CHAPTER VI

JACK LONDON'S CRAFTSMANSHIP

The depth of Jack London's craftsmanship came from visions acquired during the short journey of life he lived and led. His ideas, emotions, and social institutions were embodied in seemingly tangible shapes. The visions which shaped his life and art most profoundly, came to him on the road and the Klondike. It perhaps becomes impossible to look for a central trait, single thread in all the twisting strands that will help in explaining London's craftsmanship. To scan his writings is to witness a vast field of art wherein he has attained a serviceable lasting concept of craftsmanship which makes one feel that he was on the verge of discovering an art hitherto unknown in the world of literature. His creative power felt so strongly in few of his short stories and parts of novel is a unique testimony of this concept, and had not the belly need interfered with his writings one feels he would have attained a definite field of style. No doubt the present day literary circles do not think of London as an innovative stylist but his contemporaries did have high opinion of his art. The reviewers of London's era has phrases like "power", "alive", "glowing", "vivid", etc. Stands as a proof to such a belief. One of his critic, H. L. Mencken, while deploiring his "jejune and fallacious thinking", could not help but
exclaim, "But how beautifully he writes! How his sentences hiss and sing! What an ear he has for nervous, vibrant, bouncing English!" further he wrote:

...even in the worst of them (the novels) one comes on sudden splashes of brilliant color, spray proofs of the adept penman, half wistful reminders that perception, a high feeling, a sensitiveness to beauty. And there was in him too, under all the blatancies a poignant sense of the infinite romance and mystery of human life.*2*

The above comments impressionistic in nature reflects that London's prose style is not worthy for its simplicity and its ability to create scenes, characters and action.

Jack London wrote during that era which witnessed great changes in the American prose style. A great many readership had grown in the latter half of the nineteenth century which mainly consisted of middle and lower class Americans. There is no doubt that this audience were less "literary", because less literate, than the previously established reading public. The ten-cent magazines which gained popularity were different in form and content from the established literary periodicals of this era. A new style was developing to suit the needs of the ten-cent magazines and the popular novels. At the same time it must be remembered that in early twentieth century America the movement toward the new style had not completely taken place. Charles McLean, editor of The Popular Magazine, One of the leading ten-cent magazines during the early 1900's described

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the state of American prose style like this:

The trouble with the old times is that they are hard to read. The English language was once a more ponderous machine. It was more or less indirect. It took longer to say a thing three-hundred years ago that it does to day....Just as old machinery was heavier than modern so is old English more cumbersome than the clipped brisk speech we use today. It is not the fault of the great masters that their style is or note and diffuse. They wrote not for the mass but for the choice few educated aristocrats. Literature is changing as time passes by and we among others are helping it to change. It moves toward the chaster simpler more energetic style, further and further away from the or note and artificial. *3*

It is observed that during this period both styles the new style and the more or note and old-fashioned were practiced and read often between the pages of the same book or magazine. The style of Jack London noted by his contemporaries as "simple", "direct", "vivid", certainly fell into the new emerging style. His presence during such an era of American literary history, placed him in the vanguard of those who advocated what was to be major change in American prose style. This does not suggest that London effected that change singlehandedly but it does suggest that both London and his prose style were "noteworthy" for the period.

As was characteristic of this era the descriptive style of London took a new turn. In order to see the notable difference and the gradual change in London's prose style it would be helpful to examine two prose passages written during different phases of his career. The following passage
from "To the Man on Trail" (1899) is representative of his early descriptive style:

Then came the expected knock sharp and confident and the stranger entered. Dazzled by the light he hesitated a moment at the door giving to all a chance for scrutiny. He was striking personage and most picturesque one in his arctic dress of wool and fur. Standing six foot two or three with proportionate breadth of shoulders and depth of chest his smooth sloven face nipped by the cold to gleaming pink his long lashes and eyebrows while with ice and the ear and neck flaps of his great wolf’s cap loosely raised he seemed of a variety the frost king just stepped in not of the right. Clasped outside his Mackinaw packet a breaded bell held-two large colt’s revolvers and hunting-knife, while he carried in addition to the inevitable dogvip a smokeless rifle of the largest bore and latest pattern. As he came forward for all his step was firm and elastic they could see that his step bore heavily upon him.*4*

