The conclusion of Jack London's *The Call of the Wild* (1903) leaves a rather troubling question unanswered. Why should a dog, having returned to the wild, suddenly wander back to his master's camp and, after finding the camp in ruins, exact a bloody revenge on the Indian tribe, the Yeehats, that killed him? Such a question, I want to argue, reveals how London's portrayal of biological history, represented by the dog's evolutionary regression, becomes informed by the violence of United States history, the conquest of the frontier restaged in London's novel by the slaughter of the native inhabitants of the land. In *The Call of the Wild*, London's reading of the theory of atavism, which supported a return to past hereditary traits, addresses popular anxieties about the loss of the frontier and the resulting depletion of American masculine vitality. London's attempts to use evolutionary theories to challenge the relation of humans to nature are limited by the cultural and political pressures exerted upon the meanings of evolution at the turn of the twentieth century.

Although evolution was widely accepted on principle, there was hardly a consensus about how evolution worked, as books such as H.W. Conn's *The Method of Evolution* (1900) and Henry Drummond's *The Ascent of Man* (1911) attest. Debates focused on issues such as what defined the "fittest" chosen through the process of natural selection to survive, whether evolution led to inevitable progress, and whether acquired traits could be biologically inherited. These debates, in particular, held the theories of Herbert Spencer, who developed the survival-of-the-fittest doctrine, up to critical scrutiny. It is, of course,
acknowledged that Spencer’s theories made a rather sizable impact on London. But London read many, if not all, of the prominent theorists involved in the debates about evolution and thus had a critical recognition of the challenges posed to Spencer. August Weismann’s *The Germ-Plasm* (1893) struck a heavy blow against Spencer’s belief in the inheritance of acquired traits, while T.H. Huxley questioned Spencer’s ideas about evolutionary progress. London, moreover, read much Darwin. During his trip to the Yukon, London read *The Origin of the Species*, and he had read *The Descent of Man* by the time he co-wrote *The Kempton-Wace Letters* (1903).

My study connects London’s response to Darwin’s argument that animals and humans share biological kinship, an idea supported by his findings on dog and wolf behavior, with the role atavism plays in the construction of masculine identity and the imperialist call for U.S. expansion into new frontiers. This topic remains largely unexplored. While Earle Labor discusses atavism in London, his discussion of the mythical meanings of atavism does not address the political implications of a return to the wild. Both Christopher Gair and Amy Kaplan show how London’s narrative reenacts historical violence in the conquest of the frontier, but do not adequately address issues of biological kinship. And recent studies by Jonathan Auerbach and Jacqueline Tavernier-Courbin tend to regard London’s portrayal of dog behavior as, respectively, either purely cultural or natural, thus ruling out the possibilities for biological kinship.

In what follows, I will first discuss London’s engagement with the theory of atavism and its effects on the canine protagonist, Buck, reflected against the prevalent “frontier” mentality informed by notions about “wildness.” Then I will look at London’s views on biological kinship. Using Donna Haraway’s recent work on dog genetics, I will suggest here that Buck’s behavior is shaped by both natural and cultural factors. Finally, I connect London’s narrative with the historical violence repressed by the myth of the frontier—that is, the belief that the frontier was discovered rather than colonized. I contend that the eruption of violence at the end of the novel collapses London’s utopian vision of the frontier as a place that promotes and supports a deep-seated ethic of cooperation between men and dogs. This collapse also reveals the unmistakable presence, as Gair and Kaplan have remarked, of national fantasies and imperialistic desires.
I. Imagining an Evolutionary Past: The Return to the Frontier

The reason Buck, a domesticated, and hence civilized, dog returns to the wild is suggested by the epigraph at the start of the book: “Old longings nomadic leap,/Chafing at custom’s chain;/Again from its brumal sleep/Wakens the ferine strain.” Although none of the editions published while London was alive credit the source for this epigraph, it is, as Daniel Dyer notes, the first quatrain of “Atavism,” a poem by John Myers O’Hara published in the *Bookman* a month previous to London’s writing his novel (99). The poem calls for a return to nature, which offers the promise of true freedom and alleviates the weariness of civilized life. O’Hara’s mythic evocation of a return to the wild resonates against Frederick Jackson Turner’s image of the closing of the frontier, which in 1893 threatened to halt “the regeneration of men” (Seltzer 150). By 1898, as Christopher P. Wilson explains, there was a call, with imperialistic undertones, “to unrestrained nature ... a revival of the rough-riding and frontier spirit, when battles over natural resources shook national policymaking” (92-93). Thus, *The Call of the Wild*, in its imitation of the primitive trajectory of “Atavism,” is situated between the nostalgic desire for recovery of the lost frontier and a hope that the “frontier spirit” might be resurrected.

While London’s vision of the frontier mobilizes the social meanings of atavism, his realistic account of Northland life grounds his understanding of atavism as a key principle of evolution. Just as the idea of the frontier depends on both physical displays and fantasies of masculine power, so, too, does London’s depiction of the Northland constitute both a physically real and imagined space for the recovery (or rediscovery) of the lost frontier. Because the frontier stresses survival skills, evolution acts as a determining factor for both humans and animals. As a result, London’s narrative encompasses both the real and imagined effects of evolution. While London no doubt draws upon his experiences in the Klondike with animals to make his portrayal of evolution realistic, he then, as we will later see, speculates on how evolution would register in Buck’s thought processes. Buck’s transformation is determined by the interaction of evolutionary processes in the Northlands with technological advancements and the prevailing economic trends. London remarks at the outset:

> Because men, groping in the Arctic darkness, had found a yellow metal, and because steamship and transportation companies were booming the find, thousands of men were rushing into the Northland. These men wanted dogs, with strong muscles by which to toil, and furry coats to protect them from the frost. (3)
Thus Buck’s forced journey to the Northland. As Mark Seltzer notes, it is one aspect of a larger movement: “The twin principles of gold and the machine are the economic principles that put bodies in motion across the landscape of the great white male North” (167).

