



Sons of the Sun: Making White, Middle-Class Manhood in Jack London's David Grief Stories and the *Saturday Evening Post*

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Now how about ourselves—the boasted white race? . . . This is merely to say that modern civilization trains us to be cogs in a machine and not individuals in humanity. . . .

The stress of competition in modern civilized life is wiping out the savage in us, making us less and less like the leaders of an earlier day and making us citizens of cities instead of citizens of the great and interesting world. . . .
“Out-of-Doors: Your Faculty of Observation,” *Saturday Evening Post* (1914)

From 1909 to 1912, Jack London reestablished his relationship with the *Saturday Evening Post*, where he had earlier published the enormously popular *Call of the Wild*, to publish sixteen short stories. Among these stories are a group of South Seas tales, episodes in the adventures of the character David Grief. A white American man who adapts to the climate of the South Seas—both weather and business—Grief combines the best of both worlds. In “A Son of the Sun,” the inaugural David Grief story, the narrator reveals that Grief arrived in the South Seas “on board a tiny schooner yacht, master and owner, a youth questing romance and adventure along the sun-washed path of the tropics” (*Saturday Evening Post*, May 27, 1911, 20). Dumped onto a beach in a hurricane and rescued six months later by a “pearl cutter,” Grief fashions himself into an international capitalist (20):

How many millions David Grief was worth no man in the Solomons knew, for his holdings and ventures were everywhere in the great South Pacific. From Samoa to New Guinea and even to the north of the Line his plantations were scattered. . . . In Sydney, on Castlereagh Street, his offices occupied three floors. But he was rarely in those offices.

He preferred always to be on the go amongst the islands, nosing out new investments, inspecting and shaking up old ones, and rubbing shoulders with fun and adventure in a thousand strange guises. (20)

Grief makes himself and his fortune from absolutely nothing and in the middle of nowhere. He straddles the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by finding a new “frontier” to explore and exploit, yet simultaneously making himself a smooth and successful businessman. He has grand urban offices, but spends his time at sea, in physical risk and in the “fun and adventure” of hands-on economic imperialism. Furthermore, Grief represents an individualistic, entrepreneurial version of American imperialist conquest in the Pacific and Central America, uniting Teddy Roosevelt’s militaristic projects with ideals of individual enterprise. David Grief is also, in London’s complicated literal and metaphorical estimations of race, part white and part brown (possessing a “hint” of Polynesian skin tone and blood brotherhood with a Polynesian man); in fact, this figurative racial mixing is one of the keys to Grief’s success.

In the David Grief stories, London deploys representations of race in his central project of constructing satisfactory white manhood. He treats white manhood not only as constructed through opposition to and domination of men of color, but also as itself necessarily crisscrossed by literal and figurative racial difference, as requiring assimilation of “colored” qualities from across the spectrum.¹ As with the unnamed protagonist’s task of mixing “optic white” paint in Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man*, producing what appears to be truly white (here, a truly white *man*) requires a controlled infusion of a certain kind of darkness. In these stories, London reinscribes a basic racism that insists that white men make themselves by dominating people of color.² In excluding white women from his “savage” South Seas world and in treating native women solely as they help in making white men, he also reinscribes certain standard race-gender hierarchies. Yet he both subtly undermines any notion of white manhood as a state of blank purity and also disrupts the standard, racist parallel scales of colored-to-white and savage-to-civilized. Through its complex and self-contradictory treatment of white men, black and brown South Seas Islanders of both genders and mixed-bloods, London’s fiction helps to reveal the cultural complexity behind the *Saturday Evening Post*’s superficially simple, largely black-and-white representations of race, men and man-making, making those representations look defensive and ambivalent rather than secure and monolithic. London’s qualified inclusion of certain men of color within a definition of true manhood betrays the

general fear that white men were becoming less masculine than their racial counterparts. In turn, the *Post* works to link the primarily racially-figured splits within London's white male characters to widely-held ambivalence about the self-made, individual man and the mechanized, standardized modern businessman and consumer.

Reading several David Grief stories in the context of the *Post*, I will examine their engagement—conscious and unconscious, intentional and accidental—with anxiety about white, middle-class manhood in early twentieth-century America: anxiety about such men constrained and enervated by the demands of the modern, urban, bureaucratic workplace, as well as standardized and feminized by their new role as consumers in a national market of mass-produced goods. The middlebrow *Post* addressed and constructed a white male reader anxious to dress for success and to fit himself into the modern market as businessman and consumer.³ At the same time, it evinced apprehension about what sort of man the early twentieth century would produce. As the *Post* writer quoted above saw it, “modern civilization” was making the white, middle-class men addressed by the magazine “cogs in a machine.” By addressing such men as those with access to the world of modern work and consumption, the *Post* also helped to position them as those most threatened by modern enervation.

Appearing in the *Post*, David Grief reads partly as a response to just such anxiety about American businessmen. On the most basic level, the David Grief stories offer an escapist alternative to the modern, white, middle-class man's existence by idealizing the life of the adventurer who strikes out into the wilderness of the South Seas to make his fortune and his manhood by exploiting exotic “savages.” On this level, the David Grief stories oppose many of the *Post*'s most overt messages about successful manhood: that white, middle-class men, duty-bound to their families, should adapt themselves to the demands of the marketplace, work steadily in their urban, white-collar jobs, and purchase the accoutrements of middlebrow success. Insofar as they run against those messages, the David Grief stories emphasize the deep ambivalence running through the magazine about unfettered, “natural” masculinity and its restrained, modern counterpart. At the same time, the stories appear to resolve this opposition by embodying both sets of qualities within Grief, who combines the wild adventurer and the self-controlled businessman. Further, Grief's exemplary manhood is based on his ability to embody aspects both of the white American man and of the tropical “savage” whom he exploits—a problematic resolution indeed, especially given mainstream racial ideology of the early twentieth century. Like any successful popular text, these stories both invoke a culturally prevalent problem (here, the difficulty of making satisfactory white, middle-class manhood) and also offer a “resolution” to that problem—a resolution impracticable enough to keep readers returning for another “fix.”

The years during which London published these stories were a period of growth and change for the *Saturday Evening Post*, change which makes the *Post* uniquely well-suited to an investigation of mainstream versions of manhood. By

the end of 1908, the magazine had realized publisher Cyrus Curtis's and editor George Horace Lorimer's longtime goal of achieving "More Than a Million a Week Circulation," as its December 12 cover announced. Its circulation continued to grow in the years that followed, reaching two million in 1913; the *Post* was well on its way to becoming the most widely read magazine in the United States. Lorimer conceived of the *Post* as a men's magazine, the masculine counterpart to the *Ladies' Home Journal*, Curtis's first financial success. (In fact, the *Post* depended financially on the *Journal* during the first years of its publication.) Yet the *Post*'s growth was bound up with the rise of modern advertising and of the national consumer market—and the greatest portion of that market was female. By the twenties, because advertisers wanted to reach white, middle-class women, most of the *Post*'s ads would be meant for women's eyes, and its editorial content would be geared towards both genders. Throughout the early teens, however, neither Lorimer nor his magazine relinquished their primary address to an audience of businessmen; most of the *Post*'s advertising and virtually all of its editorial content was still intended for male readers.⁴ During the transition from addressing men to addressing men and women, the *Post* occupied a unique position. An enormously popular magazine, financed by and influential in creating the national consumer market, the *Post* nevertheless concentrated on representing and shaping *masculine* subjectivity—a masculine subjectivity narrowly conceived as white, white-collar, upwardly mobile, straight, and largely urban.

During the first few decades of the twentieth century, American mass culture emphatically addressed white, middle-class women as the primary consumers, and as primarily consumers. Cultural critics have mirrored the conception of women as shoppers and homemakers, men as producers and breadwinners, to concentrate largely on how women were addressed and represented as consumers.⁵ Yet men, too, were addressed as consumers, and manhood was reconstructed through the metaphors of consumption. Insofar as consumption was figured largely as a feminine role, coextensive with white, middle-class women's nineteenth-century function as the spiritual cleansers of the household, it made an uncomfortable fit with ideals of manhood. Addressing women, advertising entangled them in domestic narratives and exhorted them to maintain clean, dainty homes and bodies. Addressing men, it frequently attempted, paradoxically, to reinsert rational agency, strong individuality, and various kinds of mastery into men's purchases, sometimes even casting the purchase as a kind of investment or production rather than consumption, and sometimes claiming that the purchase could make the man. (An ad for "Corliss-Coon" collars, for instance, headed "We Share the Profit With You," offers male readers a "dividend" of "greater individuality of style and longer wear.")⁶ London's David Grief stories, by emphasizing that men must make themselves through hard experience in the wilderness, far from the *Post*'s world of urban white-collar work, stiff collars, and golf clubs, make clear the difficulties inherent to advertising's engagement with white, middle-class men. Those stories also, not coincidentally, remove their

exemplary men—white or not—far from white women, implicitly aligning white womanhood, “civilized” domesticity, the physical constraints of white-collar work and urban life, and consumption all against the development of satisfactory manhood.⁷

Manhood and “Civilization” in Early Twentieth-Century America

London’s *Post* fiction, both the David Grief stories and others, constructed a masculine reader defined by profoundly difficult internal contradictions. In many instances, London maintains a relatively simple model for those contradictions, employing various figures to depict men painfully divided between the impulses of their “natural,” energetic selves and the necessity of civilized constraint.⁸ In a 1909 *Post* story entitled “South of the Slot,” for example, a man finds himself split between a forceful, impulsive working-class self and an excessively repressed middle-class self. In the end, the working-class personality triumphs, relinquishing middle-class success for an idealized proletarian life of unfettered masculinity (May 22). This character also abandons a bloodless, upper-class betrothed for union with a passionate, working-class woman.

In a 1910 *Post* story entitled “When the World Was Young,” a successful attorney is similarly plagued by a split personality (September 10). At night, he becomes a “savage” throwback to his forebears, roaming his estate, killing coyotes with his bare hands and chanting battle songs in ancient Teuton. The attorney’s double life becomes intolerable when he falls in love with a gentle, civilized woman whom his savage self might harm. In this case, the modern, conventional and mature self triumphs, but at the cost of the attorney’s connection to nature, his abundant energy and his fearlessness—the very qualities which have made him exceptional and successful in the first place. These characters make clear the difficulty of embodying the disparate parts of manhood; at the same time, they demonstrate the costs of giving up either their “civilized” or their “savage” selves. The stories also layer several oppositions—working-class/middle-class, primitive/modern, boy/man, masculine/feminine—over the central opposition of savage/civilized.

