 Ibid., 142.
- 48 Engels, *Dialectics of Nature*, 19.
- 49 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (London: Penguin Books, 1998 [1848]).
- 50 Jack London, *The People of the Abyss* (Oakland: Star Rover House, 1982[1903]), 279.
- 51 Jack London, *Martin Eden* (London: Penguin Books, 1967[1909]), 153, 149.
- 52 Engels, *Dialectics of Nature*, 19.
- 53 Jack London, *War of the Classes* (New York: Mondial, 2006[1905]), 59.
- 54 Ronald Paul, "Beyond the Abyss: Jack London and the Working Class," *Nordic Journal of English Studies* 9, no. 3 (2010): 25-40.
- 55 Jack London, *The People of the Abyss*, 79.
- 56 Ibid., 220.
- 57 Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, 58.
- 58 Ibid., 64-65.
- 59 London, "The Apostate," in *The Portable Jack London*, ed. Earle Labor (London: Penguin, 1994), 131.
- 60 Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, 58.
- 61 London, *The Iron Heel*, 61.
- 62 London, *The Iron Heel*, 110.
- 63 Ibid., 157.

- 64 Ibid., 234.
- 65 Ibid., 219.
- 66 That this manifestation of universal nature takes the form of “primitive strength” is implied even in the surname Everhard.
- 67 Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, 68.
- 68 London, *The Iron Heel*, 181.
- 69 Jack London himself died at the age of 40 from an unspecified tropical disease.
- 70 This argument is made by Andrew Sinclair, who also cites London biographer Earle Labor on the matter. Andrew Sinclair, “Introduction,” in *Martin Eden*, Jack London (London: Penguin Books, 1967[1909]).
- 71 London, *Martin Eden*, 445.