Moreover, the landscape places the idea of the past beyond an easy comprehension. To travel through this territory, London implies, means risking the loss of one’s bearings, for it is an “uncharted vastness” and has the timeless quality, a “limitless future” that characterizes the frontier (62). Having been dislocated from his past life, Buck nonetheless emotionally responds to this landscape, his “boundless delight” suggesting a place without temporal or spatial boundaries (62). This idea is reenforced when Buck with his master and others walk upon “the obliterated trails of men who had gone before” and soon encounter a “path blazed through the forest, an ancient path” that seemed to begin “nowhere and [end] nowhere, and it remained mystery” (62). Granted, the repetition of “nowhere” helps invoke the mythic quality of the frontier, but, more significantly, the landscape for London yields no physical evidence of evolutionary progress. The landscape can create masculine fantasies of work and wealth, as demonstrated by London’s remark that here “the time-card was drawn upon the limitless future” (62). Yet while Seltzer finds technological mastery in the control over time represented by the “time-card” (168), this sense of progress, I think, is countered by the image of the “ancient path” that appears to descend into an “uncharted” past.

The concept of atavism, then, was entrenched both in popular thought about evolution and in more specialized scientific circles, a relationship neatly represented by London’s use of O’Hara’s poem to frame a project that uses scientific documentation and theory to tell a story about the effects of evolution on the behavior of dogs. Like London’s depiction of an uncharted past, evolutionary theorists had no physical evidence, owing to gaps in the geological record, with which to plot the course of evolution. Hence they speculated that the process of natural selection might move backwards rather than forwards. Indeed, nearly all of the influential theorists of evolution that London read questioned in some way Spencer’s claims for evolutionary progress. For instance, T.H. Huxley in 1894 believed that the equation of the survival of the fittest with progress was a misreading of evolution:

I suspect that this fallacy has arisen out of the unfortunate ambiguity of the phrase ‘survival of the fittest.’ ‘Fittest’ has a connotation of ‘best’; and about ‘best’ there hangs a moral flavour. In cosmic nature, however, what is ‘fittest’ depends upon the conditions. Long since, I ventured to point out that if our hemisphere were to cool again, the survival of the fittest might bring about, in the vegetable kingdom, a population
of more and more stunted and humbler and humbler organisms, until
the ‘fittest’ that survived might be nothing but lichens, diatoms, and
such microscopic organisms as those which give red snow its colour
[...]. (80-81)

Not only did theorists feel that the reversion to long-lost traits was
possible, some, such as Ernst Haeckel, posited that atavism was a func-
tion of evolution that was guided by the laws of heredity.7 Weismann’s
work on heredity in his pioneering study The Germ-Plasm also noted
the significance of reversion to past traits.

To be sure, it may seem tempting to reduce London’s treatment of
atavism to a romantic longing for an ideal past. Alfred Kazin has re-
marked, “London’s greatest desire was to slip backwards, away from
capitalism, into the lustier and easier world of the primitive frontier”
(110). But Kazin’s remark overlooks both the role of evolution in this
move backwards and the possibility that evolution, as London inter-
preted it, might indeed challenge the precepts of a class-based social
hierarchy. Buck’s former home, Judge Miller’s house, is a place of wealth
and luxury, where nature is tamed and made productive or else simu-
lated. There are “long grape arbors, green pastures, orchards, and berry
patches” (3), sustained only by artificial irrigation. Instead of a river
or lake, there is a “pumping plant for the artesian well, and the big ce-
ment tank where Judge Miller’s boys took their morning plunge and
kept cool in the hot afternoon” (4), which depicts the powers of nature
channeled for entertainment and relaxation. But even in this rather civi-
lized and un-natural environment, evolution acts to undermine such a
peaceful, orderly setting. Manuel, “a gardener’s helper whose wages did
not lap over the needs of his wife and divers small copies of himself”
(19), steals Buck and sells him to men who need dogs for work in the
Northland. London thus echoes Darwin, whose reading of Thomas
Malthus convinced him that the desire for reproduction would outstrip
the available resources for sustaining life. Yet, as London implies, the
effects of evolution are here shaped by racial and class-based attitudes,
those that justify the exploitation of laborers, such as Manuel, in order
to maintain the artificial environment of Judge Miller’s house. While
Buck has not become “a mere-pampered house-dog” like “Toots, the
Japanese pug, or Ysabel, the Mexican hairless,—strange creatures that
rarely put nose out of doors or set foot to ground” (4), civilized habit
has dulled his instincts. When the men who come to take Buck away
place a rope around his neck, he “accepted the rope with quiet dignity
[...] he had learned to trust in men he knew, and to give them credit
for a wisdom that outreached his own” (5). Although Buck reacts, it is
too late, for the men now control him, and his somewhat understated
response indicates that he still does not fully grasp the situation:
"[W]hen the ends of the rope were placed in the stranger’s hands, he growled menacingly. He had merely intimated his displeasure, in his pride believing that to intimate was to command. But to his surprise the rope tightened around his neck, shutting off his breath" (5).

Initially Buck appears as a product of the class system. The atmosphere of riches has clearly rubbed off on him; Buck "carr[ies] himself in right royal fashion" (4), as he exhibits aristocratic values and traits such as “dignity,” trust in a social hierarchy, and exercising “command” through subtle gestures rather than by overt force. Pleasure and displeasure are determined by whether Buck is treated in a “civilized” manner. Buck’s class conditioning is designed to render him subservient; as Joan Hedrick points out, “his initial kingly pretentions” conceal “from himself his actual dependency on Judge Miller’s largesse” (110). When these values and traits come into question once he is taken away from the protective shelter of Judge Miller’s place and the changing environment starts to register to him, Buck’s reactions are still governed by his upbringing. London describes Buck as having “the unbridled anger of a kidnapped king” (5). In other words, Buck is still acting out of pride rather than for concerns about his survival. Moreover, as the image suggests that a king’s body is not to be violated in any way, Buck tends to think of himself in the same fashion. Earlier at Judge Miller’s place “he was king” (4); he had no physical limitations. But when Buck encounters the man with the club, he realizes the limits of his body. The man beats Buck down with the club every time Buck rushes at him, until finally Buck is too exhausted to continue the fight.