With respect to the masculine/feminine opposition, a character such as the attorney’s fiancée in “When the World Was Young” nods at a conventional view of white women as civilized and civilizing. Yet “South of the Slot” introduces a class divide into white womanhood, placing white women on each side of the savage/civilized dyad and positioning the upper-class woman as a restrainer and the working-class woman as a liberator of men’s impulses—rather than dividing them internally, as with the male characters who are the stories’ central concern. Treating female characters as either civilized or savage here superficially undoes a standard Victorian gender binary, yet ultimately positions women as important only for supporting or thwarting manhood. It also reinforces a standard view of the working classes as “savage.”

What London mystifies in these stories as a pure state of originary selfhood, the eternal primitive man, I will historicize—in his work and in the magazines—as one component of a socially constructed and shifting American manhood. Gail Bederman argues in *Manliness and Civilization* that throughout the nineteenth century, ideal “manliness” for white, middle-class men was represented as a process of self-restraint. Such men, she suggests, were taught that to be manly, they must develop and exercise a powerful “civilized” will over their “primitive” impulses. Bederman further suggests that during and after the 1890s, people began to fear that being reared in an increasingly insulated domestic sphere feminized white, middle-class men and weakened their natural energy. Civilized manliness thus lost its hold as the ideal. Instead, American mainstream culture began to treat men’s primitive impulses as important and as in need of nurturance. In Bederman’s terms, based on early twentieth-century usages, the scale was tipped from “manliness” (self-restraint) towards “masculinity” (primitive impulses); I will use “manhood” as the general term.⁹

Like London, American culture at large figured white, middle-class men’s tense internal divisions in terms of class and racial difference and their self-making in terms of imperialist and racist domination. In the most basic terms, white, middle-class Americans tended to associate the working classes and people of color with “savagery” and a raw state of childhood and to place them at an early stage on a line of human development characterized by “progress.” The turn away from the Victorian manly ideal and the push to cultivate white, middle-class men’s primitive masculinity implied that such men should become more like working-class men, like the “savages” of colonized countries, or like the brutish African-American man of Euro-American mythology—an implication that carried much ambivalence.¹⁰

Theodore Roosevelt, President from 1901 to 1908, became the prime model of the white American man who embodied adequate primitive masculine force, yet held himself apart from savagery by exercising violent control over “primitive” races. Considered an upper-class fop as a young man, Roosevelt carefully cultivated his persona as wild frontiersman, virile father, and fearless leader of the Rough Riders. He also promoted and practiced military imperialism in Central America, Cuba and the Philippines—imperialism which he represented as the only way to preserve the strong masculinity of the United States as nation and as (Anglo-Saxon) “race.” After his second term, just as London’s *Post* stories began to appear, the ex-President set off on an African safari popularly represented as a voyage to the savage past of mankind. The Rooseveltian ideal, his political and personal practices, implied both that men of color possess enviable masculine force, and that white men must maintain their superiority by dominating them. Such a view is consonant with white men’s violence against black men within American borders: namely, the wave of lynchings which claimed approximately 2,500 African-American men’s lives between 1882 and 1930. Like American imperialism, lynching both expressed white envy of black men’s perceived

powerful masculinity and attempted—horribly—to reassert white male supremacy.¹¹

London's David Grief stories, in a subtle and complicated fashion, share this urge to dominate men of color, as well as the urge to possess their masculinity. They move the arena of white man-making to the Pacific, suppressing, as the entire *Post* does, both awareness of the white lynch mob and the possibility of strong African-American men. At the same time, the David Grief stories demonstrate that the oppositions "civilized-savage" and "white-colored," while they were pervasive, cannot fully describe London's—or ultimately American culture's—use of racial difference in making white men; nor can a civilized-to-savage spectrum of white-yellow-brown-black. In a story such as "When the World was Young," London maintains a relatively straightforward civilized-savage tension within his male protagonist, aligning that tension with conventionalized class difference. Yet, in the David Grief stories, alignments shift and flip to suit the need of the moment: a half-Chinese, half-European man is held up as an exemplum of strong, civilized manliness, "whiter than most white men," his Chinese "integrity" keeping in check his wild European blood; at the same time, this character's civilized qualities place him in a feminine role. Polynesian brownness signifies the money essential to white men's self-making, and the merest hint of brown may make a man out of a white boy. The palest white men (those most susceptible to the sun) are those most easily corrupted by tropical "savagery." Polynesian "savages" themselves may embody pure manhood, supplanting white men as the opposite of corrupt, black Melanesian male degeneracy. The David Grief stories construct not a series of straightforward oppositions layered over one another, but rather a complex and unstable constellation of qualities, racial and gendered, in which—even as white men's exploitative business and their self-making remain paramount—each white man is not necessarily superior to each native man, and white men *need* native men to make themselves.

Reading the *Post* of this period, apart from London's fiction which appeared there, reveals yet other features of representations of manhood not explicitly addressed by a model such as Bederman's. The *Post* of the early teens infuses the figure of the white, middle-class man defined by an internal tension between primitive and civilized selves with new, specifically twentieth-century tensions. Near and after the turn of the century, the "natural" masculine self became aligned with individual agency and was threatened not only by genteel self-restraint and domestic femininity, but also by urban confinement, standardization and mechanization. In articles, fiction and advertisements of 1909-1912, the *Post* overtly addresses a man who succeeds by fitting himself into the bureaucratic urban business world, and who demonstrates—or even creates—his success by consuming standardized goods. Broadly speaking, the *Post*'s model man during this period resembles a standardized part in the machine of work and consumption. An article about successful Wall Street businessmen, for instance, describes them as

“cogs”; another article describes a prosperous urban law firm as a “mill.”¹² Advice articles urge the reader to “fit himself” into a good position in such an institution.¹³ At the same time, innumerable advertisements for men’s clothing promoted the new mass-produced, ready-made clothing rather than individually tailored garments. These ads promise to “stamp” good qualities onto the bodies and even the “personalities” of the wearers, suggesting an industrial process in which male consumers, body and soul, become the output of mass production.¹⁴ Just as new industrial processes turned out standardized parts for smoothly functioning machines, so, figuratively, would the *Post* produce cogs for the national market. The magazine, in the words of workers in the Curtis Advertising Department, “manufactured customers”;¹⁵ it also sought to manufacture businessmen.

Yet the *Post* itself frequently manifested ambivalence about the sort of manhood implied by such a process. The same clothing ads that urge men to become stamped with standard qualities attempt, paradoxically, to re-insert individuality and agency into the purchase, promising “greater individual style” and recasting the consumption of trivial goods as a savvy financial investment.¹⁶ The article that describes Wall Street businessmen as cogs celebrates moments when human error causes “slipping and grinding and clashing,” and the article describing a law firm as a “mill” offers as exemplum one attorney’s rebellion against his own passive, mechanized existence by quitting his job, moving to the country, and becoming a “boy” again. Business articles advise a conservative office routine in one breath, and strong individual initiative in the next, suggesting that the two modes are mutually exclusive.¹⁷ All in all, just as American culture had long prescribed for men a difficult tension between civilized and savage selves, the *Post* now prescribed a tricky embodiment of both passive coghood and forceful individuality.

London’s fiction contributed to the *Post*’s ambivalence about modern manhood: in the context of this magazine emphatically addressed to middle-class businessmen, London’s story “South of the Slot” celebrates the triumph of a split man’s forceful, exceptional working-class self over his excessively civilized, mass-produced and mechanized middle-class self. Of course, London’s representation of a middle-class man as a cog and his working-class counterpart as a free individual in a story of 1909 involves a certain irony. At this time and into the next decades, industrial management theories such as those of Frederick Winslow Taylor—who explicitly sought to make working-class men into parts in a machine—became widely applied.¹⁸ At the new Ford Motor Company plant at Highland Park, Michigan, the model for the new mode of industry, traditional shop production which had privileged skilled mechanics was replaced by a massive assembly-line system that divided production into unskilled and repetitive tasks in which workers’ movements were literally regulated by machines. Testimony from Ford workers during the teens and twenties confirms that laborers felt reduced to “automatons,” to “human machinery” emptied of “thought or emotion.”¹⁹

Notwithstanding the social reality, the *Post* was in the business of addressing middle-class men: hence, it used representations of mechanization and of working-class men in problematic ways in its struggle to construct satisfactory manhood for its middle-class readers. The *Post* used mechanization as a metaphor both in its cheerleading about modern efficiency and to acknowledge that white-collar men at this time faced increasing monotony and bureaucracy and decreased autonomy on the job. At the same time, particularly in advertisements, the magazine frequently represented working-class men as machines that could be purchased and controlled by the managerial reader.²⁰ In effect, such a gesture attempted to deflect coghood onto working-class men, flattering the reader as a powerful subject rather than a laboring object.²¹ In other articles and advertisements, working-class men were presented for purchase not so much as machines, but rather as specimens of beefcake masculinity.²² Yet, in London's "South of the Slot," the working-class man was, in opposition to these representations, treated as more powerful than his middle-class counterpart. The *Post* addressed envy and fear of working-class men's perceived "savage" power, and, at the same time, attempted to package that quality for the middle-class reader's consumption, leaving him tenuously reassured of his own superior manhood.

While "South of the Slot" represented a powerful, "savage," white working-class man, and *Post* ads eroticized white working-class male bodies, the David Grief stories offered up men of color in similar ways. In the context of the *Post*, London's white male characters' ambivalent relations to native men read as one more attempt to defend against the perceived standardizing, mechanizing, and enervating forces of the twentieth-century workplace and consumer market.

David Grief and the Uses of Race

Numerous critics in recent years have proposed that whiteness, rather than existing as a natural or universal category, is perpetually formed in ambivalent relation to a colonized and constructed racial Other.²³ Indeed, London and the *Post* use men of color, in various and self-contradictory ways, to make and maintain white masculinity. In London's stories and in the *Post*, white men use men of color as fodder for the economic exploitation that makes and proves white masculinity. Whiteness is also used to set men apart from the crowd or background, to create and set off their distinction. At the same time, racial Otherness, representing various qualities, savage and civilized, becomes an ambivalently treated *element* of satisfactory, successful white masculinity. In London's *Post* stories, white masculinity is made not only against the Otherness of and on the (broken) backs of men of color, but also through ambivalent appropriation of their racial Otherness. Appropriation of racial Otherness was, however, extremely problematic for racist, anti-miscegenation sensibilities; London defends against his own creation of a metaphorically part-brown white man by associating blackness with contagion and disease. Such figurative racial mixing was not only a strategy for white man-making, but also a source of anxiety.