And this passage from Burning Daylight, (1910), is representative of his later descriptive style:

He was striking figure of a man despite his grab being similar to that of all the men in the Tivoli. Soft tanned moccasins of moose-hide beaded in Indian designs covered his feet. His trousers were ordinary overalls his coat was made from a blanket long-gauntlet lether mittens, lined with wool, hung by his side. They were connected in the Yukon fashion by a leather thong passed around the neck and across the shoulders. On his head was fur cap the ear flaps raised and the tying cords dangling. His face lean and slightly long with the suggestion of hollows under the cheek bones seemed almost Indian. The burnt skin and the white eyes themselves were essentially those of a white man. He looked older than thirty and yet smooth shaven and without wrinkles, he was almost boyish.*5*

His initial writings of the early period when compared with the later part of his writing shows that writing pertaining to the early period contained longer sentences, more complicated sentence structure and some slightly archaic
phraseology. The section of the first passage describing the
dress and facial aspect takes up a long sentence whereas the
second passage concerning the same aspect takes up seven
short ones. At the same time thus sentences in the first
passage contain an inordinate number of modifiers which
complicate sentence structure; in the second passage
modification is reduced and the sentence structure is
simpler. The first passage contains an unnecessary phrase—"of
a variety", such phrases are entirely absent from the
second. The latter writing moved toward everyday vocabulary
and word order for example "a striking personage" becomes,
"a striking figure of a man" and literary flourishes like "fatigue
bore heavily on him" and "for all his steps was firm
and elastic" were avoided keeping the above two passage in
mind. We can conclude that shorter sentences, shorter and
simpler sentence structures, a decrease in the number of
modifiers, and avoidance of both archaic phrases and abnormal
word order are characteristics of the progress in London's
changing style. It fairly represents the change taking place
in American prose style during the period and we can view
London's stylistic development as representative of the
development of the American prose style in general as
London's contemporaries regarded him as in the vanguard of
those who advocated the adoption of the new style.

The other characteristic feature of London's stylistic
development was his experimentation with dialogue and
dialect early in his career. And we can assume that these experiment had some influence on development of his later mature, simpler style.

The earliest type non-dialect dialogues, London wrote is exemplified by this passage from "the Rejuvenation of Major Rathbone (1899):

"And since there is no antidote for such emergency; so we assume that the babe must die? Not at all we administer an emetic, but of course an emetic is out of the question in the recent case. But again, say for one suffering from uxoriousness, or for a hypochondriac, what remedy shall be applied? Certainly neither of the two mentioned will do. Now for a man, melancholy mad, what would you prescribe?
"Change.... something else to withdraw him from himself and his morbid brooding, to give him new interest in life, to supply him with a resin for existence."*6*

The characters who speak in the above passage, ordinary young men, not requiring any particular stylistic invention in their speech. But their speech is filled with convoluted sentence structure, outmoded word choices, inverted word orders and a vocabulary more complicated than the situation demands. In an effort to imitate spoken conversation, some short sentences and short answers are introduced. But on the whole the dialogue, a good example of the slightly old-fashioned "literary, dialogue of London's early work. The following year, London published story as per the vogue of those days in the society magazine when featured a brand of fiction characterized by plot lines involving 'clever' society people who spoke in short, witty
exchanges. A sample of London's fiction dialogue, excerpted from a "A Wicked Women" looks like this:

"Dear little one, let us forget, all above it whatever it is. I want to tell you how I - ".
She uttered a sharp cry that was all delight and then moaned -
"Too late ".
"Too late?" he echoed in surprise.
"Oh why did I? Why did I "He was aware of a swift chill at his heart.
"What?" he asked.
"Oh. I... he... Billy".
"I am such a wicked woman. Ned. I know you will never speak to me again."
"This -er - this Billy", he began haltingly "He is your brother?"
"No ... he ... I didn't know. I was so young. I could not help it. Oh. I shall go mad! I shall go mad." *7*

The conversation which is brief with elliptical sentence structures, presents jaded society bachelor and a young innocent female as per the requirement of the society audience. They are described as speaking "haltingly", and the brevity of their exchanges, the elliptical phrase, the use of short sentences and over liberal punctuation are all designed towards achieving an effect of cleverness and snappy wit. Though the "wit" in the passage does not quite come of as the girl is leading up to a confession that "Billy" kissed her, the style is obviously simplified by London's attempts in that direction. The sentences are shorter, the word choices simpler, the sentence structures far less complex than they were in the earlier "Major Rathbone" passage. London after four years stopped writing society stories and his dialogues never reverted back to the style of the "Major" passage but they did influence his
later writing style.