Knowing the limits of the body is paramount to the (in)famous law of the club. A dog simply is not able to physically overpower a man with a club, and this lesson is reinforced when Buck sees one dog who refuses to yield and is literally beaten to death. In this episode, London expresses the contradictory aspects of power. On the one hand, a hierarchy of power never seems more absolute than when it is spelled out in terms of brute force—the law of the club. On the other, Buck realizes that this law does not rely on class-based values—that is, giving one’s superiors “credit,” whether earned or unearned. Turning away from his earlier conception of a class-shaped power relationship, Buck perceives rather that “a man with a club was a lawgiver, a master to be obeyed, though not necessarily conciliated” (9). For Buck, moreover, issues of morality and physical need become connected. He is always hungry, because his body is not yet acclimated to life in the Northland. Thus he must steal food, being clever enough to avoid getting caught. London writes: “This first theft marked Buck as fit to survive in the hostile Northland environment. It marked his adaptability, his capacity to adjust himself to changing conditions, the lack of which would have
meant swift and terrible death” (17). But to keep surviving, London implies, Buck has to keep adapting, which means moving away from the class-constructed ideas of morality prevalent in the Southland. Discussing the subsequent limits of morality brought out in this scene, London remarks: “It was all well enough in the Southland, under the law of love and fellowship, to respect private property and personal feelings, but in the Northland, under the law of club and fang, whose took such things into account was a fool, and in so far as he observed them he would fail to prosper” (18). Having sketched out the rationale for the law of club and fang, London proceeds to examine how this law operates in, and compliments, an evolutionary world guided by the principle of atavism.

To be sure, London insists that Buck intuitively grasps the law of club and fang; he does not think about it. But although London appears to express his views from a canine perspective, one of limited reason, his criticism of what constitutes moral behavior as a “civilized” trait clearly registers: “Civilized, [Buck] could have died for a moral consideration, say the defence [sic] of Judge Miller’s riding-whip; but the completeness of his decivilization was now evidenced by his ability to flee from the defence of a moral consideration and so save his hide” (18). London suggests that morality as a civilized code is shaped by the upper class for its own ends, namely to justify the subservience of those beneath them. Auerbach observes that Buck, more or less, is forced to accept this code: “That Buck ‘civilized’ begins life under a judge is no coincidence, especially since the judge’s ‘moral consideration’ and not the dog’s presumably would motivate the animal’s defense of the whip—a symbolically resonant piece of his master’s private property and a sleeker version of the club that disciplined Buck in the wild” (31). The whip implies that Buck was civilized through force, thus troubling the dominant cultural attitudes that regard civilized behavior in the Southland as a natural trait, beyond question.

The depiction of this behavior as unnatural is reenforced by London’s severing of the ties between biological fitness and morality. Even emotional responses become controlled by the biological drive for survival. London writes that Buck “did not steal for the joy of it, but because of the clamor of his stomach. He did not rob openly, but stole secretly and cunningly, out of respect for club and fang. In short, the things he did were done because it was easier to do them than not to do them” (18). These remarks of London, I think, mirror Huxley’s pessimism about evolution directly contributing to the progress of civilization. Huxley comments: “The thief and the murderer follow nature just as much as the philanthropist. Cosmic evolution may teach us how the good and the evil tendencies of man may have come about; but, in itself,
it is incompetent to furnish any better reason why what we call good is preferable to what we call evil than we had before” (80). Or, as London puts it, from the view of an animal, some things are done “because it was easier to do them than not to do them.” Accordingly, London does not equate evolution with progress; rather he says of Buck, “His development (or retrogression) was rapid” (18). Buck’s “retrogression,” then, is a return to the past; his biological (re)conditioning is a result of both learned behaviors, those that will help him survive, as well as remembering, through the process of atavism, the past behaviors of his breed. London asserts, “[N]ot only did he learn from experience, but instincts long dead became alive again. The domesticated generations fell from him. In vague ways he remembered back to the youth of the breed, to the time the wild dogs ranged in packs through the primeval forest and killed their meat as they ran it down” (18). For Buck, this return to the past revitalizes him—all a part of his becoming aware of and responding to the call of the wild.

Yet London reminds us a page later that Buck’s revitalization, informed by popular notions of “wildness,” occurs because of cultural influences, suggesting a curious alignment of evolutionary theories and dominant cultural values. According to London, Buck “came into his own again; and he came because men had found a yellow metal in the North, and because Manuel was a gardener’s helper whose wages did not lap over the needs of his wife and divers small copies of himself” (19). I want to argue, further, that the idea of “vitality” connects with a national investment in masculinity. Theodore Roosevelt’s men’s club speech, “The Strenuous Life” (1899), asserts: “[T]he nation that has trained itself to a career of unwarlike and isolated ease is bound, in the end, to go down before other nations which have not lost the manly and adventurous qualities” (270-71). In his reading of this speech, Seltzer suggests that nature is the place where such “manly and adventurous” qualities can be regenerated. The desire for the regeneration of male vitality, Seltzer explains, constitutes a response to anxieties about living in a culture of consumption, regarded as “a perverse turning away from the natural,” and manifests “a familiar opposition of the artificial and female indoor space of domesticity and conspicuous consumption, on the one side, to male and natural outdoor life, on the other” (153).9

Buck’s revitalization illustrates the values associated with “male and natural outdoor life.” Far from exhibiting any signs of “conspicuous consumption,” Buck, London writes, “achieved an internal as well as an external economy. He could eat anything, no matter how loathsome or indigestible; and, once eaten, the juices of his stomach extracted the last particle of nutriment; and his blood carried it to the farthest reaches of his body, building it into the toughest and stoutest of tissues” (18).
London’s use of Buck’s biological development to demonstrate the idea of a masculine economy fits with Cary Wolfe’s argument that dominant cultural beliefs about gender can be represented and maintained through the bodies of animals. Unlike Wolfe, however, who sees the outcome of this strategy as a violent sacrifice of animals, in London’s novel, physical violence becomes a productive means for disciplining bodies so they may fit into a masculine economy. Such a process is vividly illustrated when the man with the club literally beats the virtues of disciplined, male behavior into Buck’s body.

Conversely, the three culturally refined travelers who purchase Buck and his fellow dogs represent the kind of threat to the masculine outdoor life that so worried Roosevelt. Described in the novel as a “nice family party” (39), the three appear as the embodiment of domesticity run amuck. Tellingly, this episode unfolds from Buck’s perspective: “Buck saw a slipshod and slovenly affair, tent half stretched, dishes unwashed, everything in disorder; also he saw a woman” (39). The woman, Mercedes, who travels with her husband and brother, acts in stereotypical ways, fussing over everything and crying the loudest when more experienced travelers advise them to dump their canned goods, tent, and dishes, all bourgeois items useless for the rigors of the Northland trail. While many critics have commented on this scene, Auerbach’s remarks, in particular, are insightful:

Confronted with an alien environment, the overcivilized family registers chaos, whereas the state of wilderness clearly depends on strict regimentation, again only possible through regulated work. Given the absence of such service, at once ennobling and enabling, nature can only be represented by what it is not. (39)  

