AN ANALYSIS OF THE TECHNIQUES OF CHARACTERIZATION,
IN SELECTED FICTION OF JACK LONDON

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. The purpose of this study is to analyze the techniques of characterization in selected fiction of Jack London.

Importance of the study. An important part of any piece of fiction is characterization; therefore, an analysis of the material a writer devotes to character delineation is of value in judging his fiction and in understanding the mechanics of his techniques.

Development of the study. This study of characterization in London's fiction is restricted to twenty-two short stories and five novels. The study has been prepared in two parts: the short stories, and the novels. A limitation was necessary due to the quantity of London's fiction; he wrote one hundred and fifty-two short stories, nineteen novels, and many poems, essays, and articles. Best Short Stories of Jack London, Garden City Books, 1953, was chosen because it contains stories representative of his better work throughout his entire writing career. Another story, written in the last few months of his life, was added to the list as a check upon the chance that he developed other techniques.

The short stories analyzed are:
"The White Silence"  "A Piece of Steak"
"To Build a Fire"  "The Heathen"
"An Odyssey of the North"  "Samuel"
"The League of the Old Men"  "On the Makaloo Mat"
"Lost Face"  "A Daughter of the Aurora"
"The Law of Life"  "The Mexican"
"The Story of Jees Uck"  "All Gold Canyon"
"To the Man on Trail"  "The Wisdom of the Trail"
"The Story of Keesh"  "The House of Mapuhi"
"The Wit of Porportuk"  "The Pearls of Parlay"
"Love of Life"  "When Alice Told Her Soul”

The five novels chosen for analysis of characterization techniques were also selected from throughout London's writing career. The novels are: *The Sea Wolf*, 1904; *The Iron Heel*, 1908; *Martin Eden*, 1909; *John Barleycorn*, 1913; and *The Star Rover*, 1915. The dates given represent first editions.

**Organization of the thesis.** This study is arranged in four chapters: Chapter II discusses the techniques of

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1The short story "When Alice Told Her Soul" appeared in *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, LXIV (March, 1918), and was reprinted in the book, *On the Makaloo Mat* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1918). All the other short stories appear in *Best Short Stories of Jack London*, Garden City Books, 1953. The stories for this anthology were selected by Irving Shepard the literary executor of the London estate. Shepard informed me that he based his selection upon the number of times these stories were requested for anthologies and reprints. These stories were originally published between 1899-1913.
characterization in the short stories; Chapter III presents the study of London's novel-length techniques of characterization; and Chapter IV concludes the work with a summary of the results of the analysis.
CHAPTER II

TECHNIQUES OF CHARACTERIZATION IN THE SHORT STORIES

To sustain analysis, the material concerned must be reduced to its simplest components. Those components may be overlapping and difficult to define, but a series of common denominators must be found which are applicable to all the material in the study, and then the attempt must be made to identify and classify that material into components as it is examined. After all the material has been examined and divided, the resultant divisions may be regarded as the elements of the original material.

This plan of analysis was the procedure for this study. The material in the selected fiction that referred to characterization was examined, identified, and classified. These divisions constitute the elements of characterization.

I. THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF CHARACTERIZATION

An examination of the selected short stories reveals eight basic techniques of characterization which have been referred to as elements. The identification of these techniques was suggested by a list of six elements of characterization mentioned by Walter L. Myers in his book, The Later Realism, The University of Chicago Press, 1927. Myers lists: objective details of the character's appearance and action;
character's conversation; presentation of the character's actual sensations, perceptions, and concepts; interpretative comment upon the character; generalized narrative; and objective details of the character's environment. For the presentation of this analysis I found it necessary to identify the material that contributed to characterization more explicitly than Myers' elements allowed; therefore, I have divided London's material of characterization into eight elements. These eight elements or basic techniques are: (1) Objective details of a character's physical appearance; (2) Abstract physical appearance; (3) Action; (4) Dialogue; (5) Presentation of a character's actual sensations, perceptions, and concepts, which may be more conveniently called a character's thoughts; (6) Interpretative comment upon a character; (7) Generalized narrative; and (8) Description of a character's environment.

The point of view of a particular story has little effect upon the use of the eight elements. Of the twenty-two stories examined only two were presented by a completely first-person point of view. London was not prevented from using all the elements in these two stories; therefore, it may be said that the point of view of a story does not preclude the use of all the elements.