London’s next experimentations were with dialect which also had an early impetus in the development of his new style. The dialect craze was at its height when London began writing in the late 1900’s and with the success of The Call of the Wild, he was branded as a regional writer. He was forced to write a certain amount of regional material for the publisher’s satisfaction and the regions he choose for his fictional were the Yukon Territory and the South Seas. In them he presented a variety of different speech situations for which he created a variety of different types of dialects. The earliest types of dialect London wrote was based on the speech of speakers of English corrupted by regional or ethnic differences. In “A Daughter of the Aurora” (1899), for example, he writes the following speech for a woman of French-Canadian parentage.

“You - what you call-lazy means, you lazy mans would desire me to half for wife. It is good. Nevaire, no neveire will lezy mans my hoosband be. *8*

London tried to produce dialect expression by means of phonetic spelling, colloquial words and phrases, and corrupted grammar and syntax. He used these same techniques when he wrote dialect for English-speaking Scotchman, Irishman, Frenchman, Scandinavians, Spanish-Americans and Eskimos. He also utilized them when he tried to imitate the “plain-talking” unschooled Americans miners, pirates, traders and
prizefighters who people his short stories and adventure novels. Many of London's stories dealt with primitives and he had to deal with the problem of representing the speech of non-English speaking characters. He solved this problem by introducing "dialect translations" in which the vocabulary, sentence structures, idioms, and metaphors differed from those of normal spoken English. In "The Son of the Wolf" (1898) for example, Thling-Tinneh, chief of the Sticks, answers a white man's request for a wife like this.

"O white man, whom we have named Moose-killer, also known as the wolf, and Son of the Wolf! we know than comet of a mighty race; we are proud to have the our patlach-guest; by the king-salmon does not mate with the dog-salmon, nor the raven with the wolf."*9*

The characteristic features of this dialect are the use of occasional non-English words and phrases, the use of the familiar but old-fashioned verb form and the use of metaphors built around accessories of modern life.

London also wrote in his stories the make-shift language which had developed between English speaking traders and non English speaking natives in the South Pacific. He introduced this dialect in order to increase the simplicity of the language for the better and easy understanding of the dialect. He freely borrowed from the regional languages of both speakers and the grammar was purposely corrupted. at the same time he used in them limited vocabulary in order to achieve simplicity. We note that all of them are founded on short sentences or phrase
units and simple vocabulary. This dialect writing contributed to the simplification of London's mature style. London's experiments with the dialogue and dialect passages helped him in developing a style where short sentences, simple vocabulary and simpler word orders and sentence structure became the hallmark of his mature style.

London was also a precursor of a new technique—stream-of-consciousness. No doubt the term was coined by William James in *Principles of Psychology* (1890) to denote the flow of inner experiences but it refers to that technique which seeks to depict the multitudinous thoughts and feelings passing through the mind. It is also known by another phrase, "interior monologue." James Joyce explained this technique in his *Ulysses* (1922) and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916). Other writers like Dorothy Richardson, Marcel Proust, Henry James and Dostoevsky, indicated through long passages of introspective writing, that they were aware of something like the stream of consciousness technique. Many original minds were working independently towards this new method of writing fiction. Among the notable writers of this technique in American literature, Jack London stands apart: with William Faulkner being the major contributor with his *The Sound and the Fury* (1931) but that was long after London had left the literary scene behind him for the more enterprising writers.

*Martin Eden* presents throughout the novel, but
especially in the early chapters, the minute attention paid by London to Martin's visual perceptions, describing how they originate in his mind and achieve formal embodiment. The psychological process is the familiar one of association. We note this process of inward picturizations triggering a chain of recollections when Martin is addressed as "Mr. Eden" by Arthur Morse. Much later, after Martin has developed this natural talent into a source of conscious artistry, the underlying process of association is still spontaneous.