The white, yet part-brown, man in question is London's character David Grief. Grief is patterned after previous literary adventure heroes in more or less evident ways. Like Robinson Crusoe, he is stranded on an island—though for London, this is not Grief's whole story, but rather a briefly mentioned stage in his early development, a marker of his self-making utterly without the support of privilege. Like James Fenimore Cooper's Natty Bumppo, perhaps his most important antecedent in nineteenth-century American popular culture, Grief is a kind of frontiersman; and, as we shall see, like Natty in *The Pioneers*, Grief takes on privileged boys as apprentices to his manhood. Noting such apprenticeships, Martin Green has characterized American adventure fiction—narratives such as Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales* and Francis Parkman's *The Oregon Trail*—as one long attempt to reconcile ruling-class status with American democratic feeling, to create a strong, frontier-made manhood for the "aristo-military caste" and thus to justify their rule.²⁴ Green also, centrally, argues that (both for the British and for Americans), adventure was "the energizing myth of empire," a literary and cultural justification of imperialist conquest.²⁵

Grief as a character does read as directed towards justifying the American imperialist expansion that was roughly contemporaneous with his appearance in the *Post*. Yet he also signifies a shift which Green's argument does not emphasize. In the David Grief stories, London marks and works to justify a turn from territorial conquest figured as a state military (and often a religious) project to such conquest conceived as (or revealed to be) primarily commercial. While a writer such as Parkman maintained a certain disdain for commerce and a preference for men gentle by birth (warrior-Brahmins, in Green's terms), London presents the self-made businessman not only as the best and most effective kind of imperialist, but also as the best and most effective kind of man. Shaped by the context of the *Post*, with its pervasive anxieties about what the twentieth-century world of business would do to white, middle-class men, the David Grief stories read not so much as a retrieval of gentlemen as strong men, but rather as a redemption of the American businessman.

In "A Son of the Sun," a long list of Grief's ventures reveals that he owns trading stations, "pearling concessions" and plantations; he "recruits" laborers—Polynesians, "Santa Cruz boys," "New Hebrides boys," and "head-hunting cannibals of Malaita"—to cultivate rubber, cotton, cacao, and coconuts (20).²⁶ While other white men are sickened by the tropics until they "[descend] to beastliness" and survive only "savagely," Grief

was a true son of the sun, and he flourished in all its ways. He merely became browner with the passing of the years, though in the brown was the hint of the golden tint that glows in the skin of the Polynesian. Yet his blue eyes retained their blue, his mustache its yellow, and the lines of his face were those which had persisted through the centuries in his English race. English

he was in blood, yet those that thought they knew contended he was at least American born. . . .

As the golden tint burned into his face it poured molten out of the ends of his fingers. His was the golden touch, but he played the game, not for the gold, but for the game's sake. It was a man's game, the rough contacts and fierce give and take of the adventurers of his own blood and of half the bloods of Europe and the rest of the world, and it was a good game. . . .
(20)

In London's scheme of things, the tropical sun produces the melanin both of Anglo-Saxon suntan and of Polynesian brownness. For Grief, that color transforms into money; the liquid stuff of golden skin tone passes through the masculine man and becomes cash flow.²⁷ Grief looks ten years younger than his real age of forty, and he possesses a gorgeously masculine body: "Heavily muscled he was," with muscles that "slid softly and silkily under the smooth, tanned skin" (18-19). He plays the "game" of entrepreneurial imperialism in the South Seas not for the money, but because it is a "man's game" (20). (Surely male *Post* readers could have been gratified by envisioning their participation in business in similar terms.) And in several of the *Post* stories, Grief uses this game to make other men.

Strikingly enough, it is Grief's brownness—not his pure whiteness—which sets him apart as better than all the other white men in the South Seas, as an outstanding individual and the most successful capitalist-adventurer who comes into view throughout this set of stories. London goes as far as he can to mix this white man's blood: in "The Goat Man of Fuatino," readers learn that Grief is "blood brother" with the Polynesian Mauriri, possessor of extraordinary physical capabilities and exceptional manhood (*Post*, July 29, 1911). (In this story, Grief sides with the islanders of Fuatino in rebuffing an attack by European pirates.) Grief's (rumored) Americanness also bolsters his status as an exceptional individual, and even, insofar as America was considered slightly savage, as possessing the raw masculine force that sets him apart from his European counterparts.²⁸ Both his American individualism and his ability to go native make Grief a more effective manager of natives and their resources than European colonial bureaucrats. In the story "The Jokers of New Gibbon," several German and British colonial ministers lose their heads through inability to deal as skillfully as Grief does with the black natives of New Gibbon (*Post*, November 11, 1911).

Even in this passage which glorifies Grief's acquired Polynesian quality as part of what gives him exceptional manhood, London's ambivalence about such racial mixing is apparent. Despite sharing a "hint" of golden coloring with Polynesians, Grief retains his "English" racial features; he goes native only to a very limited degree. He is a son of the sun because he is "One . . . in ten thousand

in the matter of sun *resistance*" (emphasis mine, 20). Paradoxically, his successful assimilation of "the sun-warmth that poured through him" depends on his imperviousness to the sun's rays, which "bore into" lesser men. Gaining the racialized tint that makes the fortune and the man depends primarily on being able to resist the overwhelming power of color once exposed to it.

Grief also acquires color in what was, for London, an extremely specific sense. In the *Post* stories and elsewhere, London creates an opposition between brown Polynesians and black Melanesians. In "A Son of the Sun," while Grief is gloriously infused with brownness, other, lesser, white men are infected with morally rotten blackness. A white trader named Griffiths, caught trying to trick Grief out of a small sum of money, excuses himself by explaining that he has become like the Solomon Islanders:

I've been in the tropics too long. I'm a sick man. . . . sick in morals, too. Nothing's too mean and low for me now, and I can understand why the niggers eat each other, and take heads, and such things. I could do it myself. (19)

Griffiths' white mate describes himself and his captain as "too rotten, too rotten all the way through" to steal successfully from a man like Grief. As for white men in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, going native among black people here entails rotting from the inside out.²⁹ In a variation on Rudyard Kipling, London renders brown Polynesians "half-children and half-gods"; black Melanesians, on the other hand, are "half-devil and all beast" (20). For London, Polynesians are noble, pre-lapsarian savages, frequently compared to classical figures and speaking (in London's "translations" of their native tongues) in formal, archaic, high English. Melanesians, on the other hand, are degenerate, fallen savages, speaking in a pidgin which London casts as a bestial, devolved English (he never translates their languages).

Noticing a similar opposition, Earle Labor suggests that London viewed Polynesia as Paradise Lost, and Melanesia as the Inferno.³⁰ In his travel diary *The Cruise of the Snark*, London makes his connection between race and contagion, and his distinction between brownness and blackness, very clear. He explains at length how the pure, noble brown people of Taipi (Herman Melville's Typee) and the Marquesas were infected by white people, and their populations decimated by the Europeans' "festering bath of organic poison" (171). Among black Solomon Islanders, contagion operates in the opposite direction, so that white and brown visitors become infected with fever and with horrible, rotting skin diseases. The two episodes taken together position brown people as assailed by the corruption of both whites and blacks. London's distinction between brown and black South Sea Islanders is also clear in his captions for snapshots from his voyage: photos of Polynesians are labeled "The Goddess of the Pool," "One of the Last of a Mighty Race," while those of Melanesians are labeled "Man-Eaters," "Four Old Rascals" (158, 174, 260, 267).

As the caption “The Goddess of the Pool” suggests, London treats Polynesian women, like Polynesian men, as classically pure. This prelapsarian purity was different from the highly civilized purity so often attributed to white women; instead, it was one kind of savagery. In stories such as “The Jokers of New Gibbon,” London treats black native women only marginally, and solely as victims and signs of their husbands’ bestial, devolved savagery (*Post*, November 11, 1911). Brown women, on the other hand may play relatively active roles, exhibiting strength, bravery, and self-sacrifice, particularly in aiding white men. In “The Goat Man of Fuatino,” for instance, Queen Mataara of Fuatino unfastens herself from a dead pirate at a fathom’s depth and swims to the surface to save David Grief’s drowning Captain Glass; her daughter, Naumoo, sacrifices her life to defeat the invading pirates, urging Grief to throw dynamite onto the deck of a schooner where she stands lashed to their chief.

Polynesian women also make good mates for white men. In the same story, Captain Glass tells the story of a Dutch sailor, Pilsach, who abandoned ship to remain on the island of Fuatino with a Polynesian woman. As the captain dryly reports, Pilsach walked “off down the beach . . . holding hands and laughing” with the native woman Notutu, ending up married to her and living “in a straw house in the bush, barelegged, a white savage,” with a life of idyllic freedom (12). Union with a native woman does keep Pilsach ashore, cutting him off from London’s ideal all-male world at sea, but it *cultivates* his savagery rather than threatening it with extinction, as marriage with a white woman might.

Excluding white women almost entirely from his savage South Seas world, London reinscribes the standard view of white women as the flower of civilization.³¹ He also reflects the anxiety that white women carried the threat of constraint and feminization, offering nobly savage Polynesian women as more appropriate helpmates for strong white men. Jonathan Auerbach describes a similar treatment of “Northland squaws” in London’s Yukon fiction. Native women, explains Auerbach, “unlike their ‘idle white sisters’ are not confined to a separate domestic sphere”; hence they may be supportive, self-sacrificing partners “on trail” (*Male Call*, 64). White women in the Northland stories are important only for breeding white men (73-74). Auerbach suggests that in the Northland stories, “intimate contact with native women” is for white men “less an expediency than a necessity, the primary path toward racial self-realization and solidarity” (58). In the David Grief stories, on the other hand, for a white man to ally himself even with a native woman compromises the ideal, all-male and man-producing world of the sea. It is interesting to imagine how white, female readers of the *Post* might have positioned themselves in relation to the David Grief stories and to London’s Polynesian women. Possibly they felt pushed, not unlike London’s white male characters, to cultivate a certain kind of savagery, even as they remained white. In fact, London’s second wife Charmian, whom London presents in *The Cruise of the Snark* as an ideal companion for his adventurous self, appears elsewhere photographed in native Hawaiian garb, having gone “semi-

native.”³² The important difference is that, in these stories, London is interested in womanhood not in itself, but only insofar as it supports white manhood.

In the David Grief stories, London’s ambivalence about white men’s savage part becomes translated into his distinctions among shades of savages. Part of the challenge to the white South Seas adventurer is to mediate his own “rough contacts and fierce give and take” with other races so as to properly constitute and maintain his own manhood. London’s stories offer a number of maneuvers through the problem; the difficulty for his white traders is to incorporate and cultivate a savage part, yet to limit that incorporation, to make sure that the savage is the right color, and also—as “A Goboto Night” will demonstrate—to distinguish themselves as truly white.