Objective details of a character's appearance, element number one, denote that material which offers specific
and imageal\(^1\) details of a character's appearance. This technique was found in seventeen of the twenty-two stories examined.

Often this technique of specific details of description appears merely to offer a single, predominant detail of characteristic appearance.

There was no flesh to their faces; their cheekbones were massed with hideous scabs which had cracked and frozen alternately under the intense frost. . . . \(^2\)

Such a statement as the following also illustrates this technique:

The skin was as white as a woman's and as smooth.\(^3\) London describes four elderly men by this technique:

With rheumy eyes . . . with palsied hands.\(^4\)

A portrait of a character is drawn by a number of these objective details of appearance. Such a use of this technique may be seen in the following example:

The black hair and the fine bronze were hers, and the black eyes, brilliant and bold, keen as sword light,

\(^1\)Imageal is a term used by Walter Myers in *The Later Realism*. I believe "imageal" is the best possible term for this concept.

\(^2\)"The Wisdom of the Trail," *Best Short Stories of Jack London* (Garden City, New York: Garden City Books, 1953), p. 265. All quoted passages in this chapter are taken from this book and hereafter will be identified by story title and page number.


\(^4\)"The Wit of Porportuk," p. 194.
proud; and hers the delicate eagle nose with the thin quivering nostrils, the high cheekbones that were not broad apart, and the thin lips that were not too thin.  

London's head-to-toe portrait of a character is effected by this same technique.  

Six foot two or three, with proportionate breadth of shoulders and depth of chest, his smooth-shaven face nipped by the cold to a gleaming pink, his long lashes and eyebrows white with ice, and the ear and the neck flaps of his great wolfskin cap loosely raised. . . . Clasped outside his Mackinaw jacket, a beaded belt held two large Colt's revolvers and a hunting knife, while he carried, in addition to the inevitable dog whip, a smokeless rifle of the largest bore and latest pattern. 

This technique of detailed physical appearance tends to bring the reader face to face with a definite picture of the fictional character.  

Ten of the stories examined for this study contained the technique of a word-portrait, while seven other stories employed the technique only to the extent of presenting predominant details of appearance. 

Abstract physical appearance, element number two, identifies that material of characterization that suggests a conception of appearance. It does not create any definite image in a reader's mind, but suggests qualities of physical appearance which the reader may construct in his own imagination. This technique is present in all but one of the 

\[\text{5Tbid., p. 192.}\]

\[\text{6"To the Man on Trail," p. 178.}\]
twenty-two stories studied. It is a technique which London was able to weave easily into the action and progression of a story. By this means a reader is given a quick impression of a character's appearance without slowing the narration. Here are examples of this technique:

A strapping young woman with handsome features. . . . 7

The pitiable thing that was once a man. . . . 8

There are instances where this technique appears with the reader's interest directed more closely to a character's appearance, although the description remains abstract.

He had caught sight of his reflected face. So horrible was it that sensibility awoke long enough to be shocked.9

Emily Travis was dainty and delicate and rare. . . . 10

London uses this technique separately and in conjunction with detailed physical appearance. When a detailed physical description becomes a necessary part of a character portrayal, when a character's appearance is an integral part of the story, then London presents such a description. At other times he offers only this abstract appearance or a single predominant detail.

9"Love of Life," p. 223.
Action, the third element of characterization, denotes passages describing incidents which are made to occur before a reader's vision. Stated simply, action of characterization is dramatized movement which limits and describes a fictional personality. Such movement is usually made the focal point of a reader's attention. Here are examples of action from some of the short stories examined:

Yakaga strode over to the Cossack and sliced off a finger. 11

Stooping, Porportuk crossed El-Soo's feet, so that the instep of one lay over that of the other; and then ... he discharged his rifle through the two ankles. 12

Action of a less violent nature but equally characteristic may be seen in this mild description of movement:

She fumbled for matches and lighted a short clay pipe, pressing down the burning surface of the tobacco. ... 13

The statement that all of the stories examined contained action is not necessarily superfluous. It is conceivable to me that a short story could be written without this element present.

