

# jack london and the tradition of superman socialism

geoffrey harpham

Jack London is one of the most representative men of a confused and uncertain generation. While London's thinking on socialism is commonly taken as the idiosyncratic garble of an egomaniac who sold out to the capitalists he pretended to despise, the orthodox conservatism of his socialism is generally overlooked. Since the time when "collectivism" and "individualism" became enshrined under the names "Communism" and "Fascism" as official national ideologies, it has been easy to distinguish discordant elements in London's thought. And certainly many of London's friends were appalled at his inconsistencies. But for many Progressive-era socialists, London's description of socialism as "group individualism" struck all the right resonances. After all, both strains were anti-bourgeois, revolutionary, violent and anarchic. And both openly capitalized on the current national "gusto" mania. In fact, so many literary socialists were exponents of this bipolar "superman socialism" that it can fairly be said that London—given his eccentricities—was at least operating within a tradition, even adapting a cliché. Merging the vision of the Just Society with the idea of the romantic hero, London was merely advocating the most popular and influential form of literary conservatism—as well as literary socialism—in the first decade of the century.

In formulating this hybrid, London was responding to trends which influenced many of the leading socialist-intellectuals and those who preached socialism while standing outside the movement itself. Edward Bellamy, for example, forecasted a serenely dull society of the year 2000 (*Looking Backward*, 1888) which was to be governed by a single syndicate representing the people, with little effective democracy. Vulgarized Nietzscheanism had a direct influence on some socialists who saw society following the superman in evolving toward a condition of superior hu-

manity. Shaw's "philosopher-athlete" of *Man and Superman* (1903), who derived partially from the Nietzschean superman, excited London tremendously. In Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* (1905), Dr. Schliemann, a "philosophic anarchist" who undoubtedly speaks for the author, proposes the establishment of a magazine "for the purpose of interpreting and popularizing the gospel of Friedrich Nietzsche, the prophet of Evolution."

H. G. Wells is also a crucial figure in London's early intellectual biography. London discovered Wells while reporting on the London slums for an American newspaper in 1902. The book which emerged from his experiences was called *The People of the Abyss*, a phrase borrowed from Wells' description of the urban poor in *Anticipations*, which had appeared during the previous year. In that book, Wells described socialism as a method by which enlightened science would so organize society as to eliminate waste and corruption from life. But this society was radically undemocratic, run by an aristocracy of engineers who largely ignored "whole masses of human population" which were "as a whole, inferior." London also profited from the common Fabian appropriation of the concept of evolution as proof that society could change and adapt itself to new circumstances.

London's superman socialism was not mere megalomania; throughout his letters and essays he seeks to establish scientific, factual bases for his sense of superiority. In these respects, the work of two lesser-known writers, Benjamin De Casseres and Osias L. Schwarz, provides a lucid index to contemporary thought. London was particularly enthusiastic about De Casseres, a widely quoted polemicist and gadfly dubbed "the American Nietzsche," whose articles had been appearing since 1903. London wrote in 1912 that, though he was "in the opposite intellectual camp from that of Nietzsche," yet "no man in my own camp stirs me as does Nietzsche or as does De Casseres."<sup>1</sup> London sent with this letter a MS. copy of De Casseres' aptly titled collection of essays, *Chameleon: Being the Book of My Selves* (New York, 1922). De Casseres preached individualism, master-morality, lofty indifference and all the rest. But what is particularly interesting in relation to London's thought is his use of the all-embracing force of evolution in rining together anarchy and authoritarianism. In the evolutionary process, civilization is "the last refinement of the herding instinct," representing a degenerate form of life, a "phase of fear." Real progress is achieved by the regression of the superior man to a pre-civilized state. The strong man can rob, rape, pillage or dissipate; if it yields truth or beauty, the sin is merely self-expression. "'All property is robbery'—that is the reason why we hold all property to be sacred." (100)

This would be very familiarly Nietzschean if it were not for the essay "Absorption: A Universal Law." Here, De Casseres is at his stylistic and ratiocinative quirkiest, analyzing life as "a sucking up, a blending of forces." The weak are gobbled by the strong, the small by the large, etc.