London attempts here to teach the reader the value of the lesson about nature that Buck earlier learns, to respect physical limits and the consequences when this lesson goes unlearned. Many of the errors committed by the three fall under this heading: they ignore the fact that the dogs need a rest, instead assuming by feeding them more they will work harder; they have a sled too heavy for the dogs to pull, and they have too many dogs and not enough food. The men do not respect their own limitations, and so they do not acquire “the wonderful patience of the trail” (44). For her part, Mercedes at the end succumbs to “the chaotic abandonment of hysteria” (49). Yet her flaws, while they are connected to “the grievance of sex,” are not completely located in her biology. London comments that Mercedes “was pretty and soft, and had been chivalrously treated all her days. But the present treatment by her husband and brother was everything save chivalrous. It was her custom to be helpless” (45). In the confines of domesticity, Mercedes has
accepted her ingrained helplessness as part of her female identity, her “sex-prerogative” (45). Thus London attempts to offer an explanation for her most outrageous act, that which most epitomizes the callousness and wastefulness of the culture of consumption, her insistence on riding on the sled when she is tired, making the load the dogs must pull almost unbearable.

The tragic outcome of these three drives home London’s point that a process of over-civilization, which leads to a culture of consumption, depletes the reserves of masculine vitality needed to meet the demands of the natural environment. The perverse turning away from nature silences the instincts for survival. Faced with ice made hazardous by the spring thaw, the party decides to press on, ignoring the advice of the more experienced John Thornton. But, Buck, whose biological reversion has undone generations of domestication and sharpened his instincts, hesitates: “He had a vague feeling of impending doom [...]. What of the thin and rotten ice he had felt under his feet all day, it seemed that he sensed disaster close at hand, out there ahead on the ice where his master was trying to drive him. He refused to stir” (48). Buck is even willing to be beaten to death for refusing to go on, but Thornton intercedes and cuts Buck free from his traces. The sled goes on, without Buck, and soon breaks through the ice, vanishing from sight. In this episode, nature is not separate from culture; rather, it is how nature is culturally interpreted that determines survival or disaster. For instance, Thornton understands the cycles of nature and refuses to let the ignorance of Buck’s current owner cost Buck his life.12

Although London states that biology is the overriding factor in defining identity, he still seems conflicted over the question of the degree of stability for biological traits. This conflict, I think, emerges in the description of Buck:

> He might well have been mistaken for a gigantic wolf, larger than the largest of the breed. From his St. Bernard father he had inherited size and weight, but it was his shepherd mother who had given shape to that size and weight. His muzzle was the long wolf muzzle, save that it was larger than the muzzle of any wolf; and his head, somewhat broader, was the wolf head on a massive scale. (66)

Rather than maintaining clear distinctions, evolutionary processes, as London suggests, tend to blur biological lineages. But while Buck’s traits have been modified over time, they still suggest a wolf ancestry.13 Moreover, as the domesticated generations fall away, we can more readily see the origins of Buck’s breed in the wolf. For London, atavism becomes instrumental in “this process of stripping away, in which the stages of ‘civilization’ are removed to reveal a ‘natural’ essence” (Gair
53). When the return to the past, a time “prior to civilization” (Kaplan 265), is complete at the end of the novel, Buck “sings a song of the younger world” (74). It is indeed a sign that the promise of revitalization, through a recovery of hereditary “youth,” has been fulfilled.

Thus, London’s novel demonstrates how the interpretation of evolutionary theory is influenced by popular images of the frontier as a preservation of natural “wild life.” These images in turn reflect anxieties about national well-being. But if the novel depicts the cultural pressures on the idea of biological “fitness,” it also shows how science can contest cultural assumptions about identity, as we shall see when London participates in the debate about biological kinship.

II. The Debate about Biological Kinship

For London, the “process of stripping away” civilization helps to remove the cultural illusions that keep the development of animals and humans separate. London’s strategy here is greatly influenced by his reading of Darwin. As Donald Worster has commented, Darwin’s work challenged the view, held by his contemporaries such as Huxley, of nature and culture as opposing one another. Darwin tried to undo these oppositions. In The Descent of Man, he argued that humans and animals shared the same biological origin. With the issue of physical difference out of the way, Darwin went on to address the issue of mental difference. “[T]he difference in mind between man and the higher animals, great as it is,” he wrote,

certainly is one of degree and not of kind. We have seen that the senses and intuitions, the various emotions and faculties, such as love, memory, attention, curiosity, imitation, reason, &c., of which man boasts, may be found in an incipient, or even sometimes in a well-developed condition, in the lower animals. They are also capable of some inherited improvement, as we see in the domestic dog compared with the wolf or jackal. (122)

Darwin’s last point London especially seems to take to heart, and his attempt to dramatize these ideas angered Roosevelt, who, in a magazine interview, accused London of being a “nature faker.” In his brief analysis of the debate between Roosevelt and London, Auerbach remarks that no representation of nature can be solely objective; he argues that all representations will to some degree be “homocentric” and therefore cannot be held to “some absolute standard of verisimilitude” (26). Auerbach, however, is not so much interested in this debate, as he is fascinated by the kinds of constructions of nature by London that
do indeed appear "faked." His reading of *The Call of the Wild* regards Buck's journey as a sort of vocational training, with Buck "learning" to be wild. For Auerbach, then, there is nothing really natural about Buck's behavior at all.

But Auerbach's argument limits the possibility for the interaction of nature and culture, which I believe is crucial to understanding more fully London's depiction of dog behavior. In his response to Roosevelt, "The Other Animals" (1908), London concludes,

> You must not deny your relatives, the other animals. Their history is your history, and if you kick them to the bottom of the abyss you go yourself. By them you stand or fall. What you repudiate in them you repudiate in yourself—a pretty spectacle, truly, of an exalted animal striving to disown the stuff of life out of which it is made, striving by use of the very reason that was developed by evolution to deny the processes of evolution that developed it. This may be good egotism, but it is not good science. (120)

London asserts that animals and humans share biological kinship, an idea borne out by Darwin's theory of a common descent for animals and humans. This assertion pressures the political motives for maintaining differences between animals and humans, especially when animals are regarded as family pets. Marc Shell suggests that pets demonstrate a "relationship everpresent in political ideology—that between the distinction of those beings who are our (familial) kin from those who are not, on the one hand, and the distinction of those beings who are our (human) kind from those who are not, on the other" (148). Addressing both the biological and political implications of kinship, Haraway contends that the idea of kinship is not purely objective; rather, it is a "technology for producing the material and semiotic effect of natural relationship, of shared kind" (*Modest Witness* 53). To take, as a significant example, the human/dog relationship, an uncritical application of the idea of kinship erases the power relations that shape the affiliations between dogs, whether pets or working dogs, and their owners/masters. Haraway's most recent work on dog genetics figures dogs as "companion species," actors crossing between human and non-human worlds in a story about evolution, biology, and technology. Her work bridges the divide between nature and culture, a divide into which recent critics of London have exhibited a tendency to fall.16