Martin's trick of visioning was active as ever. His brain was a most accessible storehouse of remembered fact and fancy, and its contents seemed ever ordered and spread for his inspection. Whatever occurred in the instant present, Martin's mind immediately presented associated antithesis or similitude which ordinarily expressed themselves to him in vision. It was sheerly automatic..... Just as Ruth's face, in a momentary jealousy, had called before his eyes a forgotten moonlight gale, and as Professor Caldwell made him see again the North East trade herding the white billows across the purple sea, so, from moment to moment, not disconcerting but rather identifying and classifying, new memory-visions rose before him, or spread under his eyelids, or were thrown upon the screen of his consciousness.*10*

This process, fundamental to the poetic imagination, also underlies one of the major innovations of the modern novel, the stream of consciousness. In technical brilliance, London does not approach a Joyce, a Proust or a Faulkner: but in his concern with the reservoir of memory and the principle of association, he does anticipate their experiments.
The Little Lady of the Big House also shows this new mode of London's art, fully matured; and this modernism trend becomes pronounced in the form of interior monologue. We see Dick Forrest agonizing inwardly over the faintest sign dropped between Evan Graham and Paula, while outwardly he continues to laugh and pour cocktails and organize practical jokes for his guests. We see Graham castigating himself for remaining under Dick's roof, trying to get away, yet ascending through his deep ambivalence to Dick's hostile protests that he stays. He rationalizes about Dick and Paula's right and characteristically concludes that life was hurt and muses that it was nothing new as the side of life took its own course of action. Then we see Paula caught between the two men, both of whom she loves and both of whom insist she must choose one or the other; and, she falls farther into quandary, she radiates an ominous new energy by falling in love and discovering the radiant clouds once again. But this is the quick-burning flame of the impossible secret, the inner fire that consumes the person who harbors it, trying futilely to avoid admitting its existence. Paula tried to live with this constant state of tension between the exposed and the concealed, these characters suddenly became as much embodiments of the "inward romantic principle," as the creations of Henry James or Marcel Proust. We have for the first time characters who embrace inner contradictions they are conscientiously trying to balance; who perceive and sympathize with the interests of
others: who attempt to compromise their own interest and establish limitations when necessary for the general good.

London also utilized this techniques for characters who were not "thinking" in English. In such passages, he combined them with the technique developing during the period of representing thought patterns through the use of the third person limited point of view. All of "The law of life" is written in this mode and so does "The Mexican" shows this stream of consciousness technique.

London's mastery of style became surer with the passage of time and as his thematic interests became more defined, he was able to utilize the characteristics of his version of the mature style in a brand of writing which may well stand as his most important contribution to the development of American prose.

London's special genius appears in his command of detail and pace. He knew how to produce realism and suspense by giving the minutest factual items of situation and how on the other hand to jump over large areas of fact and make the reader supply the information or the meaning. He brings the most seasoned sophisticate to the edge of his chair and has him fidgeting with anxiety as a story builds its climax. His fiction were often viewed by editors before publication and by reviewers after it as "action-packed". He infused action in the place of a typical short story plot, like a hero
leaving the comfortable south for the harsh life of the
Alaskan territory and in the process meeting the heroine in
the midst of a snowslide as in "A Taste of the Meat," the
first of the Smoke Bellow stories. In order to complement
such plots London began to develop a style which would
enable him to describe long succession of events as quickly
as possible and still include enough detail so that his
readers could picture the action clearly. A typical passage
from "Where the Trail Forks" (1900) elaborates this idea.