“A Goboto Night” and its Contexts

In “A Goboto Night” David Grief puts his own manhood, and his great wealth, to work in making a man out of a childish, unmanly trust-fund inheritor (*Post*, September 30, 1911). Goboto, an island a quarter of a mile across, serves as a center of European and American commerce, apparently in Melanesia, since life there is “unhealthy and lurid,” and the servants and laborers are black. The white men who spend time there drink a tremendous amount, yet manage to maintain civilized qualities—perhaps because their insides are too “pickled” to rot. The story opens as a group of white traders, along with the manager and clerks who work on Goboto, drink and play cards. A young newcomer named Deacon, an Australian with a ten-thousand-pound letter of credit who is “looking to invest in a plantation,” drunkenly harrasses a man named Peter Gee, a half-white, half-Chinese pearl trader. Deacon bullies Gee into playing piquet with him at five pounds a game, and grows increasingly angry and impolite as Gee quietly wins each hand.

Onto this scene appears the urbane David Grief. After watching Deacon’s embarrassing “animosity” escalate for a while, Grief intercedes, accepting in Gee’s place Deacon’s challenge to play casino, and stunning Deacon by agreeing to stakes of five hundred pounds per game (21). Despite Deacon’s unsportsman-like ploy of doubling the wager each time he loses, thereby getting even each time he wins, he eventually loses his entire fortune to Grief. As the pale and shaken Deacon prepares to leave, Grief offers him a deal: they’ll play another hand, and if Deacon wins, he’ll get his letter of credit back. If he loses, he’ll replace Grief’s dying trader on Karo-Karo, a tiny island where the trader is the only white man, where there are “about eight hundred natives, a king and two prime ministers, and the last three named are the only ones who wear any clothes,” and where the trader’s boat’s crew is made up of “hard cases” who would “run away or kill him if they could” (65). Grief will require Deacon to work there for two years; if he performs adequately and follows Grief’s “instructions,” Grief will replace Deacon’s ten thousand pounds at the end of his service. Deacon accepts the deal, sobers up and plays the last hand like a gentleman, and loses. The reader is left

understanding that Grief has already gone far in teaching him how to be a man, and that living and working on Karo-Karo will certainly finish the job. It is perhaps Grief's penchant for bringing such man-making "grief" to those who need it that gives him his name.

Notably, the company manager on Goboto, one of the drinking and card-playing crowd offended by Deacon, requires all visiting white men to wear pants and shoes, the "appearances of civilization." A previous manager named Johnny Basset felt so strongly about this unwritten sumptuary law that he shot one Captain Jensen rather than let him come ashore in a loincloth. After Captain Jensen recovered from his bullet wound, Basset "kindly but firmly assisted his guest into a pair of pants of his own. This was a great precedent. In all the succeeding years it had never been violated. White men and pants were undivorceable. Only niggers ran naked" (20). Such violent enforcement of the rule suggests that these men feel insecure indeed about the distinction between themselves and the indigenous islanders; whiteness alone does not suffice to mark civilization, but must be aided by other signs. Civilization itself becomes figured as clothing put on or removed. Captain Jensen serves as an instance of the unstable relationship between whiteness and civilization: he was "the wildest of the blackbirders, though descended from New York Knickerbocker stock" (20). The emphasis on clothing as a marker of "caste" distinction (the word "caste" acknowledging implicitly that race and class are tied together) also echoes the *Post's* many clothing ads' message that clothes mark the distinguished man. In both cases, distinction (whether in terms of race or class) is rendered an externally acquired as much as an inherent quality. It is also rendered precariously easy to lose and threateningly easy to gain.

At the same time, the emphasis in "A Goboto Night" on the fact that the white adventurers ordinarily "run" almost "naked" highlights the degree to which David Grief and his ilk represent a rebellious, escapist alternative to the constrained businessman addressed, constructed and instructed by the *Post*. Sharing the final pages of the story, ads for suspenders, typewriters, knit sport coats and collars construct a consumer who goes to an office wearing standard business attire and relaxes by playing golf in appropriate sportswear.³³ Opposite the final page of "A Goboto Night," a full-page ad for a tailoring company, meant to depict it as large, successful and efficient, inadvertently supplies a nightmare image of the modern bureaucratic workplace. An immense, perfectly box-shaped building rises into the night sky (the point being that the tailors will work overtime to finish your clothes). In the foreground, literally identical little tailors march in a precise line into the building's doors. Identical and evenly-spaced windows reveal an interior packed with more duplicate tailors, presumably at work. The ad is addressed to the man who has his clothes made, but was read by large numbers of men more likely to share the economic status of the tailors. In such a context, escape to the South Seas, where white men go native and conduct their business in loincloths, becomes an extremely appealing alternative to either purchasing or manufacturing these clothes.

“A Goboto Night” not only offers escape, but also demonstrates, in Deacon’s education, how to make a strong white man. Before Grief takes him in hand, Deacon is in all respects an unsatisfactory man. First and foremost, he is not self-made. As Grief, the consummate self-made man, points out: “The money you’ve lost to me was left to you by your father or some other relative who did the sweating. But two years of work on Karo-Karo as trader would mean something.” For a man to make his own fortune is for a man to make his own self. The *Post* elsewhere echoes this distinction between inheritors and earners of wealth, evincing great suspicion towards trust-fund boys and frequently offering anecdotal models, not too different from London’s, for making men out of them. Narratives contrasting the self-made man favorably with his externally-made opposite appear in editorials, fiction and articles.³⁴ In the issue containing “A Goboto Night,” the lead story, “Five Thousand an Hour,” recounts the exploits of a character named Johnny Gamble. Gamble, consonant with his name and parallel with David Grief, has raised himself from very humble beginnings through business acumen and a willingness to take risks. Through the course of the story, Gamble makes and remakes himself (in other words, his fortune) several times, a process which demonstrates exceptional masculine qualities and “a force which nothing could resist,” particularly not a man named Gresham, who inherited his wealth and is therefore weaker than Gamble.³⁵ Especially in light of such *Post* contexts, London’s fiction departs from earlier adventure writing (such as Parkman’s), in which high-born men go to the frontier to hone their native superiority. David Grief focuses on trust-fund boys not because of their innate manhood, but because they are especially pitiful.

Deacon also cannot restrain himself. “He can’t contain his drink—that’s clear,” remarks the Gobotan manager. As Deacon loses at cards, he utters “sharp, ugly curses and he [snaps and growls] at the imperturbable half-caste” Peter Gee. One of the story’s illustrations features Deacon half-risen from his seat at the card table, scowling belligerently and with his cap askew (21). In this story, the Victorian model of civilized manliness is clearly at work: an adequate man not only covers his body with pants, but also exercises control over his base impulses.

Again, other texts in the *Post* share this measure of adequate manhood. Notably, the ideal man constructed by the *Post*’s advertising must contain himself within restrictive and highly civilized clothing.³⁶ And successful men in the *Post* restrain their emotions, while lack of restraint is a sign of inadequacy: Gresham in “Five Thousand an Hour,” for instance, finds “his face suddenly twitching viciously in spite of himself” as he plots to squash Johnny Gamble. Gamble, on the other hand, is “very much a gentleman”—a self-made, *not* a high-born, gentleman (4). Deacon, like Gresham, suffers from inadequate internal “force” and from inadequate strength to contain his meager impulses.

Oddly enough in the context of a story glorifying white men’s economic imperialism, Deacon’s apparent racism towards Peter Gee also demonstrates his inadequacy as a man. The other white men, deeply annoyed at Deacon’s behavior toward their friend, speculate about his motives: “‘Maybe it’s because Peter’s got

Chink blood in him. . . . Deacon's Australian, you know, and they're daffy down there on color" (20). The island's manager fumes: "He's got "all-white Australia" on the brain. Thinks because his skin is white and his father was once Attorney-General of the Commonwealth that he can be a cur" (21). The white men's criticisms of Deacon's racism suggest that he fails truly to behave as a white man, instead using racial distinction to prop up his own failed manhood. Gee, on the other hand, is in several important senses a better man even than the white traders (excluding David Grief, who hasn't yet arrived on the scene): "he was better educated than any man there, spoke better English as well as several other tongues, and knew and lived more of their own ideals of gentlemanliness than they did themselves. And . . . he was a gentle soul. Violence he deprecated, though he had killed men in his time. Turbulence he abhorred" (20). Skilled and lucky at cards, capable of killing when it is necessary but also adept at restraining his emotions, Peter Gee is, as the manager puts it, "whiter than most white men" (20). That a half-Chinese, half-white man can be more white than white men suggests, like Goboto's sumptuary law, that whiteness is as much earned as inborn, a set of qualities that may be abstracted from "biological" race. The manager's remark that Gee is "whiter than most white men" also introduces a paradox. The manager invokes a simple, dark-and-savage to white-and-civilized scale in order to describe a man who upsets that simplicity, a man who is not white and yet is more civilized than "most white men."

It is important to notice that the manager's hint of anti-racist humanism—the suggestion that a man is not superior "because his skin is white"—is belied in several ways. The narrator treats Gee as an anomaly, calling him "that rare creature, a good as well as clever Eurasian" (20). The characters, even as they use their racist correspondences to praise a half-Chinese man, equate adequate manhood with whiteness, so that to be better is to be whiter. The manager's condemnation of Deacon as a "cur" also suggests that while he is white by blood, he displays mongrel qualities, implicitly equating inadequate manhood with mixed-race qualities.³⁷ And, of course, all of this takes place in the context—implicitly glorified in the story—of white men making themselves by stealing from, exploiting and killing people of color, particularly the black Melanesians who here constitute a kind of backdrop for London's white characters.

Yet the treatment of Peter Gee by these characters and by the narrator does destabilize simple racist correspondences to some degree. In the case of Peter Gee, the narrator (unlike the manager) reverses the standard treatment of whiteness as the civilized part which controls the savage part-of-color. "In fact," comments the narrator, "it was the stolid integrity of the Chinese blood that toned the recklessness and licentiousness of the English blood that had run in his father's veins" (20). In another short story entitled "Chun Ah Chun," (first published in *Woman's Magazine* in 1910, the year before "A Son of the Sun" initiated the David Grief series in the *Post*), London pursues the theme of the male Asian entrepreneur in greater detail, presenting a Chinese man who possesses

inviolable serenity and integrity. The character Chun Ah Chun, like David Grief, begins with nothing (as a Chinese peasant immigrant to Hawaii), and fashions himself into an enormously wealthy businessman, while always maintaining spotless integrity; in other words, he is an exemplary self-made man. He takes a mixed-blood Hawaiian wife, who produces a large family of beautiful Polynesian/Italian/Portuguese/Chinese/English sons and daughters. Chun Ah Chun, who is not only a shrewd businessman, but also “essentially a philosopher,” foresees that his children will squabble over his fortune.³⁸ “Asiatic to the last fibre,” he divides his fortune equitably among his wife and offspring and retreats to Macau, where he lives the rest of his life in serenity, far from the greed and violence into which his family descends (1461). As with Peter Gee, Chinese “blood” makes for greater integrity and civilized self-restraint than do other strains, including English.