Hence I want to use Haraway's idea of dogs as companion species, as having co-evolved with humans, to shed light on London's depiction of Buck's behavior. To briefly sketch out the terrain in which I will be working here, Haraway's conjoining of biology and technology dovetails with "the body-machine complex" in London's writing chronicled by Seltzer, while her description of evolution as a social and cultural
process fits with London’s description of atavism as informed by technological development and dominant cultural values. Moreover, Haraway considers the voices of both scientists and non-scientists in debates about dog behavior, permitting London, whom critics often perceive as lacking scientific credibility, to receive a fairer hearing.

To start, we need to keep in mind London’s rhetorical treatment of dog behavior. In “The Other Animals,” London claims that his writing about dogs constituted a “protest against the ‘humanizing of animals’” and that his canine characters “were not directed by abstract reasoning, but by instinct, sensation, and emotion, and by simple reasoning” (109). Accordingly, the start of London’s first sentence of *The Call of the Wild* is intended to make the reader assume that Buck’s intelligence is limited: “Buck did not read the newspapers” (3). But there are, of course, ways of depicting intelligence other than by an ability to read newspapers. If London denies Buck human intelligence, the kind represented by the ability to read, he doesn’t categorize Buck as an ignorant brute. Rather, London attempts to define and represent dog intelligence. To evaluate London’s efforts, we might turn to Haraway’s discussion of *Genetics and the Social Behavior of the Dog* (1965), a notable example of “pure science” of the post-World War II era, written by John Paul Scott and Scott Fuller, who devoted thirteen years to the study. Scott and Fuller observe that “no evidence was found for a general factor of intelligence which would produce good performance on all tests” (256). Rather, they found that emotional and motivational differences played a significant role in determining performance (387). In her appraisal of Scott and Fuller’s work, Haraway remarks:

> A dog might be able to solve a problem, but would he or she want to do so? Under what terms? Breed and individual differences might have much more to do with motivation than with what the testers meant, and mean, by intelligence. Any dog person, including a behavioral genetics researcher, must meet dogs this way if their knowledge is to be persuasive in cross-species communities of practice. (“Love of a Good Dog” 12)

Thus the concept of intelligence is as problematic in debates about dog behavior as ideas about fitness and progress are in debates about evolution.

Aware that readers might find suspect any attempts to describe thinking in dogs, London places explicit limits on dog intelligence. After discussing Buck’s moral regression, London is careful to say that Buck’s actions are not the result of a conscious decision on his part: “Not that Buck reasoned it out. He was fit, that was all, and unconsciously he accommodated himself to the new mode of life” (18). London ascribes
Buck's amorality to the demands of his environment: "In short, the things he did were done because it was easier to do them than not to do them" (18). Yet, to some degree, London does appear to anticipate the findings of Scott and Fuller. For after the man in the red sweater defeats Buck, London states that Buck "was beaten (he knew that); but he was not broken" (9). Buck's awareness that his defeat is not final motivates him to lie low, which makes him appear somewhat more intelligent than another dog "that would neither conciliate or obey, finally killed in the struggle for mastery" (9). While here, intelligence appears as a quality of the individual, London also discusses intelligence as being derived from Buck's parents and ancestors: "His cunning was wolf cunning, and wild cunning; his intelligence, shepherd intelligence and St. Bernard intelligence" (66).

Once again London locates the origin of Buck's intelligence in his past biological history. Likewise, the past also shapes Buck's dreams. Although some may find London's exploration of Buck's thought processes through his dreams somewhat fanciful, London adheres to Darwin's argument in The Descent of Man: "As dogs, cats, horses, and probably all the higher animals, even birds have vivid dreams, and this is shown by their movements and the sounds uttered, we must admit that they possess some power of imagination" (72). Indeed, Buck's dreams do more than to simply imagine the past; his dreams, I propose, suggest the co-evolution of humans and dogs. Challenging the idea of domestication as a "one-sided human 'social invention,'" Haraway quotes from Susan Crockford, a prominent archaeozoological expert, to assert that "human settlements provided a species-making resource for would-be dogs in the form of garbage middens and—we might add—human bodily waste. If wolves could calm their well justified fear of Homo sapiens, they could feast in ways familiar to modern dog people" (28). Thus Buck's dreams remember one of his wolf ancestors who was drawn to a primitive man's fire for warmth and comfort:

Sometimes as he crouched there, blinking dreamily at the flames, it seemed that the flames were of another fire, and that as he crouched by this other fire he saw another and different man from the half-breed cook before him. This other man was shorter of leg and longer of arm, with muscles that were stringy and knotty rather than rounded and swelling [...]. He uttered strange sounds, and seemed very much afraid of the darkness into which he peered continually [...]. (35)

The theory that "'wild canids domesticated themselves,'" as Haraway remarks, combines agency with the biological shaping of behavior that, along with evolution, produces over time what looks like a dog:
Those wolves with lower rates of thyroxine production, and so lower
titres of the fright/flight adrenaline cocktail regulated by thyroid secre-
tions, could get a good meal near human habitations. If they were really
calm, they might den nearby. The pups who were the most tolerant
of their two-legged neighbors might make use of the caloric bonanza
and have their own puppies nearby as well. A few generations of this
could produce a being remarkably like current dogs, complete with
curled tails, a range of jaw types, considerable size variation, dogish
cot patterns, floppy ears, and—above all—the capacity to stick around
people and forgive almost anything. People would surely figure out
how to relate to these handy sanitary engineers and encourage them
to join in tasks, like herding, hunting, watching kids, and comforting
people. (29)

Although Haraway points out that her account has some problems (it
is not a complete explanation, as any speculation on the evolutionary
past is necessarily incomplete), she makes, I think, a rather compelling
argument to re-examine biological kinship. For it is not just wolves
who had to get used to humans; as Haraway posits, humans perhaps
needed to get “their own fear/aggression endocrine systems to quell
murderous impulses toward the nearby canine predators who did
garbage detail and refrained from threatening” (30).