He stepped a space in advance and waited between
two pines. The dogs of the camp were disturbing the
night with their tangle, and he watched for their
coming. A dark spot, growing rapidly, took form upon
the dim white expanse of snow. It was a forerunner of
the pack, leaping cleanly, and, after the wolf fashion,
singing direction to its brothers. Hitchcock stood in
the shadow. As it sprang past, he reached out, gripped
its forelegs in midair, and sent it whirling earthward.
Then he struck it a well-judged blow beneath the air,
and flung it to Sipsu. And while she clapped on the
harness, he, with his ace, held the passage between the
trees, till a shaggy flood of white teeth and glistening
eyes surged and crested just beyond reach Sipsu worked
rapidly. When she had finished, he leaped forward,
siezed and stunned a second, and flung it to her. This
he repeated thrice again, and when the sled team strode
snarling in a string of ten, he called, "Enough".*11*

The passage, stylistically, depends upon two
principles. The simple vocabulary, the preponderance of one
syllable words, and the frequent use of short sentences or
longer sentences built from short parallel sentence units
are all indicators of his new style. At the same time there is
another principle at work that of discerning as many events
in as few sentences as possible. In one fairly short
paragraph, London shows the protagonist waiting in a
preplanned place to intercept the lead sled dogs. He hears their approach, sees them appear, seizes the leader, shuns it, throws it to the waiting Indian girl who harnesses it while he holds off the remaining animals, repeats this action thrice and calls the operation to halt. Separate actions take place and are described quickly, in fact, a new one occurs in almost every sentence. This principle, combined with technical characteristic of his new style, enabled London to develop a "style of action," which he used to considerable advantage in this and similar action passages.

London's letter to Cloudsley Johns reflects that he was aware of this style and he considered it as separate from his dialogue and narrative style.

Your style—don't be so halting and disconnected. Diversify your sentence structure. Sentence after sentence of yours are identical in structure, and sometimes almost in length. Quick, snappy sentences, short and crisp and curling, are oftentimes excellent for action. But if, in inaction, or minor action you have employed them, when you came to major action, they are worthless and worse than worthless.*12*

London's narrative style contained all the three types of narration, wherein he began a story, as narrator, by using his own voice; then introduced a narrator who told the story and which had its own characters who, in turn, had their own voices and who, in their turn, of course, did narrate. London became quite adept at this technique and his
stories are a testimony to this technique. He often used the first person narrator as a humorous narrative device. A number of his stories are told in the first person by narrators who are deluded, dishonest, obsessive, mentally retarded or even completely crazy, or, on the other hand, by a down-to-earth narrator who witnesses with astonishment the foolishness of the world around him. "That spot," is an hilarious example of London's use of a dishonest narrator. In "South of the Slot," an extraordinarily controlled and well-wrought piece, London adopts the parable form and with it a formal distance from his material. He employs a third-person narrator, and the events of the tale, which concern the rivalry between two primitive tribes, the Meat-Eaters and the fish-Eaters, are told by Long-Beard, patriarch of the fish-eaters. The story-within-the-story technique further distances author and reader from the material. London's narratives are set in the frozen wastes of the Northland, in the slums of London's East End, on the blood-washed deck of a North Pacific schooner, in the hobo jungles of "fin-de-siecle" America, in prisons, in futuristic societies ravaged by social revolution or biological plague, on the bridge of a ship torn by mutiny—or in the islands of the South Pacific. In such worlds both readers and fictional characters find themselves "twisted from the ordinary, wrenched from the quite, uneventful round of everyday life and flung into the throes of a vast and terrible drama that works itself out in unleashed passions, in blood, and sudden
death." London the narrator in *The Cruise of the Snark* treats the reader to a dissertation on the physics of waves.

The face of the wave may be only six feet, yet you can slide down it a quarter of a mile, or half mile, and not reach bottom. For, see, since a wave is only a communicated agitation or impetus, and since the water that composes a wave is changing every instant, new water is rising into the wave as fast as the wave travels. You slide down this new water, and yet remain in your old position on the wave, sliding down the still newer water that is rising and forming the wave. You slide precisely as fast as the wave travels...... If you still cherish the notion, while sliding, that the water is moving with you, thrust your arms into it and attempt to paddle; you will find that you have to be remarkably quick to get a stroke, for the water is dropping astern fast as just as you are rushing ahead.*14*

In a passage like this, which is a distinguishing feature of London, he involves the reader in an intellectual adventure that is just difficult enough to keep him alert with the effort to understand. The rush of thought is of a piece with the rush of discovery and adventure; where it surges along with the foaming racing sea. This juxtaposition of the description of the surfer and the analysis of wave motion exhibits the flexibility and diversity of the author's prose.