Dialogue, the fourth element of characterization, is the quoted speech of a character. It is present in every story examined; however, three stories contain very little. ... 11"Lost Face," p. 71.
One story has only twelve lines of dialogue, another has only five, and another has but a single line. On the other hand, one of the stories is predominantly dialogue, containing only sixteen short paragraphs that are not dialogue.

Following are examples of the different styles of dialogue found in the examined stories. Standard English is presented in this speech:

"I remember hearing Prince Lilolilo tell Uncle John that you were the best rider in all Hawaii."14

London presented dialect in some instances as shown by this example:

"Oh, aye, a bug but, suvunty acres. Ut kept me old mon buzzy, along with a son an' a hired mon, tull say naught o' extra honds un the harvest an' a maid servant un the house."15

London used unusual word arrangement and choice to give the impression of the speech of one who is unfamiliar with the language.

"Yet is there small use in life. I can go to Constantine, and he will put irons upon me, and one day they will tie a piece of rope, so, and I will sleep good. Yet--no; I do not know."16

London's use of simple, short, forceful, and image-provoking words gives an impression of uncommon speech and strength and grandeur which is an aspect of this technique.

"I am Imber of the Whitefish people... My father was Otsback, a strong man. The land was warm with sunshine and gladness when I was a boy. The people did not hunger after strange things, nor hearken to new voices, and the ways of their fathers were their ways. The women found favor in the eyes of the young men, and the young men looked upon them with content. Babes hung at the breasts of the women, and they were heavy-hipped with increase of the tribe." 17

There are few words of more than two syllables in the above passage. Such dialogue presents a definite impression of uncommon and characteristic speech. It also gives the impression of a wild and forlorn rhythm that characterizes the speaker and permeates the entire story.

Presentation of a character's thoughts, the fifth element, is the title given to that material which clearly presents a character's sensations, perceptions, and conceptions about anything his mind may be made to dwell upon. For this study I have labeled only material that is definitely presented as thoughts; material interjected by an omniscient narrator must be clearly identified as a particular character's thoughts to be so classified in this study.

Of the twenty-two short stories examined all but five contain this element.

Following are several examples of this technique:

Youth will be served--this saying flashed into King's mind, and he remembered the first time he had heard it,

17 "The League of the Old Men," p. 56.
the night when he had put away Stowsher Bill. 18

He remembered back into the fight to the moment when he had Scandel swaying and tottering on the hairline balance of defeat. Ah, that piece of Steak would have done it! He had lacked just that for the decisive blow, and he had lost. 19

He . . . resumed his meditations. It was the same everywhere, with all things. The mosquitoes vanished with the first frost. The little tree squirrel crawled away to die. 20

And south, still south, they would go, while the winter raced vainly after them, and the ice formed in the eddies, and the days grew chill and crisp, south to some warm Hudson's Bay Company post, where timber grew tall and generous and there was grub without end.

These were the thoughts of the man as he strove onward. 21

London also presented a character's thoughts without so pointedly declaring that "he thought" or "he remembered"; still the material is clearly designated as the workings of a mind. For instance:

Suddenly there came to him a premonition of danger. It seemed a shadow had fallen upon him. But there was no shadow. 22

In the above example the character's mind is clearly presented as the origin of the sensation. "There came to him" clearly labels the place the premonition resides. "It

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"seemed" identifies a sensation and thus is a thought of the character.

The thoughts and impressions of a character present a penetrating insight into that character and offer a means of presenting material of immediate importance concerning that character. London uses a character's thoughts to present material of characterization other than immediate reactions, but this involves a blend of elements which will be discussed later.

Interpretative comment, the sixth element of London's basic techniques of characterization, was found to be, in its simplest forms, an easy and effective means of character delineation. This technique may be defined as anything said about a character other than obvious physical description. Interpretative comment may be presented by an omniscient narrator, a first-person narrator, or a character in a story. This element is present in all the stories examined.

The simplest use of interpretative comment is exemplified by the underlined word in the following quotation:

"Which she would have done anyway, and you know it," Martha charged, lapsing charmingly into twentieth-century slang.23

In the preceding example London merely interjected a single word of interpretative comment into a sentence of conversation.

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Here is another example of the same brief use of this element:

"Good night, Mr. Pocket," he called sleepily. 24

A more elaborate use of this technique is London's presentation of direct statements about a character.