Such a racial formulation reflects one aspect of then-current white American views of Asians. Theodore Roosevelt himself characterized the Japanese as highly civilized and argued that immigration of Japanese men to the United States must be limited, since their “frugality, abstemiousness and clannishness make them formidable to our laboring classes.”³⁹ Asian men—Chinese, Japanese, South Asian—were widely considered to possess a self-discipline that enabled them to work long hours for low pay, and thus to drive wages down for white workers.⁴⁰ In the *Post*, Asian men appear infrequently, but are characterized in similar terms, which tend to turn towards the negative. Thus a part-Chinese, part-white character in a story called “The Three Tools of Death” is a negative reflection of the restrained Peter Gee. Magnus, an English noble’s manservant, is “a dull-looking man with flat black hair, a colorless face and a faint suggestion of the East in the level slits of his eyes and mouth.” His face is “dead,” his speech too correct, and he is contrasted unfavorably with one of the story’s protagonists, a large blond man who sends “an iron fist smash into Magnus’ bland Mongolian visage.”⁴¹

This association of Asian manhood with excessive self-restraint corresponds to the lurking sense that Peter Gee is, through his Chineseness, too hesitant to defend himself forcefully against Deacon, too civilized and—to borrow the manager’s terms—hence *too white* to be adequately masculine.⁴² This excessive “whiteness,” which corresponds paradoxically with Gee’s Chineseness, ultimately causes Gee to take the place of a *woman* in “A Goboto Night.” Though the narrator initially describes him as a more-than-adequate man (capable of deadly force, yet also capable of restraint), Gee’s place in the plot, as he fails to resist Deacon’s uncouth aggression and as the other men try to rescue him, slips toward the feminine. Gee’s manner gradually and insistently becomes marked as womanly: he speaks “mildly,” with “habitual quietness,” “he murmur[s] gently” (20-21). For Asian manhood to shade into femininity is, of course, another standard racist association. Further, Gee’s role shades into the standard function of Asian *women* within the pages of the *Post*—to provide a hint of exotic and submissive sexuality. Throughout the period when these London stories were

printed, for instance, small ads for Jap-a-lac wood varnish feature an illustration of a tiny Japanese girl in a kimono kneeling on the lid of a can of Jap-a-lac. As a Curtis Publishing Company advertising manual euphemistically puts it, an “Oriental treatment . . . Surrounds the product with an interesting atmosphere.”⁴³

Noting that Gee becomes feminized points towards the fact that the white interlopers on Goboto would have men of color—including the “handful of black laborers” and servants—take the place of women in this all-male society through their role as servants without pants. The violent enforcement of the sumptuary law (“only niggers ran naked”) points to the artificiality, insecurity, and fundamental defensiveness of such a racially-based gender displacement. Indeed, at a time when white, middle-class men were associated with overcivilized effeminacy and treated as needing to regain “savage,” masculine forcefulness, the narrator’s equation of Peter Gee’s “English blood” with the “recklessness and licentiousness” his father showed in seducing a Chinese woman seems a fantasy of white male forcefulness and virility. After all, behind the ambivalent figure of Peter Gee lurks the possibility that to be “*whiter* than most white men” is to be effeminate (emphasis mine).

As Gee becomes coded feminine, Deacon’s aggressive attention to him and him alone begins to look vaguely sexual. After all, here is an island to which men sail from remote locations to have “sprees”—and an island implied to have no female inhabitants at all. To notice that Deacon’s aggression towards Peter Gee hints at the sexual is to raise questions about the place of desire between men in London’s hypermasculine worlds and in David Grief’s man-making projects: Is the inadequate man a gay man in any sense? Is the reader to understand that black men *sexually* take the place of women on an island such as Goboto?

In the case of Deacon, gay desire remains wholly underground, the merest of inadvertent hints. He is less than a man not because he focuses his aggression on a man, but because he shows childlike unrestraint and because he has failed to make himself and his fortune—because he is, in the manager’s words, one of those “infants with bank accounts” (21). The more general sexual implications of the Gobotan situation are clear to the alert contemporary reader, and London himself was not innocent of gay practices in all-male contexts.⁴⁴ Yet, just as he excludes the possibility that white men could be attracted to black native women, London holds the possibility that white men could desire or even admire black men strongly at bay, consistently describing black native men as outrageously filthy and physically ruined, often self-mutilated in disgusting ways.

What remains forbidden and suppressed with respect to black men becomes explicit and legitimated with respect to brown men. Witness Grief’s reunion with his Polynesian blood-brother, Mauriri, in “The Goat-Man of Fuatino.” The narrator lovingly describes Mauriri’s body as it appears over the railing of Grief’s schooner, the crew watching raptly: “a brown hand and arm, muscular and wet, [were] joined from overside by a second brown hand and arm. . . . Broad brown shoulders and a magnificent chest rose above the rail. . . .” The union is the closest

Grief comes to marriage: ““He is my own blood brother by sacred plight of native custom,”” explains Grief. ““His name is mine, and mine his”” (12). In saving the island of Fuatino from invasion by European pirates, Grief and Mauriri prove the perfect team, with Grief’s superior skill at strategy complementing Mauriri’s superior physical prowess. In this match, as on Goboto, race displaces gender: Grief is (masculine) mind and Mauriri (feminized) body, complete with the narrator’s and the male characters’ objectification of Mauriri’s various gorgeous body parts. The displacement, even as it raises the possibility of gay desire, reinscribes both racial and gender hierarchies, framing men of color as “wives” for white men, giving white men access to and dominance over what is fantasized as savage virility.⁴⁵ Here again, insofar as physical prowess is masculine and civilization more feminine, there remains the backgrounded threat that the white man is the more womanly. The contradiction virile/wife contains both the threat that the man of color is more masculine and the mode of containing that threat.

Oddly enough, Grief’s relationship with a brown man—strongly admiring but never actually sexual—only makes him more intensely masculine, *more masculine* than those men who allow themselves to be kept on land by heterosexual relationships. (The reader learns in this story that the sailor Pilsach jumped ship and stayed on Fuatino to remain with the woman Notutu [12].) In short, London is faced with the problem that to practice heterosexuality (for men) is to expose oneself to the feminizing influence of women. London, his commitment to heterosexual norms running against his deeply-felt masculinism, must walk a fine line. Throughout the David Grief stories and London’s oeuvre, the capacity to form passionate but scrupulously unconsummated male-male attachments, whether across race or not, is treated as an important step in making strong white men.⁴⁶

While Peter Gee’s Asianness subtly shades into womanliness in his response to Deacon, he is nevertheless first and foremost held up as a better man than most. The racial components that make him so represent a reversal of those that constitute David Grief, for whom a “hint” of brownness provides savage essence rather than supercivilized self-control. Asian self-restraint bolsters white masculinity from one side, and noble brown savagery from another. In both cases, truly exceptional white masculinity requires an infusion—real or figurative—of conveniently categorized racial Otherness. In a character like Deacon, white masculinity suffers from weakness of both the savage and the civilized/civilizing parts, causing it to require new force in each pole, and thus increased internal tension. Racial difference here provides the figure for the internal contradiction required to make a man.

Yet Grief’s ultimate prescription for making a man out of Deacon is to make him earn his status as the only white man on Karo-Karo, to set him *against* and *apart* from indigenous black men whom he must control and exploit. To survive on Karo-Karo, Deacon will not only have to control unruly natives, developing his savage, forceful part, but also learn to resist incorporating savagery like theirs, exercising his civilized part. On a deeply subterranean level, the reader may also

infer that Deacon will have to control his desire for these naked natives. Grief's instructions are very detailed; he draws up for Deacon a list of "rules." "These you will repeat aloud every morning during the two years," decrees Grief, "They are for the good of your soul." Grief reads his rules aloud to the group of men:

I must always remember that one man is as good as another, save and except when he thinks he is better.

No matter how drunk I am I must not fail to be a gentleman. A gentleman is a man who is gentle. Note: it would be better not to get drunk.

When I play a man's game with men, I must play like a man.

A good curse, rightly used and rarely, is an efficient thing. Too many curses spoil the cursing. Note: A curse cannot change the card sequence nor cause the wind to blow.

There is no license for a man to be less than a man. Ten thousand pounds cannot purchase such a license. (65)

Neither, apparently, can whiteness. A satisfactory man, then, must restrain himself in consuming alcohol and dispensing curses. He must be gentle, controlling his violent impulses; here again, London emphasizes that gentleness is a matter of character, not birth. He must recognize the equal manhood of other men—where laborers-of-color may be conveniently dismissed as "boys," as they are throughout the David Grief stories. And he must never be "less than a man," particularly when playing "a man's game with men"; in the context of so many prescriptions for manhood, this phrase functions as an overdetermined "all of the above." In order to teach Deacon to be both truly white and truly a man, Grief offers him the examples of a half-Chinese gentleman and his own brown-tinged self. He moves Deacon from the "sissy game" of playing with his father's money, through a "man's game" of cards, and to the money-making and man-making "game" of exploiting first-hand the people and resources of Karo-Karo (21).

As if to cap off the message that the endpoint of this lesson is success through the economic exploitation of indigenous men of color, a tiny filler anecdote headed "A Barrel of Money" completes the last column of "A Goboto Night." In this pointed little story, a Montana "oldtimer" explains how the rich man who just walked into the local hotel got his start:

He sold whiskey to the Indians. He used to take a barrel of water, put in a gallon of alcohol to give it a flavor, some burned sugar to give it a color, a few grains of strychnin [sic] to make it go some, two plugs of tobacco to make you sick and two bars of soap to give it a bead, and trade it to the Indians—one drink for a buffalo robe! (66)

Such a detailed and wryly approving description of white masculine self-making by foully tricking native men of color appears also in another of London's David Grief stories, "The Proud Goat of Aloysius Pankburn" (*Post*, June 24, 1911). The story bears striking resemblance to "A Goboto Night": in it, David Grief encounters an alcoholic, helpless trust-fund boy (actually *weeping* when Grief first encounters him on a ship) whose mother holds his purse-strings. This young man, Aloysius Pankburn, also happens to know where some treasure is buried. Grief transports him to the remote island on the condition that Pankburn will sail as one of Grief's crew. Predictably, over the course of months, Grief subjects him to the labor and the abstinence that make a man out of him; the two also develop the strong masculine and masculinizing bond so important to man-making for London. When they arrive at the island, they discover that the native black men—no women appear here at all—have dug up the treasure and hung British coins all over their bodies. Pankburn's final transformation into a self-made man occurs as he tricks the natives out of their wealth by offering enormous quantities of tobacco in trade for copper coins, so that the natives figure that gold is worthless and trade at the rate of ten sovereigns for two sticks of tobacco. At the story's closing, as if to pound the point home, Pankburn demonstrates his new manhood by lifting "two black stewards. . . above his head like a pair of dumbbells" and displaying seaman's skill superior to that of a "Rapa sailor." If becoming an adequate white man entails rubbing shoulders with men of color and internalizing metaphorical racial difference, thus threatening racial separation and hierarchy, then the conclusions of both "Aloysius Pankburn" and "A Goboto Night" place their newly made white men safely in a separate and dominant position.