Jack London was a master craftsman of the short story. A short story is a prose narrative which requires anything from half an hour to one or two hours in its perusal. It is written in a simple, lucid and graphic style. It concentrates on a unique or single effect and one in which
the totality of effect is the main objective. It should deal with singular incidents and only a few characters. In the present day contest, the short story has taken so many forms that its form has shown itself to be so flexible and susceptible of so much variety that its possibilities seem almost endless. For example, it may be concerned with a scene, an episode, an experience, an action, the exhibition of a character or characters, the day’s events, a meeting, a conversation, a fantasy etc. Most of the great short stories of the world contain a strong element of irony and most of the great short stories of the world contain a strong ironical twist, and none of them could surpass London’s irony of situation. Further when a short story’s artistic concerns deal with description, it must have a strong and vivid description. London was a master of all the above qualities, as he had the ability to create strong narratives, to create marvelous story atmosphere and he infused into it graphic descriptions pertaining to its characters or events. And above all, he was a master at developing an ironic situation which touches our lives upon analysis.

London’s major characteristics in his writings were his tremendous ability to create a narrative, to write a narration and thereby arousing an interest in the reader with the unfolding of the story to move from page to page. Then, his ability to create an atmosphere in which the character moves and lives and which many times effects the
outcome of the story. London's plus point in his stories are
great as any. His stories abound with the above features and
it is not an easy task to pick from them to illustrate these
features. Even then few of them stand apart, like "To
Build a fire", "Love of Life," "The law of life," his North
land stories and "The Chinago" from the South seas tales.
Here London shows his ability to graphically portray both
narration and description. The depth of irony, understanding
of human nature, the graphic style of writing are vividly
pictured in these stories. "To Build a Fire" presents
London's application of art and imagination to fact with an
even greater conviction that the grim ending was more
appropriate. Here London created a story about man's
struggle with nature in which a particular, representative
man, a nameless "chechaquo" or tenderfeet, shows great
ingenuity, with the odds against him, but loses in the end.
London leaves his protagonist nameless, thinking, perhaps,
that his anonymity will make him more typical of all human
beings and will increase the starkness of the struggle with
nature. Throughout the story except at the very end, when
the man's mind ceases to function. As the narrative
progresses, a state of uncertainty, anticipation and
curiosity as to the outcome of the story develops in the
reader. During the action the protagonist's attitude shifts
from confidence because of bodily well-being to
apprehension, fear, panic, and eventually, when all is
clearly lost, to resignation—an unhealthy resignation which
leads to drowsiness, coma, and death. The heroism of the nameless protagonist is rewarded with death which is perfectly logical and of oneself against the odds of the Alaskan cold, the protagonist fails to survive the arctic weather of fifty degrees below zero while the dog, living only on his instinct, without mittens, without ear flaps, without coat, without lunch, and without a fire, saves himself. The irony is that with all of his knowledge he is still a helpless victim to natural powers and natural forces. In order to show the strength of the story and London’s craftsmanship, the story as a whole has to be taken which is refrained from as it will fill pages and still not do justice to the story.

The opportunity to study London’s imagination operating on identifiable material can hardly be bettered than in the composition of “Love of life,” one of his most famous short stories and the one Lenin praised in such glowing terms. “Love of Life”, describes the ordeal of a nameless prospector who has been abandoned by his partner and must wander alone through the forbidding Alaskan landscape if he is to survive. Only his tenacious, instinctive will to live, despite the pain and hopelessness of his situation, permits him to reach the safety of a ship anchored in the Arctic Bay. Here London’s point of view became strictly controlled, although the narrative is in the third person. The reader sees everything from the hero’s view throughout...
the story except for the rather weak epilogue, but the story is remarkably graphic and memorable. London carefully arranges the circumstances to make the prospector’s wanderings look more plausible. The weather echoes and symbolizes the wanderer’s mental state. As the weather clears up so does the mind of the hero. Time is skillfully handled till the hero loses track of time but the suspense is maintained as London builds up the story by many different devices. The action too is made more dramatic by careful selection of details for effect, by proper timing, and by expansion when necessary. At the beginning, the author suggests about the bad relationship between the two men but never makes it clear whether this was the reason that the two became separated. London uses the companion’s silence and inexorable movement as a means of establishing the hostility between the two and of accentuating the plight of the hero.