El-Soo was quick, and deft, and intelligent; but above all she was fire, the living flame of life, a blaze of personality that was compounded of will, sweetness, and daring. Her father was a chief, and his blood ran in her veins. Obedience on the part of El-Soo was a matter of arrangement. 25

... these uncrowned heroes who had seen history made, who regarded the great and the romantic as but the ordinary and the incidental in the routine of life. 26

Jees Uck, whose mind was simple, who thought elementally and was unused to weighing life in its subtler quantities. 27

For this study similies and metaphors are considered interpretative comment if they present material about a character. Inasmuch as they do, they offer comment about a fictional personality. For instance, the underlined portion of the following quotation is considered a simile of interpretative comment.

... and he brought the butt of his dog whip against Malemute Kid's door as a Norse sea rover, on a southern

foray, might thunder for admittance at the castle door.28

Metaphors of interpretative comment are exemplified by these quotations:

... and Tom King was the grizzled old chopping block that guarded the highway to fame and fortune.29

Imber ... was standing there, a gaunt and hungry-looking shadow.30

Generalized narrative, the seventh element of characterization, refers to any episode, pertinent to a character, which is given in the story but not dramatized as occurring before the reader's vision. It is that which has taken place at some earlier time or some other locale than the main story occupies. It may be material that needs to be put before the reader but is not important enough to dramatize; or it may be material of importance which London prefers not to dramatize because of other considerations of taste or emphasis. This technique is most often employed to present material which may be loosely called background. Past incidents which are important in a character's development are presented to the reader by this method.

Generalized narrative occasionally occupies the greater part of a story, as in "Samuel" and "The Law of Life."

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28"An Odyssey of the North," p. 29.


It is a technique which London manipulates effectively from the third-person point of view; the narrator is able merely to tell all matter of importance that has previously happened to a character. London modifies this technique occasionally to prevent an impression upon the reader of wading through mere exposition. He accomplishes this by occasionally dramatizing episodes in the midst of a long passage of history, and by presenting the material in different tenses. In "Lost Face" a long passage of background begins logically enough in past perfect tense, then switches to past tense, then back again to past perfect. The switch to past tense tends to give a sense of greater immediacy to the material, then when the final switch is made the reader realizes that what he has just read was background material.

All but five of the twenty-two stories selected for this study contain generalized narrative. Of these five, four contain this element in a blend which will be discussed later.

Generalized narrative often presents episodes that occur during the time of the story but are not important enough to present as action. An example of this aspect of the technique follows:

At St. Michael's she washed dishes in the kitchen of the post... But just before Bering Sea closed in for the year she bought a passage south on a strayed sealing schooner. That winter she cooked for Captain Markheim's household at Unalaska, and in the Spring
continued south to Sitka on a whisky sloop.  

Following is an example of the use of generalized narrative that offers episodes that occur prior to the action of a story.

The years had passed. He had served under Tebenkoff when Michaelovski Redoubt was built. He had spent two years in the Kuskokwim country. Two summers, in the month of June, he had managed to be at the head of Kotzebue Sound. Here, at this time, the tribes assembled for barter; here were to be found spotted deerskins from Siberia, ivory from the Diomedes, walrus skins from the shores of the Arctic, strange stone lamps, passing in trade from tribe to tribe. . . .  

Description of a character's environment, the eighth element of characterization, merely defines that material which describes the physical world in which a character appears. This technique may be offered by means of objective details or abstract terms and impressions.

Description of environment is present in nineteen of the twenty-two stories examined.

Following are examples of objective details of environment:

It was a noble situation--noble as the ancient hau tree, the size of a house, where she sat as if in a house, so spaciously and comfortably houselike was its shade furnished; noble as the lawn that stretched away landward, its plush of green at an appraisement of two hundred dollars a front foot, to a bungalow equally


32 "Lost Face," p. 65.
dignified, noble, and costly.\textsuperscript{33}

The walls and ceiling were of oiled and paneled redwood. The floor was more glassy than glare ice, and she sought standing place on one of the great skins that gave a sense of security to the polished surface. A huge fireplace—an extravagant fireplace, she deemed it—yawned in the farther wall.\textsuperscript{34}

Examples of abstract description of environment are contained in the following passages:

... it was an unknown journey through the dismal vastnesses of the Northland... the kind that try to the uttermost the souls of men.\textsuperscript{35}

It was very lonely at Twenty Mile. The bleak vastness stretched away on every side of the horizon. The snow, which was really frost, flung its mantle over the land and buried everything in the silence of death.\textsuperscript{36}

And the land was very large, with plains soggy with water, and great forests. And the cold came with much snow on the ground, and no man knew the way.\textsuperscript{37}

London's choice of objective details of environment or abstract qualities and impressions appear to be entirely dependent upon the sensation he wished to engender in the reader's mind. The abstract description of the Northland wastes especially seem to create a forlorn and lonely impression, whereas specific details might not accomplish such a mood.