"On the Levee at New Orleans" and Making the White, Middle-Class Man

Reading the David Grief stories in the context of the *Post* links the stories' ambivalences about manhood and race with other, related ambivalences in the magazine's general man-making project. Most fundamentally, it demonstrates how whiteness became linked to urban constraint, passivity and standardization of self, while the "savagery" of men of color was linked to an originary self who maintains internally generated force and distinction. Such a reading also provides a framework for unpacking the *Post*'s apparently straightforward representations of race (primarily as whiteness versus blackness) and manhood.

An ad for "Good Clothes" made by Hart, Schaffner and Marx, one of a series of similar ads appearing on page two of the magazine (this one in the June 24, 1911, issue, containing "Aloysius Pankburn"), serves as a richly revealing point where constructions of race and manhood, and their attendant anxieties and defenses, converge. This full-page ad's large graphic, a drawing elaborately framed as if it were fine art, is captioned "On the Levee, at New Orleans." It depicts a white man nattily dressed in a freshly-pressed and pale-toned suit,

2 THE SATURDAY EVENING POST June 24, 1911



On the Levee at New Orleans

YOU may as well have the economy of all-wool fabrics, and the shape-keeping value of thorough tailoring in your thinnest summer clothes; you'll have both if you buy clothes with our mark in them.

It's a smart thing to look for next big thing to find.

Hart Schaffner & Marx
Good Clothes Makers

Chicago Boston New York

Figure 1: "On the Levee at New Orleans." (*Saturday Evening Post*, June 24, 1911, 2.)

complete with rigid collar identical to those in other ads. He is standing very erect, gesturing broadly, and apparently speaking to the black man standing next to him about where to take the bale (of cotton?) that sits behind them. The black man is of the same height as the white man, and is in many respects a mirror image, except that he slouches slightly, his suit is dark, torn, and rumpled, his collar is open, and his skin is dark. The dark region of his clothing, face and hands blend with the bale behind him and, further in the background, with the figure of another black man holding a wheelbarrow. His dark suit, torn to reveal a pale shirt, makes a visual rhyme with the torn, dark material on the bale, associating him strongly with a commodity under the white man's control. The pale *chiaroscuro* of the white man's figure stands out from the combined darkness of his own shadow, the black men's figures, the bale, the wheelbarrow, and the rest of the background; black men, shadow, and objects blend together and serve as backdrop to emphasize the white man's distinctiveness. On a more literal level, they represent the goods and services that the white man commands, setting him apart as powerful and well-to-do.

At the same time, somewhat as David Grief and friends impress upon Deacon that whiteness alone does not make a man (and that a man must make his own whiteness), the ad suggests that this white man requires numerous trappings—affluence, natty clothes, a professional reason to stand so commandingly on the dock, a flattering background—to supplement and highlight his racial status. The ad betrays how much this white man needs black men and commodities to make his manhood; as with the traders and their pants on Goboto, it is “Good Clothes” as much as whiteness that distinguish him from the man standing next to him. The ad suggests that (already white) men may purchase their racial status with their clothes, that the clothes will “stamp” true whiteness, along with good posture and distinction, onto the male consumer. Deacon must earn white manhood by living on Karo-Karo, but the consumer may merely purchase it.

Like “A Goboto Night,” then, this ad both betrays some of the social constructedness of race and emphatically and defensively constructs the white man's as the position of distinction. Like “A Goboto Night” and “Aloysius Pankburn,” it uses representations of black men to serve as the objectified backdrop which creates white men's power and distinction. In setting its distinctive white man “On the Levee at New Orleans,” this ad also repeats London's gesture of sending his white men into exotic territories to make and prove themselves; New Orleans, like the South Seas, stands in for the frontier and black men for the natives. In the *Post* of this period, black men are routinely deployed as a dark background to set off a white man's distinction, as props that signify white affluence, or as negative examples next to which white men appear powerful and masterly. Numerous ads for clothing and automobiles, for instance, use images of smiling African American male servants or porters to bolster the sense of privilege and distinction conferred upon white consumers. Fiction depicts African Americans as a comic type: ignorant, greedy, childish, lazy, generally in need of management and patronage by whites.⁴⁷

The opposition between the white man and the black man in this ad is linked to other important and ambivalent oppositions. Most basically, if the white man is set apart as smooth, successful and distinguished-looking, he, like the white, middle-class businessman and consumer generally constructed by the *Post*, is also threatened with becoming a weak, overcivilized urbanite, a standardized part in the consumer market and the business machine. Whiteness itself becomes associated with passivity, constraint, standardization of self, and the threat of feminization. The white businessman represented in this ad and the white consumer addressed by this ad represent the model to which a fantasy like the subtly part-brown David Grief opposes itself. David Grief had to strike out into the wilderness alone to earn his manhood and distinction through hard work, physical strength and superior business acumen. The consumer addressed by this ad may purchase his manhood with his clothes—the same clothes that many other men will purchase.

If that is so, then the black man in “On the Levee” should represent the “savage,” the raw masculine essence and the stuff of difference that white men need to assimilate and cultivate. But he does not: representations of African American men in the *Post* function differently from representations of either brown or black South Sea Islanders in London’s stories. Representations of African American men as embodying the sort of savage masculinity that white men were urged to borrow existed solely outside the *Post*, remaining only symptomized within the magazine as white defensiveness. One useful illustration of white Americans’ extreme insecurity at this time with respect to what they conceived as African American men’s forceful masculinity is the public response to the Jack Johnson-Jim Jeffries heavyweight boxing match of 1910. Bederman gives a thorough account: when Jack Johnson, a black boxer, took the heavyweight title from the white boxer Tommy Burns in 1908, the white press—including Jack London—“clamored” for retired white champion Jim Jeffries to accept Johnson’s challenge. Jeffries eventually agreed, explaining that he accepted ““for the sole purpose of proving that a white man is better than a negro.”” When Johnson won in a “bloody rout,” explains Bederman,

the defenders of white male supremacy were very publicly hoist [sic] by their own petards. They had insisted on framing the fight as a contest to demonstrate which race could produce the superior specimen of virile manhood. . . . After the fight, the black *Chicago Defender* exulted that Johnson was “the first negro to be admitted the best man in the world.” (2)

Predictably, mobs of angry white men attacked black men all over the country. Congress suddenly outlawed film productions of prizefights, apparently terrified of the possibility that the Johnson-Jeffries fight would be viewed nationwide, and Johnson was hounded out of the country on trumped-up legal charges pertaining to his relationship with a white woman (4). Jack Johnson too

closely embodied the mythical black brute whom white men envied and feared. Even more, he raised the possibility that a black man could be more than a mere brute—could be, in fact, “the best man in the world,” embodying the combination of force and self-control required to beat his *white* opponent.

The year after Jack London witnessed and reported on the Johnson-Jeffries fight as a journalist, he published a short story in the *Post* in which a Mexican prizefighter wins a match against a white man. The story, “The Mexican,” displaces the winner’s role onto a brown instead of a black man; it also explains the superiority of the man of color even as it renders him alien and frightening (*Post*, August 19, 1911). Rivera, the Mexican, has been “seared” by the experience of oppression in Mexico, of seeing his parents massacred with many other workers by Porfirio Diaz’s men. (The metaphor is reminiscent of David Grief’s golden suntan which makes him so successful.) Having joined Madero’s revolution, Rivera works in a driven and singleminded way that frightens even his comrades. When the revolution is threatened with failure for lack of money to purchase guns, he enters a prizefight across the border. The gringo crowd vilifies the wiry, brown-skinned Rivera and cheers on the favorite, a white man named Danny Ward who is larger and more full-grown. Yet it turns out that Ward is also less of a man: “When Danny stripped, there were ohs! and ahs! of delight. His body was perfect. . . . The skin was white as a woman’s, and as smooth. . . . His photographs were in all the physical culture magazines” (27). Danny is so smooth and white that he is womanly; and, like a woman, he is the object of men’s admiring gaze. Rivera has “gone through such vastly greater heats” than that of this fight—or than his opponent has—that he keeps his cool until the end, defeating Ward as Jack Johnson defeated Jim Jeffries. The brown and working-class Mexican, far from being a savage brute, has gained through the experience of oppression a singularly powerful will and a formidable self-discipline. London, rather than depict an exemplary black man in his *Post* fiction, embodies such powerful manhood in a brown one.⁴⁸

Indeed, the *Post* never reported on the Johnson-Jeffries fight. Instead, it consistently used representations of African American men as smiling servants, slouching nonentities, or childish buffoons to defend against an image like Johnson’s—both its threat of harm to whites and its threat that black manhood was superior to white manhood. Such representations also constitute attempts to hold at bay the reality of whites’ violent response, in lynchings, to their own notions of African American men’s savage force. And, at a time only a few decades distant from slavery, the *Post*’s treatment of black men as props and servants harks back to the time of their literal commodification as slaves. Somewhat as the treatment of working-class men as machines or beefcake objects sought to deflect the threats of mechanization and commodification from the middle-class reader, so the treatment of black men as passive props sought to deflect threats of diminished autonomy from the white reader, and to reassure him of his power. Yet the comparison has its limitations: in a story such as London’s “South of the Slot,” the *Post* depicts a white, working-class man who possesses

virility and power, and who collectivizes that power as a labor leader; the magazine would never depict a similar black man. Neither would the *Post* offer sexual, beefcake images of black men.⁴⁹

“On the Levee” neither depicts an enviable man of color nor suggests, as London’s David Grief stories do, that white men must assimilate a hint of “color” in order to make their fortunes and make themselves into outstanding individuals. Hints of the latter gesture, however, exist elsewhere in the *Post* of this period. In the issue containing “A Goboto Night,” for instance, sharing the page with a business advice article called “Success After Forty,” an ad for Flor de Mendel cigars is headed with the word “Individuality” and dominated by a drawing of a cigar which can only be described as phallic—or, more specifically, as resembling an erect penis.⁵⁰ Cigars were traditionally imported to the United States from colonized nations of people of color; this cigar possesses “An unusual blend of Havana leaf.” It is “Wrapped in Sumatra” and offers the “Rich, ripe flavor” and the “Aromatic bouquet” of the tropics. This single-column ad manages to associate virility, imperialism, physical assimilation of exotic “flavor” and masculine “Individuality,” suggesting that the male consumer may purchase them all in the neat package of a cigar. In effect, the ad shares London’s associations and—rather than opposing all of these things to the life of the urban businessman and suggesting that he must escape to the South Seas to find them—attempts to roll them into a convenient commodity.