'I say, Bill, I’ve sprained my ankle'.
Bill staggered on through the milky water. He did not look around. The man watched him go, and though his face was expressionless as ever, his eyes were like the eyes of a wounded deer.
The other man limped up the farther bank and continued straight on without looking back. The man in the stream watched him. His lips trembled a little, so that the rough thatch of brown hair which covered them was visibly agitated. His tongue even betrayed out to moisten them.
'Bill,’ he cried out.
It was a pleading cry of a strong man in distress, but Bill’s head did not turn. The man watched him go, limping grotesquely and lurching forward with stammering gait up the slow slope toward the soft skyline of the low-lying hill. He watched him go till he passed over the crest and disappeared. Then he turned his gaze and slowly took in the circle of the world

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that remained to him now that Bill was gone.*15*

London uses similar dramatizations in the man's search for food. His great narration comes into picture when he writes about the hero's final struggle for survival.

He did not hear the breath, and he slipped slowly from some dream to the feel of the tongue along his hand. He waited. The fangs pressed softly; the pressure increased: the wolf was exerting its last strength in an effort to sink teeth in the food for which it had waited so long. But the man had waited long, and the lacerated hand closed on the jaw. Slowly, while the wolf struggled feebly and the hand clutched feebly, the other hand crept across to a grip. Five minutes later the whole weight of the man's body was on top of the wolf. The hands had not sufficient strength to choke the wolf, but the face of the man was pressed close to the throat of the wolf and the mouth of the man was full of hair. At the end of half an hour the man was aware of a warm trickle in his throat. It was not pleasant. It was like molten lead being forced into his stomach, and it was forced by his will alone. Later the man rolled over on his back and slept.*16*

In this stark narrative, with its symbolic overtones and the data presented by the story, it is quite appropriate to trace in detail the genesis and development of a narrative idea in London's fiction. An examination of the various stages through which it passes throws a good deal of light on the relationship of his 'invention and expression', as London put it.

London's "The law of life" also presents the same stylistic pattern as discussed above with minor changes whereas his "The Chinago" is an outstanding story from the point of view of the building of an atmosphere, the telling of a characteristics of London's writing ability to create a
narrative, to create atmosphere, and the use of irony.

London’s narratives of the South Sea tales dominate with violence but the most successful descriptive passage recreates one of nature’s most awesomely violent challenges to man—the hurricane. It is among the most memorable aspects of the narrative writing about violent natural phenomena.

"There she comes," he said quietly. They did not need glasses to see. A flying film, strangely marked, seemed drawing over the surface of the lagoon. Abreast of it, along the atoll, traveling with equal speed, was a stiff bending of the coconut palms and a blur of flying leaves. The front of the wind on the water was a solid, sharply defined strip of dark-coloured, wind-vered water. In advance of this strip, like skirmishers, were flashes of wind-flaws. Behind this strip, a quarter of a mile in width, was a strip of what seemed glassy calm. Next came another dark strip of wind, and behind that the lagoon was all crisping, boiling whiteness....

The Roberta, lying nearest to the wind at slack chains, was swept off broadside like a straw. Then her chains brought her up, bow on to the wind, with an astonishing jerk. Schooner after schooner, the Malahini with them, was now sweeping away the first gust and fetching up on taut chains....

And then there was no wind. The flying calm streak had reached them. Grief lighted a match, and the unshielded flame burned without flickering in the still air. A very dim twilight prevailed. The cloud sky, lowering as it had been for hours, seemed now to have descended quite down upon the sea."

Eugene Burdick’s comment on the above passage is noteworthy. He says in "The Pearls of Parny" London’s "description is masterful, an exercise in economy and the glancing insight.... In the end London does the impossible: he makes
the wind visible, gives it palpable character."  Of the hundred and eighty-eight stories, London wrote, not all are masterpieces but many are and they live and find place in the permanent literature of the world. They are testimony to the genius of Jack London, mastery of irony and master craftsman of the short story.