\textsuperscript{33}"On the Makaloa Mat," p. 122.
\textsuperscript{34}"The Story of Jeess Uck," p. 171.
\textsuperscript{35}"The Wisdom of the Trail," p. 267.
\textsuperscript{36}"The Story of Jeess Uck," p. 160.
\textsuperscript{37}"An Odyssey of the North," pp. 41-42.
Description of environment is the least important technique of characterization in the short stories examined. Environment itself is of utmost importance to particular stories, but not as a means of character delineation. London employs environment as a force in conflict with his characters rather than as any underlying and irrefutable governing influence upon them. His created environments are indifferent and unconquerable forces, but his characters that move through such environments are occasionally given the power and the intellect to co-exist with such unfavorable surroundings.

Such environment presentation is material of characterization only indirectly. A human being that can exist in such a place is seen by the reader to be a person of strength and ability, but certainly not a human representative of his surroundings such as those found in literature about more civilized environments.

Of the twenty-two short stories examined, ten were plotted around the conflict between character and his natural environment. Of the other twelve stories, five contained a minor conflict of a character versus nature. Therefore, environment may be primarily regarded as a source of conflict in London's short stories rather than a background of influence upon a character as is found in literature containing deterministic concepts.

Two of London's stories in this study present an
environment that almost possesses its own character or consciousness. "The White Silence seemed to sneer"\(^{38}\) at the survivor of a party who had lost one member to their environment. A beautiful sunny valley was scarred by the diggings of a gold-miner in another story. After the miner leaves the valley, London writes "through the silence crept back the spirit of the place."\(^{39}\)

The eight elements of characterization have been shown and their functions discussed. But these basic techniques are only the most simple instruments of characterization. In the next section the more elaborate devices of characterization are presented and discussed.

II. BLENDS OF THE BASIC TECHNIQUES

Because dialogue and thoughts are presented by words, these elements of characterization have the capacity of offering all other material of characterization. This is true simply because a fictional character speaks and thinks in words; thus, a character's speech or thoughts can be made to present any element that a narrator might offer in words, regardless of point of view.


\(^{39}\)"All Gold Canyon," p. 264.
From the twenty-two stories of this study there are only rare instances of dialogue and thoughts presenting all the elements of characterization; however, one example is sufficient to show that London did present material of characterization by means of his character's dialogue and thoughts.

In this analysis of techniques of characterization it is pertinent to consider why London presented some material of characterization through dialogue and thought, while he presented other material by means of a narrator. Obviously, he must have considered one method more desirable than another.

**Dialogue.** An examination of the selected stories indicates that the benefits of presenting any material through dialogue are an intensified illusion of reality, a justification of a chosen stylized language, and a limitation of viewpoint.

London presents the greater portion of "An Odyssey of the North" through dialogue. The main action of the story always happens beyond the reader's view and therefore needs to be told by a character in the story. The greater portion of the story is told by the character Naas, with whom the story is most concerned. He relates in his own speech the main story.

By having a half-civilized character give most of the material, London could use simple and forceful language, full of nature and sea-lore references, that he apparently valued
for its aesthetic mood. "An Odyssey of the North" thus illustrates dialogue used to justify the style that London preferred. Here is an example of the dialogue from this story:

"So I drifted, like those little fish which raise a sail to the wind but cannot steer. But my eyes and my ears were open always, and I went among men who traveled much, for I knew they had but to see those I sought to remember. At last there came a man, fresh from the mountains, with pieces of rock in which the free gold stood to the size of peas, and he had heard, he had met, he knew them. They were rich, he said, and lived in the place where they drew the gold from the ground."40

Dialogue is used in "On the Makaloa Mat" for a different reason. The character who tells the story needs to justify her actions as they are presented, hence the story is given through her speech and from her point of view. More than a story of episodes, it is a story of justification. It is a character's point of view, and the author permits himself no comment upon a plot involving adultery.