In his novel, London depicts the biological kinship between humans
and (wolf) dogs that will later produce the dog as a companion species.19
As the call of the wild grows stronger, Buck’s dream-visions become
more frequent, and a more vivid picture of shared emotional responses
between early humans and dogs emerges.20 In The Expression of the Emo-
tions in Man and Animals, Darwin comments, “[F]ear was expressed from
an extremely remote period, in almost the same manner as it is now by
man; namely, by trembling, the erection of the hair, cold perspiration,
pallor, widely opened eyes, the relaxation of most of the muscles, and
by the whole body cowering downwards or held motionless” (281-82).
Buck’s memories of a past world are infused by such primitive emo-
tion and its physical articulation: “The salient thing of this other world
seemed fear. When he watched the hairy man sleeping by the fire, head
between his knees and hands clasped above, Buck saw that he slept
restlessly, with many starts and awakenings, at which times he would
peer fearfully into the darkness and fling more wood upon the fire”
(63). This scene, in particular, projects the humility with which London
in “The Other Animals” views the human condition and his disdain
for an unquestioned human superiority: “Let us be very humble. We
who are so very human are very animal” (120).

Thus London suggests that patterns of evolutionary change brought
humans and dogs together. Haraway remarks: “Paleoagricultural
settlement could have been the occasion for much more radical ac-

commodification between the canids and hominids on the questions of tameness, mutual trust, and trainability” (30). Besides sketching out the co-evolution of humans and dogs, Buck’s dreams, however, touch on an area equally as problematic (for most) as co-evolution, the idea of remembered instincts. That is, London pushes Darwin’s argument about dogs dreaming a bit further—Buck dreams not just about his “own” experiences, but also about the experiences of his ancestors. While the case could be made that Buck’s dreams are London’s imaginative way of showing us what these instincts are that Buck recovers, many critics, such as Auerbach and Tavernier-Courbin, argue that London is representing a collective unconscious or “racial memory.” I would, however, question this argument on the grounds that it tends to support a racist reading of evolution. Instead, I want to consider the way London associates Buck’s dreams with his imagination. In the scene where Buck defeats his rival, Spitz, to gain leadership of the dog team, London writes, “[T]he scene came to Buck with a sense of familiarity. He seemed to remember it all,—the white woods, and earth, and moonlight, and the thrill of battle” (29). Yet this dream-like image of “white woods” and “moonlight” frames London’s remark that “Buck possessed a quality that made for greatness—imagination. He fought by instinct, but he could fight by head as well” (30). Buck comes up with a creative plan of attack; he fakes a head-on rush and, at the last minute, bites down on Spitz’s leg, breaking it. Spitz is soon rendered immobile, and Buck easily knocks him down and finishes him off.

Buck’s imagination, I propose, does more than enable him to marshal his instinctive behaviors, presumably inherited from his wolf ancestors, to win the critical battle against Spitz; it suggests the larger ends to which Buck’s abilities may be put. As Scott and Fuller conclude in “Heredity and the Social Behavior of Mammals” (1956): “The behavior traits do not appear preorganized by heredity. Rather a dog inherits a number of abilities which can be organized in different ways to meet different situations” (23). Such a conclusion, Diane Paul comments, refutes any simple understanding of heredity’s effects on dog behavior. Indeed, Haraway, who cites Paul’s reading of Scott and Fuller in support of her argument, claims: “The last word is not in on the genetics of complex, specialized canine behavior” (12). London’s depiction of Buck attempts to dramatize this idea of “the genetics of complex, specialized canine behavior.” Rather than consigning instinct to a “black-box” as Auerbach charges (29), London instead shows how it is interrelated with motivational aspects of behavior, i.e. Buck’s desire for mastery. London therefore depicts the formation of Buck as an individual, defined through his goal-oriented behavior. That is, his desire for winning, or earning, the leadership of the pack can be read through
the capitalist ideology of acquisition, in part what defines the notion of the individual, one embodied by masculine leaders such as Roosevelt. While the image of Buck as “dog hero” carries with it mystical overtones, upon which many critics have commented, his “heroic” behavior fits closely with dominant cultural ideas about individualism at the turn of the twentieth century. As we shall see, these ideas, the “furry logic” that drives London’s narrative, cause it to fall apart at the end.

III. Evolutionary Violence and National Conquest

London’s explanation for why Buck returns to the ravaged camp just in time to take revenge on the Yeehats is troubling: “For the last time in his life he allowed passion to usurp cunning and reason, and it was because of his great love for John Thornton that he lost his head” (70). This rather flimsy defense of Buck’s behavior causes Auerbach to remark that “London’s booby-trapped naturalism finally explodes, forcing us to scramble for other sorts of supernatural explanations” (44). But we need not, I would argue, go to such lengths.

Rather than London’s “naturalism” being the culprit, the contrary cultural forces and accumulated historical violence that London’s narrative tries to contain trigger the “explosion.” Buck’s act of revenge, as we will now see, epitomizes the ideals of masculine individualism. London, to be sure, is not the only one to read cultural implications into the behaviors of dogs. So do Scott and Fuller, whose study on dogs leads them to proclaim, “This means, in terms of human behavior, that the best sort of social environment is one which permits a large degree of individual freedom of behavior. Most individuals can reach desired goals if they are allowed sufficient freedom in the ways they reach those goals” (“Heredity” 23). For his part, London hopes to recover and/or reproduce the frontier as a masculinized space that “permits a large degree of individual freedom.” Standing as London’s vision of the frontier, the Northland is a place where the harsh environment makes survival the prime goal. As London sees it, this environment overrides or negates fussy, overcivilized notions of morality, instead necessitating a deep-seated ethic of cooperation between men and dogs. Thus London’s ideal of an evolutionary, biological kinship harmonizes with his desire for a place where a rugged individualism can be freely expressed—for London the other half of the frontier equation.