Applauding this right of the mighty, De Casseres extends the law to cultural life and social change. The trusts, for example, “absorb the small dealer and dangerous competition, not by main force, but by a process as legitimate and as inexorable as the drop of rain is absorbed into the sea. . . . The trust is . . . the instinct of the sublime manifesting itself in the world of give-and-take.” With the mention of “inexorable laws,” we feel securely at home in the Darwinian-Spencerian universe, where the Blond Beasts of Empire roam freely. De Casseres, however, asserted that if “the nation will obey the same principle, absorbing the giant corporations into the state, and ultimately being itself absorbed into larger states, the result will be—universal socialism! Not, however, of the “brotherhood of man” variety: “It is this that makes socialism right. It is founded on the law of absorption, my euphemism for murder.” (204-05)

De Casseres’ socialism is based on the conviction that the civilized man is a degenerate, effeminate, overrefined, cringing beast.

The Masses! the masses! That mighty strangled sigh that goes into the infinite! The trillion-eyed being who sees nothing, whose life is nothing, who is just the Mass! They manure the glory of the great. . . . A meaningless generation. A useless fecundity. A buffoonery of nature. A flood of sap. The stench of an enormous iniquity. Will the earth never cease belching! . . . The uncountable, inscrutable masses—pedestals of flesh and bone for the strong man—skulk back to oblivion, one crawling over the other ant-wise. The obscene, gluttonous, putrescent trillions—the eruption of some eternal subhuman hell. (71-72)

De Casseres is unable to classify the masses in any known category of humanity. But, it seems, neither the Mass nor the Individual are wholly human, and behind this praise of the solitary soul we can sense an abiding feeling of self-contempt. In fact, at one point De Casseres depicts all life as “grotesque, fantastic, irrational, [and] imbecile . . . to the eye of the Yogi, the emancipated mind.” (110)

Throughout the Progressive era, even the most orthodox socialist writers presented grotesque, terrifying images of the masses as the central fact on which everybody could agree, the nucleus of the commitment to social justice. But Schwarz, for whose *General Types of Superior Men* (Toronto, 1916) London contributed an adulatory preface, went even further, indicting all non-supermen. In an “Introductory Letter” to Schwarz’ book, Max Nordau<sup>2</sup> takes exception to Schwarz’ socialism, arguing that society will always be constituted largely of philistines; what Nordau really likes is Schwarz’ abuse of the “average man who is in fact an average beast.” “The miserable creature man” and his “ghastly and appalling” society necessitate such helpful prescriptive studies of superiority. Schwarz is also a superman socialist, but he specifically renounces Nietzschean amorality in favor of the proper use of genius in struggling for a better social order. And nothing could be further from De Casseres’

ranting than Schwarz' taxonomic pedantry. Schwarz' superior being is "nothing but a more normally, harmoniously, many-sidedly, freely developed human being." (422) This superior man is in strong contrast, however, to the average man, who "stands for a mere social unit, social cell, easily replaceable . . . and not infrequently misplaced on account of social imperfections, thus hindering the functioning of social organs, or geniuses." (26). This average cipher is usually content to remain in the "sweet habitual sleep of its semi-conscious, hypnoidic life." (29)