The consumer constructed here aspires to gain white manhood by purchasing a mass-produced commodity, while London emphasizes that it is obtainable only through individualistic adventure, entrepreneurial risk, and hands-on imperialistic domination. In other words, London’s fiction highlights the contradictory nature of the ad’s messages: How could a man make his own individuality by purchasing the same cigar that masses of other men could purchase? How could an urban white-collar worker and family man—even if he smoked a Flor de Mendel cigar—make himself in the style of David Grief?

What is striking here is that, even as they elucidate such contradictions, London’s stories are ultimately easily assimilated with an ad like that for Flor de Mendel cigars, and the many other ads that packaged imperialism and the colonized Other for white men’s consumption. After all, these stories themselves offered a neatly packaged, vicarious experience of adventure. Like ads that presented beefcake images of working-class men, they offered men of color such as Mauriri for readers’ safe consumption. The white, middle-class men addressed by the *Post* largely did not travel to exotic regions, did not engage in adventure on the high seas, did not personally exploit natives. Instead, they worked at their white-collar jobs, supported their families, and read the *Post* in their leisure time, perhaps imbibing some fantasies by Jack London (as perhaps did their wives and children). As magazine readers, these men followed in the footsteps of the women readers who had made the *Ladies’ Home Journal* so successful. They also followed in their footsteps in becoming increasingly constructed through, not against, the consumer’s vicarious and artificial relation to the world, however that

relation contradicted dominant conceptions of manhood. Advertising and consumer culture are not bothered by such contradiction; in fact, they thrive on the lingering sense of insufficiency that it creates.

I do not wish to suggest that the David Grief stories, as fantasies, functioned solely to remove their readers from real social practices. On the contrary: in their capacity as popular magazine fiction, they worked subtly to justify very real practices within U.S. borders, their representations of black natives, for instance, indirectly legitimating economic exploitation of and terrorism against African Americans. In depicting South Seas entrepreneurialism as a venture that produces strong white men, these stories also worked to legitimate American imperialist expansion. Even as they elucidate the complex, self-contradictory, insecure and defensive nature of the *Post's* use of race in making white, middle-class men, the David Grief stories join with the *Post* in reinscribing the most basic race and gender hierarchies. Rather than undoing the disturbing power relations underpinning white man-making, London reveals how very flexible, adaptable and durable they were.

Notes

My warm thanks to Donald McQuade, Katherine Snyder, Frederick Crews, Michael Rogin, and Greg Forter for their astute and helpful readings of drafts of this article, and to George Starr for suggesting Jack London as a subject in the first place. My writing group, Theresa Tensuan, Daphne Lamothe, and Cynthia Dobbs, have provided the sustained, inspiring, and extraordinarily intelligent support that has enabled this and many other projects.

1. For many years, critics interested in London's life story, in his treatment of "universals" and in arguing defensively for his place in the American literary canon, scarcely read Jack London's stories and novels for their historically specific versions of American manhood. Recent criticism, however, has more to offer in this area. For instance, Jonathan Auerbach has compared London's own self-making through conquest of the field of Klondike regional writing with the travails of his Northland characters (*Male Call: Becoming Jack London* [Durham and London, 1996], especially chapter four, "The (White) Man on Trail: London's Northland Stories" [47-83].) Several critics, including Auerbach in *Male Call*, have also written about masculinity in London's *The Sea-Wolf*: see Robert Forrey, "Male and Female in London's *The Sea-Wolf*," in Jacqueline Tavernier-Courbin, ed., *Critical Essays on Jack London* (Boston, 1983), 131-40, and Christopher Gair, "Gender and Genre: Nature, Naturalism and Authority in *The Sea-Wolf*," *Studies in American Fiction* 22.2 (Autumn 1994): 131-147. On London's problematic construction of heterosexual manhood in *The Sea-Wolf* and *Martin Eden*, see Scott Derrick, "Making a Heterosexual Man: Gender, Sexuality, and Narrative in the Fiction of Jack London," in Leonard Cassuto and Jeanne Campbell Reesman, eds., *Rereading Jack London* (Stanford, California, 1996), 110-129.

2. London critics Jacqueline Tavernier-Courbin and Susan M. Nuernberg protest that many critics have simply indicted London as a racist. Tavernier-Courbin, 6-7, and Susan M. Nuernberg, ed., *The Critical Response to Jack London* (Westport, Connecticut, 1995), xxiii. Tavernier-Courbin and others have attempted to defend London against such charges, citing instances in which he writes from the perspective of a character of color or in which he treats such characters favorably. It seems to me more illuminating to analyze London's (and the *Post's*) politics without trying to defend them.

For an account which contrasts London's explicit white-supremacist beliefs with his less racist treatment of various characters of color, see Andrew Furer's "'Zone-Conquerors' and 'White Devils': The Contradictions of Race in the Works of Jack London," in *Rereading Jack London* (158-171).

3. Curtis Publishing Company marketing publications indicate that the *Saturday Evening Post* and the *Ladies' Home Journal* were literally marketed to white, relatively affluent readers. Based on census data, Curtis created color-coded maps of U.S. cities and steered circulation managers away from neighborhoods insufficiently white, affluent, and native-born (City Markets and Curtis Circu-

lation, 1922-1934, Box 128, Curtis Papers, Van Pelt Library, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia).

4. In the January 6, 1912 issue, for example, about 80 per cent of the clearly gendered ads were addressed to men; that number includes a high proportion of full-page ads, and the issue's only two-page ad. Of 125 ads total, 58 were addressed to men, 13 to women, and 54 to both.

Jan Cohn identifies 1908 as a turning point, when Lorimer decided to revise editorial strategies to begin attracting a female audience. Jan Cohn, *Creating America: George Horace Lorimer and the Saturday Evening Post* (Pittsburgh, 1989). Yet, as she remarks, "the businessman remained the central focus and the principal audience" (86). See her Chapter Two, "'More Than a Million a Week,'" for a particularly useful account of this period in the *Post's* development. On the *Post's* address to a gendered audience, see also Helen Damon-Moore, *Magazines for the Millions* (Albany, New York, 1994).

5. I am thinking of work such as Rachel Bowlby's *Just Looking: Consumer Culture in Dreiser, Gissing and Zola* (New York, 1985).

6. *Saturday Evening Post*, May 22, 1909, 36.

7. The *Saturday Evening Post* and the *Ladies' Home Journal* of this period themselves reflected the view of white, middle-class women as the height of genteel civilization: while the *Post* addressed worldly issues such as business and government in a down-to-earth manner and generally eschewed (or even openly rejected) high-cultural topics, the *Journal* favored a genteel tone and included topics such as art, drama and music. At the same time, it is worth noting that the view of women as more civilized than men was not monolithic or simple. As Gail Bederman points out in her discussion of the Columbian Exposition of 1893, white men sought primary claim to modern civilization in many contexts (*Manliness and Civilization* [Chicago, 1995], 31-41).

8. Notable examples elsewhere in London's oeuvre include *The Sea-Wolf* (1904), in which the satisfactory man appears as two men, one intellectual and effete, and the other animalistic and brutal; *The Call of the Wild*, in which Buck the dog sheds his civilized veneer to regain his fundamental savage state; and *Martin Eden* (1908), in which the title character embodies both a working-class self and a new, middle-class self, ultimately becoming so alienated from each self and each world that he commits suicide. In London's novels and stories, at least one self must generally suffer defeat and death. London's men (or, occasionally, dogs) maintain, at best, a difficult and ambivalent coexistence of their warring selves; at worst, they are destroyed by their inner or outer schism.

9. Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, see especially 7-19. On the late Victorian notion that boys were threatened by feminization at home and at school, see Jeffrey P. Hantover, "The Boy Scouts and the Validation of Masculinity," in Elizabeth H. Pleck and Joseph H. Pleck, eds., *The American Man* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1980), 285-301.

10. With respect to emulating working-class masculinity, Harvey Green documents collegiate appropriation of working-class sports such as boxing and baseball in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Harvey Green, *Fit for America* (New York, 1986), 203-208. Michael Kimmel demonstrates that as early as the mid-nineteenth century, members of the "educated elite" were "idealizing the rough-hewn working classes" and seeking renewed masculinity in "the deep soil at the bottom of society." Kimmel also shows the strong connection of idealized working-class manhood with the ethos of the frontiersman. Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America* (New York, 1996), 61; Kimmel quotes Francis Parkman's *The Oregon Trail* (1849). On instructing boys in how to cultivate their savage part, see "'Teaching Our Sons to Do What We Have Been Teaching the Savages to Avoid': G. Stanley Hall, Racial Recapitulation, and the Neurasthenic Paradox," in Bederman, *Manliness*, 77-120.

11. Stewart E. Tolnay and E.M. Beck, *A Festival of Violence: An Analysis of Southern Lynchings, 1882-1930* (Chicago, 1995), ix. Lynchings peaked at 99 documented in 1893, with smaller fluctuations until about 1922, when they began a steady decline. Tolnay and Beck offer several explanations for variations in numbers of lynchings over the years, mostly involving white men's desire for economic and political domination of black men (see esp. 32, 184, 271). Of course, as many have observed, the invention of black men's sexual threat to white women, and white men's violent "response," provided a way to bolster white manhood, which was perceived to face particular threats in the post-Civil War south.

12. "Profits by Accident" and "The Man Who Would Be a Boy," *Saturday Evening Post*, May 22, 1909, 29.

13. "Success After Forty," *Saturday Evening Post*, September 30, 1911, 16.

14. Advertisements, *Saturday Evening Post*, May 22, 1909, 30, 53, 56, 65.

15. The phrase is quoted by James Playsted Wood in his *The Curtis Magazines* (New York, 1971), 63.

16. See, for example, an advertisement for collars, *Saturday Evening Post*, May 22, 1909, 36.

17. See, for example, "True Economy as a Business Asset," May 22, 1909, 30.

18. Taylor espoused minute specialization and control of workers' motions in "A Piece-Rate System, Being a Step Towards a Partial Solution to the Labor Problem," *Transactions ASME* 16 (1895): 856-903; "Shop Management," *Transactions ASME* 24 (1903): 1337-1480; and *The Prin-*

ciples of Scientific Management (New York, 1911).

19. Stephen Meyer, III, *The Five-Dollar Day: Labor Management and Social Control in the Ford Motor Company, 1908-1921* (Albany, New York, 1981), 40.

20. See, for example, an advertisement that pictures a brawny man containing a magneto (July 4, 1914, 41); an ad that equates an automobile with an employee (January 2, 1915, 26-27); or an ad for gauges that promises to give employees the "Accuracy, Standardization, [and] Speed" of machines (July 6, 1918, 91).