The frontier myth, as Seltzer remarks, informs both individual and nation building. But this myth also depends on an historical illusion, that the frontier was an uninhabited place, just waiting to be discovered. This illusion, I believe, causes the novel to reflect the contradictory im-
ages of nature produced by dominant culture. As we have seen earlier, the masculinized Northland epitomizes nature as a fierce adversary, one who tests the resolve of the rugged individualist and counters the threat of feminine domesticity. But towards the end of the novel, London shifts to feminine imagery, describing the land that Thornton’s party crosses as an inviting and edenic surrounding, where nature yields riches of “strawberries and flowers” (62). Restaging frontier fantasies, the land is explicitly uninhabited: “[T]here was no life nor sign of life” (62). At the same time, Buck’s reversion is echoed by signs of the past etched on the landscape, from “an ancient path” to “the time-graven wreckage of a hunting lodge” (62). The overall impression, then, is a search for origins. Yet what finally is suggested is a reenactment of the violence of national origins, that fateful encounter on frontier lands with native inhabitants that leads to cultural violence on a massive scale. Dyer provides compelling evidence for such a reading of the end of the novel: “There was no tribe of American Indians named ‘Yeehat.’ London’s decision to employ a fictitious tribe is consistent with Northland traditions, however, for it was common to hear tales of fierce people living in remote and unexplored regions of the territory” (223). London’s fiction of the Yeehats, I would argue, borrows from images of Native Americans located in the national memory that reduce the very real presence of Native Americans to stereotyped “tales of fierce people” residing in distant lands. These tales are distortions, much like London’s portrayal of the Yeehats; as Gair states: “[T]he representation of the Yeehats as superstitious, aggressive, and incompetent is a strategic construction designed to conceal or justify the occupation of their land and the removal of their minerals by the Americans” (56). I would add that the transformation of Native American territory into what Dyer describes as “remote and unexplored regions” sets the stage for American conquest of these lands.

And, to be sure, Buck is an American dog, the product of American nature and culture. His “destiny” for greatness is suggested at the beginning of the novel, his nascent rugged individualism placing him apart from the explicitly non-American and weaker dogs, “Toots, the Japanese pug, or Ysabel, the Mexican hairless” (4). Arguing that Buck entering the wild frontier, where “real Americans are produced,” inscribes a “national fantasy” onto the natural landscape, Kaplan observes: “The first dog Buck kills to assume the position of leader of the pack is the German Spitz, from a nation increasingly threatening to America at the time” (265). Accordingly, she, too, reads the ending of the novel as reinventing “the conquest of America—this time as the invasion of Indians who destroy the primal unity between man and beast in the wilderness. Thornton and Buck are not seen as intruding
into the Yeehats’ prior history, marked only by an arrow in the body of a moose hunted by Buck” (265). But I would contend that biological kinship, “the primal unity between man and beast,” is disrupted primarily by the corrosiveness of human relationships displayed in the attitudes of Thornton’s party. Thornton and his party seem only interested in the gold that can be taken from the land, an American capitalist attitude that clashes with the notion of human interrelationship with nature. Such an attitude can be read into Buck’s revenge against the Yeehats, which is depicted as a heroic and individualistic act, introducing masculine and patriotic values into London’s narrative about the effects of evolution on the behavior of dogs. Thus the exploitation of and dominance over nature is subsumed into the story of Buck’s heroism. That London, however, cannot completely reconcile Buck’s American identity with his ideal of an evolutionary past is illustrated through the rupturing of the narrative at the moment that Buck decides to take action.

Buck’s aggression against the native inhabitants reveals the cultural attitudes that connect a belief in the survival of the fittest to imperialist desires, both of which serve to rationalize such violence. Gair, moreover, asserts that narrative technique helps to justify the killing of the Yeehats. The relationship between Thornton and Buck, Gair writes, “is constructed within the generic conventions of the popular romance, which demands revenge as a moral resolution” (57). I agree with Gair’s argument that the overall sweep of the narrative—Buck’s return to the wild—and the combined ideal and threat of the “primitive” embodied by the Yeehats constitute a violent reaction to the fears of domesticity and over-civilization. Rather than take too much solace in Buck’s final liberation from human captivity, as Hedrick appears to do, Gair remarks:

Although Buck’s liberation appeals to the sentimentality of the popular reading public—seducing them into a belief in the ‘natural’ rightness (“a falling tree,” etc.) of their culture’s moral crusade and generosity to others—the text’s displacement of that public’s appetite for violence and superstition onto other cultures simultaneously reminds us of the self-justifying nature of American imperialist discourse. (67)

Consequently London’s utopian vision of biological kinship at the close of the novel erupts into violent energies, the same energies that drive both evolutionary theories and imperialist dreams.
IV. A Civilized and Disciplined Imperialism

My reading of the end of the novel suggests that London was an evolutionary conservative. Yet unlike his famous alter-ego in Martin Eden (1909) who used evolution to justify an absolute individualism, London places limits on the virtues of individualism as he depicts the influence of evolution on Buck. Gair comments: “To be the fittest here means to be standardized to a predefined model—the hereditary of the breed”—so that individual idiosyncrasies are eliminated. To be an individual is to perish, since it implies a failure to standardize the self into a type” (52). This tension gives rise to two models, whereby individualistic values could be reconciled with larger social goals. The concept of nation building, which expressed national health as the “fitness” of the individual, promoted the heroic feats of national leaders, most famously Roosevelt, whose doctrine of self-improvement set an example for the rest of the nation to follow. Closely related, the eugenics movement promoted the improvement of the human race through the selection of individual genetic traits. Hence London’s engagement with scientific discourse was, perforce, an engagement with national politics. But, as Seltzer contends, the appropriation of nature led to either the control of nature, seen in the eugenics movement, or the confrontation with nature, endorsed by Roosevelt as a means of sustaining and proving masculine vitality.

Read, then, against the larger cultural picture that Seltzer paints, London’s call of the wild clashes with the national call to modernization, “the transition from competitive individualism and market culture” to “disciplinary individualism and machine culture” (Seltzer 155 emphasis in original). The narrative’s valorization of the primitive, the ideal of a past outside cultural history, ends up reenacting scenes of the exploitation of native lands and the killing of their inhabitants. To some degree, London appears torn between the primitive vitality that the Yeehats possess and the threat to civilized progress that they, seen as “primitives,” embody. What disrupts London’s vision of biological kinship is that Buck, as an animal, can go where he himself cannot, back to a “younger world,” where these kinds of problems do not exist.