Group Individualism had a positive and a negative side. The negative side is a view of the masses dominated not by sympathy but by contempt or horror. The positive side is a view of the superior man dominated by admiration. For all superman socialists, the exact delineation of the category of the damned was of supreme importance. London's socialism, for example, was always exclusive, aligned with the myth of Nordic dominance. "Where am I to draw the line?" he wrote to a friend; "At the White. . . . If a man would save an animal from pain, another kind of altruism is brought to bear; the same if he saves a nigger . . . a yellow, or a brown. But let Mr. White meet another white hemmed in by dangers from the other colors [and] they will hear the call of blood and stand back to back."<sup>3</sup> Always drawn by the cult of race, London never placed his faith in the magnetic power of an idea in binding mankind to brotherhood. "I do not believe in the universal brotherhood of man. I believe my race is the salt of the earth. I am a scientific socialist, not a utopian. . . ."<sup>4</sup> London's controversial statement that he was "a White Man first, and a socialist second" actually reflects a horror of racial impurity, which would lead to social degeneration. Advocating the pure breed in dogs and men, London glorified in particular the Anglo-Saxon as the agent of an irresistible destiny, lord of the Darwinian jungle. "God abhors a mongrel,"<sup>5</sup> he asserted confidently.

God abhorred weaklings as well, and while this apparent fact of urban life presented problems for many socialist theoreticians, London predicted that the "coming change of system" would not necessarily be "the death stroke to individuality. . . . There will always be leaders, and no man can lead without fighting for his position. . . ."<sup>6</sup> The miserable, disease-ridden proletariat was never, for London, the core of the Socialist movement. Playing socialism as a strong man's game, London became a primary spokesman for a barbaric American Kiplingism in which the fit survived and the unfit perished, to nobody's regret—a view which lent itself to a sanction not only of superman socialism, but of empire and militarism as well. London was enormously taken with the vital figure of Teddy Roosevelt, the presiding genius of the era. And the image of the Great Big White Man, responding to the romance of imperialism while preaching bloody reform undoubtedly contributed to London's concept of the revolutionary leader. Following his heroic rise from the slums of Oakland, London was profoundly self-reliant—even self-adulatory, to the

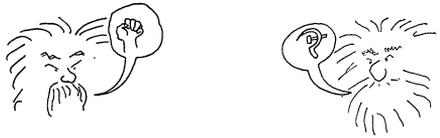
extent that, in order to survey himself completely he had to identify himself with his race and his class, making good his revenge against an oppressive society by the threat of multitudes on the march.

For London, individualistic aspiration seemed entirely consistent with socialist doctrine, at least during the early and middle parts of his career; many of his bourgeois contemporaries, themselves confused and seeking authority for their impulsive expansionism and laissez-faire brutalities, agreed. And among the socialists, there was no commonly accepted body of dogma by which to repudiate such heresy. Marx was not one of the most widely read authors of the socialist movement; no edition of his works was generally available until 1906, when Ernest Untermann's edition of "the entire Marxian theories of capitalist production" appeared. Indeed, Marx's theory of proletarian revolution is extremely remote from London's prophecy that the revolution would be conducted by a picked group of Nietzsche-Horatio Alger heroes. What London really sought was a condition where only the "unfit, inefficient and mediocre" would occupy their Abyss, leaving the strong and proud to ascend into the higher strata. The "people of the abyss," far from becoming more and more inclined to revolution as their condition worsens, become increasingly devitalized "until, at the bottom of the social pit, they are wretched, inarticulate beasts, living like beasts, breeding like beasts, dying like beasts."

But London was not only contemptuous of those in the Abyss; he was horrified by them as well. Such descent was a real possibility for a child of the slums such as London had been. London joined the growing literary movements of naturalism and the new realism in portraying grotesque visions of the urban hell. Stephen Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (1893) may be said to have begun this movement in America. To those who saw society as degenerate and overripe, these urban jungles seemed a symptom. Bellamy, for example, described society through the common contemporary metaphor of a comet which, having attained perihelion, was about to plunge downward to "its nether goal in the regions of chaos." And the final pages of *Looking Backward* are dominated by a nightmare vision of the Boston tenement district. All the muckraking classics, including Jacob Riis' *How the Other Half Lives*, Morrisson's *Tales of Mean Street* and Sinclair's *The Jungle* presented such catalogues of human misery.