The third reason for dialogue, an intensifying of the illusion of reality, is usually applicable to all instances of dialogue; but never is it so obvious as in the presentation of dialect. The use of standard English in dialogue can contribute to the illusion of reality in a story, of course, but a dialect makes the reason for its use more apparent. A reader's impression of the printed page tends to diminish,

40 "An Odyssey of the North," p. 42.
and he receives a richer sensation from a story when a character uses such language as the following:

"Ut was all on account o' Samuel, which was the name o' her eldest an' they do say her favorit brother--hum oz died by his own hand all through the munster's mistake un no registerun' the new church ot Dublin."

Dialogue is a highly effective means of offering material of characterization, and London uses it whenever convenient or justifiable; however, many instances occur when material of characterization cannot be offered by any character in the story simply because it would be incongruous with the realism of the story. A reader never has the impression of London manipulating a situation just to allow a character to give information that could be given by the narrator of the story. It is a small matter, but it demonstrates London's writing skill.

Following are examples of dialogue employing all of the elements of characterization. London's predominant reason for offering this material via dialogue is to achieve a greater illusion of reality. When other reasons are prominently involved, they are discussed.

Here are examples of a character's dialogue giving generalized narrative about another character and about himself.

"Last fall he gave his whole clean-up, forty thousand,

\[41\] "Samuel," p. 111.
to Joe Castrell, to buy in on Dominion. Today he'd be a millionaire. But while he stayed behind at Circle City, taking care of his partner with the scurvy, what does Castrell do? Goes into McFarland’s and jumps the limit, and drops the whole sack. Found him dead in the snow the next day. And poor Jack laying his plans to go out this winter to his wife and the boy he's never seen. You'll notice he took exactly what his partner lost—forty thousand."42

"Old Parlay arrived after that with his pearls. There was a single one of them, they say, worth sixty-thousand francs. Peter Gee saw it and has told me he offered that much for it. The old man went clean off for a while. They had him strait-jacketed in the Colonial Club for two days—"

"His wife's uncle, an old Paumontan, cut him out of the jacket and turned him loose," the supercargo corroborated.43

"And I was only nineteen, when Uncle Robert decided on the marriage. How was I to know? Uncle Robert talked to me. He pointed out how the wealth and property of Hawaii was already beginning to pass into the hands of the haoles [whites]."44

Through dialogue London presented interpretative comment by various characters upon themselves and upon others.

"I was thirsty for it. I was like a survivor from the open boat falling down on the sand and lapping the fresh bubbling springs at the roots of the palms."45

"Aye, an I'm grantun' all thot you say," she went on calmly. "But I am no referun' tull thot. I am referrun' tull her wucked-headed an' vucious stubborness. No more stubborn woman ever luv'd than Margaret Henan."46

42"To the Man on Trail," pp. 182-83.


This last quotation presents material of interpretative comment through dialogue for two reasons: illusion of reality plus a limited point of view. This limited point of view enables the writer to offer material that is opposite to the final opinion, different from other characters', including the narrator's, and, most important, material that he wants the reader to consider but does not want to state as the truth. Another quotation exemplifies more pointedly this last statement.

"I have told you," said Vera. "Diaz has more to fear from this youth than from any man. He is implacable. He is the hand of God."47

The author of a story could not honestly say that one of his characters was "the hand of God," but an author could put that idea into a reader's mind by having an impressionable character utter those words.

An example of dialogue offering description of environment also presents an instance of dialogue being used because of its style. In the following quotation it is obvious that London wished to utilize the rhythm and the force of short, simple words.

"As I say, we dwelt in Akatan, which lies in the midst of the sea on the edge of the world. . . . Our homes shouldered about one another on the rocky strip between the rim of the forest and the yellow beach where our kayaks lay. We were not many, and the world was very

small. There were strange lands to the east—-islands like Akatan; so we thought all the world was islands and did not mind."48

The following examples offer instances of dialogue presenting action, thoughts, objective details of appearance, abstract physical description, and other dialogue.