21. It is important to note that, as Richard Ohmann asserts, many readers of magazines such as the *Post* were *not* members of the professional-managerial class. "History and Literary History: The Case of Mass Culture," *Poetics Today* 9.2 (1988): 370. We can only imagine the uncomfortably divided identifications of, for instance, a clerical worker reading an ad that addresses a manager who seeks to mechanize his employees.

22. See, for instance, an ad for Fisk Solid Tires that offers the image of a beefcake serviceman and implies that he is "ready to go over the top in service, at any time" (June 3, 1918, 27). The article "The Man Who Would Be a Boy" recommends companionship with a working-class man in place of marriage to a woman (May 22, 1909, 28-29).

23. See, for instance, Homi Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," *Modern Literary Theory: A Reader* (London, 1996), 360-67; Bhabha, "The Other Question," *Screen* 24:6 (Nov.-Dec. 1983): 18-36; Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York, 1993); Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1993); Haryette Mullen, "Optic White: Blackness and the Production of Whiteness," *Diacritics* 24 (Summer-Fall 1994): 71-89; and Rachel Blau du Plessis, "'HOO, HOO, HOO': Some Episodes in the Construction of Modern Whiteness," *American Literature* 67:4 (Dec. 1995): 667-700.

24. *The Great American Adventure* (Boston, 1984), 12-13.

25. *The Great American Adventure*, 4; see also Green's *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire* on both British and American adventure fiction (New York, 1979).

26. London's accounts of such recruiting in his travel narrative *The Cruise of the Snark* describe terrible conditions aboard a "blackbirding" yacht in the Solomon Islands and reveal such labor "recruiting" to be little different from slave trade (New York, 1911, 283). *The Cruise of the Snark* recounts London's attempt to sail around the world with his wife Charmian and a small crew on the schooner he had built in an Oakland, California harbor. Having contracted various ailments and become too ill to sail, London ended his cruise in Melanesia, spending several months in an Australian hospital before returning to California.

27. Herbert Sussman has traced the metaphor of fluid for masculine essence throughout the Victorian period, suggesting that it was associated with male sexual energy, and that manhood required containment of masculine essence and its redirection into production. Around the turn of the century, masculine essence became explicitly associated with dollars, so that anti-masturbatory regimens were supposed to increase moneymaking capacity. Herbert Sussman, *Victorian Masculinities* (Cambridge and New York, 1995). On the issue of spermatic economy, see Pleck and Pleck, *The American Man*, 15-16.

28. I am indebted to Daphne Lamothe for this observation.

29. In Conrad, this moral insufficiency of colonial white men is as much hollowness as rottenness, so that Marlow meets a "papier-mâché Mephistopheles" whose insides are "a little loose dirt, maybe." *Heart of Darkness and The Secret Sharer* (New York, 1983), 93.

30. Labor, "Jack London's Pacific World," in Tavernier-Courbin, *Critical Essays on Jack London*, 212, 205-222.

31. One white woman, though she is dark-complexioned, appears briefly as a swindler's mysterious wife in "A Little Account With Swithin Hall," *Saturday Evening Post*, September 2, 1911.

32. Richard O'Connor, *Jack London: A Biography* (Boston and Toronto, 1964), photo insert following p. 242.

33. Ads for Hallmark Shirts and Slidewell Collars, Pennsylvania Knit Coats, "Whiz" suspenders and "all makes" of typewriters for sale or rental (66). Golf itself implies play within a tamed and circumscribed landscape—the opposite of the wild territory of the South Seas.

34. *Post* editor George Horace Lorimer's own *Letters From a Self-Made Merchant to His Son*, published serially and anonymously in the *Post* in 1901-2 and later released as a highly popular novel, extols the virtues of the self-made man and informs privileged college-boy sons about the self-making experiences they will miss.

35. *Saturday Evening Post*, September 30, 1911, 5. Gamble's cleverness and extraordinary "force" enable him to walk off with a large chunk of Gresham's money, and thus also with the delightful woman, Constance Joy, who was bequeathed to Gresham by a relative and who knows a strong man when she sees one.

36. Ambivalence about this self-restraint is ubiquitous in the *Post* of 1911. For instance, Gresham, the insufficiently forceful receiver of inherited wealth, "was so flawlessly dressed that he sat stiffly." September 30, 1911, 4.

37. This gesture of equating upstanding manhood with whiteness and failed manhood with nonwhiteness is repeated elsewhere in this issue of the *Post*. In a story called "The Big Idea," which depicts only white characters, the self-made and upstanding protagonist chastises a weak and duplicitous man: "If I was to let you off now, would you try to brace up and act like a white man?" September 30, 1911, 73. Frantz Fanon describes a similar set of equations with respect to blackness and whiteness in Martinique: "In the collective unconscious, black = ugliness, sin, darkness, immorality. In other words, he is a Negro who is immoral. If I order my life like that of a moral man, I simply am not a Negro. Whence the Martinican custom of saying of a worthless white man that he has a 'nigger soul.' Color is nothing, I do not even notice it, I know only one thing, which is the purity of my conscience and the whiteness of my soul." *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York, 1967), 192.

38. Earle Labor, Robert C. Leitz, III, and I. Milo Shepard, eds., *The Complete Short Stories of Jack London*, vol. 2 (Stanford, California, 1993), 1455. Andrew Furer points out that Chun Ah Chun contradicts London's anti-Asian views expressed in *A Daughter of the Snows* and "The Yellow Peril." Furer, "'Zone-Conquerors,'" 163-4.

39. Quoted in Bederman, *Manliness*, 199.

40. Ronald Takaki, *Strangers From a Different Shore* (Boston, 1989). These were, of course, some of the rationalizations for the various Asian Exclusion Acts of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. The Chinese were also, however, subjected to opposite stereotypes, as "savage, childlike, and lustful" (101). As Homi Bhabha writes, "the chain of stereotypical signification is curiously mixed and split, polymorphous and perverse, an articulation of multiple belief" ("The Other Question," 34). It is also adapted to the social-psychological need of the moment.

41. *Saturday Evening Post*, June 24, 1911, 13.

42. Similarly, the reader is left with the lurking sense that London frames Chun Ah Chun, in completely retreating from his family's affairs, as not quite man enough to stay and fight it out—as a bit too much the aloof "philosopher."

43. *Two Color Advertising* (Philadelphia, 1917), 63.

44. In Richard O'Connor's *Jack London: A Biography*, an acquaintance quotes London as remarking, with reference to "homosexual" men: "Sailors are that way, too. . . . Wherever you herd men together and deny them women their latent sexual perversions come to the surface" (327; quoted by Robert Forrey in "Male and Female in London's *The Sea Wolf*").

45. Leslie Fiedler has described a very similar dynamic for Natty Bumppo and Chingachgook, a relationship which similarly shields the white man from relationships with women: "This is the pure marriage of males—sexless and holy, a kind of counter-matrimony, in which the white refugee from society and the dark-skinned primitive are joined till death do them part." *Love and Death in the American Novel* (New York, 1992), 211.

46. Robert Forrey writes of London's character Humphrey Van Weyden, who admires the hypermasculine Wolf Larsen in a manner that verges on the erotic, that his "transformation . . . from an effete intellectual into a strong man . . . takes place as a result of his relationship with Wolf Larsen" ("Male and Female in London's *The Sea Wolf*," 134). For a nuanced, Freudian reading of the "remaindered homoeroticism" present in so much of London's writing, see Derrick, "Making a Heterosexual Man," in *Rereading Jack London*.

47. A representative story depicting African American men as childlike and amusing is "The J'iner," by Harris Dickson. September 10, 1910. At the same time, the *Post* contains occasional moments of liberal-humanist anti-racism, a view that all men are similar (read: white) under their skins. An editorial of September 30, 1911, for instance, launches an anti-stereotyping argument with respect to Jews and several European "races" (26). Similarly, an article of June 24, 1911, entitled "The Autobiography of a Jailer" proposes that black and white prison inmates share equally in basic humanity (3-4). In light of these articles, the emphatic racism of ads and fiction reads partly as a defense against the full implications of such humanist views. It is also worth noting that the NAACP was founded in 1910; the *Post* may also have implicitly (not explicitly) responded to anti-racist activism by blacks and whites, echoing public anxiety by presenting overt liberal humanism alongside unselfconscious, virulent racism.

48. As Andrew Furer has suggested, London's journalistic accounts of the Johnson-Jeffries fight run against standard racist associations by casting the white Jeffries as the "primitive fighter" and ultimately crediting Johnson with "a powerful, creative mind" as well as "a superb body" (Furer, "'Zone-Conquerors,'" 169).

Yet London's reports leading up to Johnson's victory yield a more conflicted picture. Before the fight, London celebrates "this big, modern Jim Jeffries" as having "bridged the gap" between primitive savagery and civilized self-control (that ideal tension): "despite Jeff's primitiveness, he is more disciplined than the other man [Johnson], vastly more disciplined" (King Hendricks and Irving Shepard, eds., *Jack London Reports: War Correspondence, Sports Articles, and Miscellaneous Writings* [Garden City, New York, 1970], 286, 267). Johnson, on the other hand, London implies to be slack of will and of discipline (unlike Rivera of "The Mexican"). Assessing Johnson's "relaxed" fighting style, London lapses into a stereotype: "[Johnson] seems to relax in mind as well as in body.

It is far less tiring to shuffle about flatfootedly than to spring and poise with muscles tensed" (274). "Johnson's famous loafing tactics," London explains, ". . . are very little deliberate and largely temperamental" (275). "This fight does not mean to Johnson what it does to Jeff," declares London (268); "Johnson is happy-go-lucky in temperament, as light and carefree as a child. . . . He lives more in the moment. . . . He is not capable of seriously adjusting his actions to remote ends" (266). Only after Johnson's victory does London recast Johnson's calm as a skillful cover for energy and for "a perfect mechanism of mind and body" (296). And then he concludes by calling somewhat forlornly for a new (white) champion who can "remove that smile" from Johnson's face (301).

49. Greg Mullen has shown that another, and considerably less respectable, American magazine of the early twentieth century—Bernarr MacFadden's *Physical Culture*—did offer the bodies of black men as "objects of desire" (44). Even here, though, the images are of "exotic" natives, not African Americans, and black men are presented solely as the objects, and not as "agents" of desire. "Nudes, Prudes and Pigmies: The Desirability of Disavowal in Physical Culture," *Discourse* 15:1 (Fall 1992): 27-48.

50. *Saturday Evening Post*, September 30, 1911, 57. The single-column cigar ad flanks the article on the left side of the page, while another ad, for Pyrene fire extinguishers, flanks the article on the right with a very similar phallic image. It is tempting to read these images as reassuring supplements to the article, which informs men that they may still make themselves after middle age.