So far from favoring the weak, London always presents them as corrupt, putrescent and bestial. While it seems incredible to many later critics that the element of reactionary contempt and horror at the oppressed should have escaped unnoticed, perhaps the explanation lies in the fact that the strong middle class element in the contemporary socialist movement never really identified its condition with that of the people of the abyss at all—this was, after all, the era of the "millionaire socialists"<sup>7</sup>—while to the working-class socialist, the images of degeneration seemed

themselves to argue for social change. "The Apostate" (1906), for example, was published as a socialist pamphlet. This story concerns a twelve-year-old boy named Johnny (London's childhood name) who winds jute-twine on tiny bobbins for long hours (as did London) in order to support his mother and younger brothers and sisters. Marx had spoken about the dangers of man becoming "an appendage of the machine"; Johnny has had machinery "bred into him." Working in a gargoye posture, bending over his knees, his shoulders growing humped and his chest narrower, he passes through all the diseases malnutrition has to offer; he is a hardened adult at eleven. When he finally rebels and shuffles away from family and jute mill, it is doubtful whether anything is left. "He did not walk like a man. He did not look like a man. He was a travesty of the human. It was a twisted and stunted and nameless piece of life that shambled like a sickly ape, arms loose-hanging, stoop-shouldered, narrow-chested, grotesque and terrible." This is a self-portrait for London, the vision that must have confronted him as he stared disbelieving into the Abyss. So effective was he as a creator of scenes of horror that the counter-revolutionary element was often overlooked; he was widely regarded even in the Soviet Union as the foremost American socialist.



*The Iron Heel*, in fact, is the only book by an American author listed in the Russian intellectual Bukharin's bibliography of Communist literature. There is no better guide to the confusion of the contemporary socialist movement than the reception of this book since its appearance, in 1907, to an astonished public. Out of print in this country from 1907 to 1971, it has remained popular in England as well as in the Soviet Union. It was, in its time, the one book on the required reading list of every socialist. Anatole France wrote a respectful introduction to a later edition, and even Leon Trotsky said the book surprised him "with the audacity and independence of his historical foresight."

Some reviewers, however, had strong objections, and the book never sold as well as some of London's early work. Of course the middle class periodicals were outraged. But even some socialist writers deplored the final scenes of "The People of the Abyss." *The International Socialist Review* printed an article by John Spargo in which he maintained that the book was "well calculated . . . to repel many whose addition to our forces is sorely needed." *The Arena*, which also believed that London was part of an international capitalist conspiracy to overthrow the communist movement, commented that, with all the blood in the final pages, the book would discourage and insult the proletariat, serving as "a detriment rather than a help to the cause of social justice." What was wrong?

According to Spargo, the heresy was in its giving “a new impetus to the old and generally discarded cataclysmic theory; it tends to weaken the political Socialist movement by discrediting the ballot and to encourage the chimerical and reactionary notion of physical force, so alluring to a certain type of mind. . . .” Spargo, no superman himself, was one of the few who perceived the essentially reactionary character of London’s socialism. But as we have seen, he—not London—was in the minority camp; much of the intellectual leadership of the socialist movement was attracted by the nineteenth-century notion of the hero, the ethical brute.

The part of the book all socialists liked was the scene in Chapter Five where Ernest Everhard—a name which connotes such revolutionary qualities as sobriety, determination and sexual vigilance—beards the power brokers at the meeting of the Philomath Club. Here, the socialist hero emerges in full plumage as the antagonist of the wealthy, avatar of evolution, scorning sham, hypocrisy, exploitation, complacency, injustice, logical fallacies, metaphysics, contemplation, impotence and most women—while extolling truth, facts, science, equality of opportunity, the strenuous life, violence when ballots fail and domesticity when available.

But a larger mythology than the socialists could provide governs this malignant self-portrait. London-as-Everhard seems himself in Biblical Cinerama as prophet of destruction, avenging angel and even as Jesus Christ. London even includes excerpts from his own speeches as dialogue for this saviour of mankind.