But this call of the wild is, of course, not unmediated expression; rather, as I have argued, it is constructed and read through larger discourses about culture and nature. While the interplay between culture and nature supports London’s vision of biological kinship, these larger discourses reveal the connections between nationalism and individualism. For, if Buck appears as an individual, he has, we remember, been disciplined through the Judge’s whip and the law of club and fang. These acts of discipline, which produce a version of what Seltzer calls
"disciplinary individualism" recall the masculine fantasies that inform the "big stick" of Roosevelt's foreign policy. Buck's becoming an individual, because it can be explicitly read through the capitalist ideology of acquisition, demonstrates that the masculine action and vitality responsible for Buck's heroism are necessary for realizing U.S. imperialist desires. Moreover, as I have illustrated, the theory of atavism that challenged Spencer's reading of evolutionary progress becomes connected to the popular image of the frontier. London's novel, which threads Buck's retrogression/development through numerous examples of cultural memory (and amnesia), thus, I propose, suggests that the nation could remember its past conquest of the frontier and use these memories to realize its destiny as a global leader. Although some may have feared that a national return to the past might result in cultural de-generation and impede the movement towards disciplinary individualism, London demonstrates that, guided by an ideology of capitalist acquisition, a national investment in the belief of progress could be maintained by refashioning acts of rugged male individualism into the dreams of a civilized and disciplined imperialism, dreams built on desires for new frontiers to seek out and conquer.

NOTES

I would like to thank Cheryl Lester, Philip Barnard, Elizabeth Schultz, Susan Harris, David Katzman, and Dale M. Bauer for their comments on earlier drafts of this essay.

1. For instance, Ronald Martin's reading of London in American Literature and The Universe of Force relies heavily on this argument.

2. To determine what London had read on Darwin, I consulted David Mike Hamilton's "The Tools of My Trade": The Annotated Books in Jack London's Library and The Letters of Jack London Volume One: 1896-1905, edited by Earle Labor, Robert C. Leitz, III, and I. Milo Shepard. Discussions with Bert Bender and the research staff at the Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California, which houses London's personal library, were also helpful. I would also like to thank Bert Bender for allowing me to read an earlier version of "Jack London and 'the Sex Problem'" and Donna Haraway for allowing me to quote from a preliminary draft of "For the Love of a Good Dog: Webs of Action in the World of Dog Genetics."

3. That London read The Origin of Species during his trip to the Yukon is noted by Hamilton. Bender points out that the references to Darwin's theory of sexual selection in The Kempton-Wace Letters indicate that London had read The Descent of Man prior to having co-written this book with Anna Strunsky.

4. See, for example, Earle Labor and Jeanne Campbell Reesman's Jack London, Revised Edition.

5. For his narrative about dog behavior, London consulted Egerton R. Young's My Dogs in the Northland (1902) and Edward Jesse's Anecdotes of Dogs.
Daniel Dyer’s reader’s companion to *The Call of the Wild* provides compelling evidence for London’s documentary approach to writing the novel. All references in this essay to the novel are from this edition.


7. London read Ernst Haeckel’s *The Evolution of Man* (1895) and *The Riddle of the Universe* (1901).

8. Christopher Gair comments that the narrative about Buck documents the “shift from class privilege to an individualist meritocracy” (52).

9. Gail Bederman remarks that “one source of his vibrant virility was Roosevelt’s talent for embodying two contradictory models of manhood simultaneously—civilized manliness and primitive masculinity” (44). Her reading of Roosevelt’s “The Strenuous Life” emphasizes how his understanding of social Darwinist doctrine reinforces his conservative political views.

10. In Cary Wolfe’s provocative study of twentieth-century American culture and literature, he proposes that Ernest Hemingway’s *The Sun Also Rises* uses the bodies of animals to mediate problems of gender. That is, Jake Barnes is able to reaffirm his masculinity through his interest in bullfighting, which requires the physical mutilation of bulls, creating a bond (“aficion”) with other male admirers of and participants in the sport, namely Montoya and Romero. I find it interesting how London’s novel appears to anticipate what Wolfe calls “species discourse,” while suggesting that the struggle for survival overrides the kind of formalized sacrifice of animals that Wolfe sees in Hemingway’s novel.

11. Christopher Gair and Amy Kaplan also discuss this scene.

12. Jonathan Auerbach states, “Portraying the intense intimacy between Buck and Thornton, London is compelled to level the difference between man and beast, to make them share the same ontology” (40). For evidence Auerbach points to London’s description of Thornton reacting to Buck’s being beaten by Hal; Thornton lets out “a cry that was inarticulate and more like the cry of an animal” (48). That Buck’s love for Thornton overrides his instinctive return to the wild as critics such as Auerbach have observed, offers another dimension to the nature-culture debate, particularly, I would argue, when read in the light of Darwin’s questioning of the distinctions between the emotions of animals and humans.

13. In *The Descent of Man*, Darwin notes, “Our domestic dogs are descended from wolves and jackals, and though they may not have gained in cunning, and may have lost in wariness and suspicion, yet they have progressed in certain moral qualities such as in affection, trust-worthiness, temper, and probably in general intelligence” (78).


15. Although Auerbach acknowledges the ongoing debate about animal behavior, he chooses not to make it the primary focus of his argument (25).
16. While Auerbach positions himself on the cultural side of this divide, Jacqueline Tavernier-Courbin’s discussion of the effects of the environment on Buck’s sense of morality appears to place all of the emphasis on the natural.
17. Refer to Mark Seltzer’s *Bodies and Machines*.
18. For different readings of the newspaper reference, see Gair and Auerbach.
19. My discussion about the idea of dogs as companion species, I think, would provide an answer to the question posed by Auerbach: “[W]hy should masters, hairy or otherwise, be dwelling in Buck’s racial unconscious, as if human mastery over nature were somehow natural in itself?” (30).
20. Charles N. Watson Jr.’s remarks on the novel also suggest the idea of biological kinship: “[T]he intuition at the heart of the novel is that the processes of individuation in a dog, a wolf, or a human child are not fundamentally different” (38).
21. Gair and Kaplan also make this point.
22. The narrative also echoes this search, as Thornton and his companions are looking for a fabled lost mine.
23. In “For the Love of a Good Dog,” Haraway reminds us that the start of the study of dog genetics was shaped by eugenics. Indeed, the persons who started the program, Alan Gregg and C.C. Little, believed if it could be proven that heredity determined the intelligence of dogs, it would be easier to convince the public that the same held true for humans (6-7). Read in this light, London’s novel becomes a cautionary tale about the violence lurking in discourses of biological purity, those expressed though London’s “call of the wild.”
24. It should be noted that when London offered a mirror image of Buck, the “civilizing” of a wolf in *White Fang* (1906), violence also erupts at the end; the wolf “recognizes a criminal intruder about to kill a judge, and ... unleashes his primitive killer instinct to tear out the throat of this lower-class criminal, a degenerate beast” (Kaplan 265).

REFERENCES