A mention of London's another masterpiece deserves here as probably none is more artistic, thought-provoking than "War." It deserves to be ranked with the best war stories of the world. "War" is a successful story for several reasons—because of the craftsmanship evident in its evocation of setting, character, and incident through a minimum of details; because of London's skill in objectively detaching himself from the story as narrator and because of its powerfully chronic situation and conclusion. Another important artistic element is the use of symbolic colors. His use of black as death symbol, red as violence and pain symbol and yellow as an enlightening symbol amplifies the message of the story and at the same time these symbols are carefully injected into the plot in form of foreshadow, setting and irony. Nowhere else in London's writing—and few places else in literature in general—do we find such a balance of colour symbols as we do in "War". The colour elements in "War" adds tremendous stylistic depth to the story and presents another feature of London's craftsmanship. Although merely 2150 words long, "War" presents a fully developed analysis of the ironies of
combat. The conclusions reached on close examination of "War" is that although short, the story is perfectly balanced as to format and style; and London's use of symbolic colors to produce precision crafted elements of foreshadowing and character parallelism.

London's writing career in relation with character portrayal is not that notable in his short stories and the progression or regression of his art is seen more clearly in his novels than in his short stories. An important area in which his novels play a significant role is in the many discussions of London's skill or lack of skill-in the delineation of character. Several critics have pointed out, again correctly, London's weakness as a creator of characters. Although often criticized for his lapses in characterization, London strove with some success to create protagonists who, regardless of social status, are individual and whose worth the reader is urged to recognize. Some notable exceptions may be pointed out. Wolf Larsen of The Sea-Wolf and both Saxon and Billy of The Valley of the Moon are complete and unforgettable. The Sea-Wolf remains one of London's most readable works for the characters it presents. At their best London's characters are animated by ideas, social and philosophical; at their worst, they serve merely as spokesman for these ideas. Fred Lewis Pattee, one of the more penetrating critics of London maintains that "His characters are not actual men whom he has himself seen
and known; they are demigods, the unsung heroes of a heroic age now put into epic setting." Here Pattee is speaking of heroes such as Buck, Larsen, and some of the short story heroes and not of the typical London character. He does point out favorably about London's portrayal of character of Eskimo woman. It is seen that certainly most, if not all, of London's characters are self-portraits, depicting different aspects of the London's character and they are neither demigods nor individuals but symbols of unconscious "characters" in the collective psyche of the race. In other words, character portrayal was lower on London's list of values than motif—that is theme, or archetype. His characters, then, are themselves archetypes, creating, by their very situation in the story, responses in the reader that have little to do with the characters themselves, with Wolf Larsen being the only exception.

It is a mark of the journalist to write hastily and too often, and Jack London is a brilliant example. Almost all the American naturalists, in fact, worked as journalist at some point in their careers. The biographical connection indicates a deeper structural connection between the specular world of naturalism and the specular world of the newspaper. It maybe pointed out that yeoman service to London's journalistic nonfiction, such as The People of the Abyss, The Road, The Cruise of the Snark, has by quite a few critics. Even then few lines will suffice to show the journalistic trait of London. London constantly asserts that
his information in The People of the Abyss is factual, for his strategy is above all documentary as he buttresses the claims of his own observations by quoting statistics, newspaper articles, court reports. Fact enjoys a particularly privileged status, as the book is not a fictional text but presents itself as an account of the "real" Jack London's "real" experiences. Here the documentary strategy no longer coexists with plot, and we are no longer reading a novel but a piece of journalism, amateur sociology, in fact simply a documentary. London portrayed the "real" world and "real" people as he perceived them. In his "Eight factors of literary Success," he attributed his own literary prowess to this "reality principle". His style expressed his aesthetic philosophy; his politics expressed his social philosophy. Together they explain his most basic assumption about experience and value. Howard Lachtmn has pointed out, "the power of London's pen grips us not simply because it is blunt, but also because it is sympathetic, capable of fine shadings and a poetry that is part of the power". London was a pioneer in the field of sport's writing and was far more than this because he was capable of dramatizing the psychology and the symbolic meaning of sports as they reflected the deeper truths about the game of life itself. When London wrote to Mary Austin describing her situation, he was delineating his own as well--and perhaps that of all artists. The world, he said, "fails to recognize that your style is merely the
very heart and sole of your brain. The world has an idea that style is something apart from heart and brain. Neither you nor I can unconvince the hold of that idea."

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