For London, all violence was purgative; even World War I was “a pentecostal cleansing” of the human spirit. And he had always recognized a strongly religious element in class warfare. Speaking to college audiences on his 1905-06 lecture tour,<sup>8</sup> he compared the revolution to a “passionate gospel, the Brotherhood of Man. Not only is it a cold-blooded economic propaganda, but it is in essence a religious propaganda with a fervor in it of Paul and Christ.” In *The War of the Classes*, London had introduced the apocalyptic theme, declaring that class separation “hints of anarchy,” and predicting a period immediately prior to the revolution in which “Powers will rise and fall, and mighty coalitions shape and dissolve in the swift whirl of events.” Apocalypse is realized in *The Iron Heel*; as violence spreads across the country, a “last days mania” arises among the people, led by “an offshoot of the Seventh Day Adventists.” (Chapter 15) Popular leaders “worship at the shrine of the Revolution,” and promise the transfiguration of men into gods; Everhard himself is always conscious of dying to make men holy as he dies to make them free. Not surprisingly, the terrorist guerrilla groups (which spring up after the initial rebellion is crushed) are named the Danites (after the avenging angels of Mormon mythology), the Valkyries, the Berserkers and the Wrath of God.

To Spargo and other ballot-box socialists, this prediction was appalling. And in fact the kind of violent and anarchic frenzy projected in

this book was the special province of the superman socialist, for whom law and morality were bourgeois prejudices. For ordinary men, such prejudices constitute absolute bounds of behavior; while, for the superman socialist, indifference to these bounds is the first step in self-mastery and the salvation of society. In the lawlessness and sheer excess of his self-expression, he achieves the ultimate, the sublime.

The people of the Abyss in *The Iron Heel* are agents not only of the revolution, but of the wrath of God—beasts of the Apocalypse, come to destroy a sinful and corrupt civilization.

It was not a column, but a mob, an awful river that filled the street, the people of the abyss, mad with drink and wrong, up at last and roaring for the blood of their masters. . . . It surged past my vision in concrete waves of wrath, snarling and growling, carnivorous, drunk with whiskey from pillaged warehouses, drunk with hatred, drunk with lust for blood—men, women, and children, in rags and tatters, dim ferocious intelligences with all the godlike blotted from their features and all the fiendlike stamped in, apes and tigers, anaemic consumptives and great hairy beasts of burden, wan faces from which vampire society had sucked the juice of life, bloated forms swollen with physical grossness and corruption, withered hags and death's-heads bearded like patriarchs, festering youth and festering age, faces of fiends, crooked, twisted, misshapen monsters blasted with the ravages of disease and all the horrors of chronic innutrition—the refuse and the scum of life, a raging, screaming, demoniacal horde. (Chapter 23)

Here, the apocalyptic idea merges with London's detestation of corruption and weakness, and this double source is responsible for much of the ambivalence of response toward the people of the abyss. They bear not only the fury of the Godhead<sup>9</sup> but also the afflictions of degeneration and devitalization. Images of life twisted and diseased, they yet function as symbols of a higher realm.

Such portrayals of the masses formed the backbone of London's commitment to socialism. Reviewing Sinclair's *The Jungle*, London said it depicted "not what man ought to be, but what man is compelled to be in this, our world, in the twentieth century . . . it depicts what our country really is, the home of oppression and injustice, a nightmare of misery, an inferno of suffering, a jungle wherein wild beasts eat and are eaten." And in *The Iron Heel*, personal nightmare, Apocalypse and the urban jungle are combined in one of the most complex and, to London's contemporaries, terrifying pictures of society's underworld.

Degeneration and regeneration struggled briefly in London's thought, achieving a moment of balance in the powerful ambiguity of the people of the Abyss in *The Iron Heel*. But what was merely complex in *The Iron Heel* becomes self-subverting in *Martin Eden* (1909); as degeneration dominates more and more of London's vision, the superman becomes

more an isolate and less able to effect the regeneration of the masses. This impotence comes clear on examination of the character of Brissenden, Eden's friend and mentor. Brissenden represents a further development of London's superman socialism. Indeed, after Brissenden, it could develop no further.

Brissenden would have Eden believe that a contempt for the average and an obsession with excellence underlies his socialistic indictment of "the timid swine that now rule." Actually, Brissenden is resigned to socialism rather than committed to it; he knows it would mean the ascendancy of "the whole slave-morality" he despises. In fact, Brissenden is motivated solely by a sense of repugnance with all he can see. He feels that socialism will triumph not because it is right, but because the very rottenness of the capitalistic system dictates its downfall.

London approved Brissenden's socialism, quoting it in defense of the book's orthodoxy.<sup>10</sup> But Brissenden has no positive vision of the Just Society. His perceptions are limited to an apprehension of disease. Within the space of a single, incredible, three-page dialogue with Eden, Brissenden attacks "the little mannikins," "ghouls and harpies," "the spawn," "the little chattering daws of men . . . mouthing and besliming the True, the Beautiful, and God," "the cowed gnomes," "these sick and rotten cities of men," "man and woman, all of them animated stomachs . . . dry-rot is no name for it," and "That pale, shrivelled, female thing." (Chapter 32) This last is a description of Ruth Morse, Eden's anemic-ethereal girlfriend. Only Eden's "throttling clutch on his throat" ends the stream of negation. Shadowy, nebulous, diseased—Brissenden is unique in the parade of London's muscular heroes. And instead of resolute determination and relentless perseverance, he carries the grimmest message: that knowledge leads to nihilism; that perception means only consciousness of decay and degeneration; and that the will to intenser life means the will to suicide. An aesthete, he knows that death is the mother of beauty: he longs for nothings so fervently as to die.

Eden is convinced that Brissenden has the soul of a prophet with the flaming uncontrol of genius. Concerning his body, however, Eden is troubled.

Brissenden's face and long, slender hands were browned by the sun—excessively browned, Martin thought. This sunburn bothered Martin. It was patent that Brissenden was no outdoor man. Then how had he been ravaged by the sun? Something morbid and significant attached to that sunburn, was Martin's thought as he returned to study of the face, narrow, with high cheek-bones and cavernous hollows, and graced with as delicate and fine an aquiline nose as Martin had ever seen. (Chapter 31)

Like Loerke of D. H. Lawrence's *Women in Love*, Brissenden is the artist-degenerate, scorning society—and humanity itself—in favor of a never-to-be-embodied ideal of Art. Popularized largely through Max Nordau's

*Degeneration* (New York, 1895), the figure of the artist-degenerate was the nightmare of contemporary reactionaries who saw in mysticism, the cult of egoism, and the whole *fin-de-siècle* ethos signs of the impending collapse of an overrefined and unworthy civilization. This civilization, Nordau asserted, encouraged the evolution of mankind into morbid, hysterical, or neurasthenic types—of which Brissenden is an example.

As an evolutionist, London has long been aware of the concept of degeneration, and with Nordau's work; he even chides Schwarz in his preface to *General Types of Superior Men* for not being as much a disciple of Nordau as Schwarz would like to think. In fact, in *Martin Eden* London uses some of the physical stigmata of degeneracy as described by Nordau and others in a way that indicates he expected his readers to be able to identify them without explanation. He refers to "Eurasians stamped with degeneracy" (presumably because the mixing of the races has brought about a decrease in the vitality of the bloodline); and when he wants to stress Eden's great health, he points out the regularity and strength of his teeth (faulty teeth, Nordau assures his reader, are suspect). When the reporter at the socialist meeting describes Eden in the most terrifying possible terms for his newspaper, he mentions Eden's bilateral asymmetry "and various other signs of degeneration." The others at the meeting are "wild-eyed, long-haired men, neurasthenic and degenerate types. . . ." Brissenden's "morbid" sunburn is only one stigma of his degeneracy; he betrays himself just as surely in other ways. Although he looks like an ascetic, he is, "in all the failing blood of him, a frank voluptuary." Like the quintessential degenerate, Des Esseintes of Huysman's *A Rebours*, he had done "many strange things in quest of new sensations. As he told Martin, he had once gone three days without water, and done so voluntarily in order to experience the exquisite delight of such a thirst assuaged." (Chapter 32)

The treatment of Brissenden in this book is a measure of London's complete disillusionment with the ideals which had sustained him to this point in his career, and with superman socialism in particular. The fact that a degenerate—with whom the early London never would have sympathized—is the prophet of higher truth indicates that London had abandoned the ideal of the survival of the fittest, abandoned the very concept of health itself. The kind of degenerate sickliness against which he (with Frank Norris and others) had led the strenuous bourgeois chorus is apotheosized in Brissenden. Brissenden is radical: he not only subverts the tenets of individualism; in his contempt for everything merely human, he places his socialism on an extremely heretical basis. Nordau counted a belief in socialism an unmistakable symptom of degeneracy, and Brissenden's form of socialism—of which London, apparently failing to recognize the implications, approved—seems to justify this diagnosis.

Superman socialism had always been like a piece of iron suspended between two powerful electromagnets. With Brissenden, we see the iron splitting into fragments; and for superman socialism, the message is

clearly that one man cannot long sustain it. Nor did its currency in the United States last beyond the First World War. Because of this, we might be tempted to see superman socialism as an historical freak, a symptom of a general confusion in a less sophisticated time. And the posturing, wooden figures which populate the socialist literature of the period seem to occupy a moral and psychological world extremely remote from ours, a world of moral absolutes unchallenged and unexamined, of puppet-show exaltation and fine hatred. In short, the whole issue of superman socialism might seem safely forgettable. But perhaps there is a contemporary application in the study of Jack London as well. For, in a sense, superman socialism is merely a caricature of the contradictory aspirations of a democratic society which advocates universal social justice while placing almost no upward bounds on individual self-aggrandizement.

University of California at Los Angeles

### footnotes

1. King Hendricks and Irving Shepard, eds., *Letters from Jack London* (New York, 1965), 361. Hereafter referred to as *Letters*.
2. Largely because of his *Degeneration* (New York, 1895), Nordau was the acknowledged prophet among contemporary philistine doomsayers. Interestingly, his *Convention Lies of Our Civilization* was placed on a reading list given out by the Oakland section of the Socialist Labor Party during the late '90's, when London was in the area. The list contains no works by Marx or Engels.
3. *Letters*, 43.
4. *Ibid.*, 74.
5. Charmian London, *The Book of Jack London* (New York, 1921, 2 vols.), I:297.
6. *Letters*, 35-36.
7. Including William English Walling, who married London's friend Anna Strunsky, and London himself.
8. Reprinted as "Revolution" in Philip S. Foner, ed., *Jack London, American Rebel* (New York, 1947).
9. In *The Stones of Venice*, Ruskin described the role of such mixed or confused figures in the "noble grotesque": these figures "in all ages have been preferred by the Christian world, as expressive of Evangelist power and inspiration, to the majesty of the human form." Since Nietzsche has been a prominent figure in this essay, it might be interesting to compare his image of the chaos and frenzy attending the Dionysiac revellers as they sweep through the streets. In the crisis of the rite of celebration, "the slave emerges as a freeman; all the rigid, hostile walls which either necessity or despotism has erected between men are shattered. Now that the gospel of universal harmony is sounded, each individual becomes not only reconciled to his fellow, but actually at one with him. . ." Francis Golfing, trans. and ed., *The Birth of Tragedy* (New York, 1956), 23.
10. See *Letters*, 306-308.