Action:

"She opened her arms to me, and I came against her. Then sudden, the hate flamed in her eye, her hand was at my hip. And once, twice, she passed the knife."49

Thoughts:

"When I came among you people of the Mackenzie, I was of one mind. As I listened in the council and thought of the swift legs of El-Soo, I was of many minds. Now am I of one mind again, but it is a different mind from the one I brought to the council. Let me tell you my mind. When a dog runs once away from a master, it will run away again. No matter how many times it is brought back, each time it will run away again. When we have such dogs we sell them. El-Soo is like a dog that runs away."50

Objective details of appearance:

"I knew his fine, brave eyes, with their straight black brows, the nose of him that was assuredly a Kamehameha nose, and the last, least, lovable curve of his mouth."51

Abstract physical description:

"And that handsome looking fellow putting the capote under his head is a French half-breed."52

Dialogue:

"'Come!' I cried, taking her strong by the hand.
'The way is long and dark. Let us hurry!'
'Where?' she asked. . . ."53

Thoughts. Presentation of material of characterization through a character's thoughts involves other reasons than those cited for characterization material through dialogue. London offers characterizing material through a character's thoughts because as thoughts the material becomes the motivation of a character's actions and further behavior. A particular character must have particular thoughts in his mind to do what he does. The thoughts of a character may have no reality even in the story, but still such thoughts explain a character's actions. This is the primary reason London offers material of characterization through a character's thoughts rather than by a mere statement from a narrator. In no way does this deny the importance, although it is secondary to plot, of the material as characterization.

The following examples demonstrate the capacity of a character's thoughts to present all the elements of characterization. The greater amount of thought presentation which embraces other elements is concerned with offering interpretative comment or generalized narrative. Such blends of elements appear in five of the twenty-two stories, while blends

53"An Odyssey of the North," p. 47.
of thoughts and other elements appear in three of the stories. Here is an example of a character's thoughts presenting interpretative comment upon himself.

He knew that he would pray, and beg, and entreat. . . . This would not be nice. To pass out bravely and cleanly, with a smile and a jest--ah, that would have been the way. But to lose control, to have his soul upset by the pangs of the flesh, to screech and gibber like an ape, to become the veriest beast--ah, that was what was so terrible. 54

A character other than the owner of the thoughts is commented upon in the following example:

He felt, then, that this was a new breed of woman . . . Tender and Soft! \{original italics\} He knew her feet had been born to easy paths and sunny lands, strangers to the moccasined pain of the North,unkissed by the chill lips of the frost. . . . 55

London uses this technique to show the thoughts of a group about an individual:

The audience began to grow incensed with Rivera. Why didn't he take the licking that was appointed him? Of course he was going to be licked, but why should he be so obstinate about it? 56

As was pointed out earlier in this study, the point of view from which a story is narrated did not prevent London from characterizing by any of the techniques. Following is an example of thought presentation giving interpretative

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54"Lost Face," p. 63.


56"The Mexican," p. 244.
comment from a first-person point of view story.

Who was I, anyway, to know more about the sea and its ways than a properly qualified captain? was what was in their minds, I knew.57

London presented much generalized narrative by the technique of having a character think about his past and thereby present background material of characterization. In some of the stories examined, all the background is presented by this technique. Other stories present the background merely through pure generalized narrative from an omniscient third-person narrator. Following are examples of this particular use of a character's thoughts.

He strove to think of other things, and began reading back in his own life. He remembered his mother and his father, and the little spotted pony. . . . Once more he saw Paris, and dreary London, and gay Vienna, and Rome. . . . Ah, there it was that the long trail began.58

But the things Rivera fought for burned in his brain—blazing and terrible visions, that, with eyes wide open, sitting lonely in the corner of the ring and waiting for his tricky antagonist, he saw as clearly as he had lived them.

. . . He saw the six-thousand workers, starved and wan, and the little children, seven and eight years of age. . . .59

Obviously this technique possesses greater force of characterization since it reveals the things that a character has experienced and points out that these experiences still

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57"The Heathen," p. 91.
affect and determine the sort of person the character is; therefore, in the field of characterization this material, by being so presented, has increased importance.

London's characters are occasionally made to think about their environment, but only when such thoughts have a narrative purpose.

Farther on, he knew, he would come to where dead spruce and fir, very small and wizened, bordered the shore of a little lake, the titchin-nichilie, [original italics] in the tongue of the country, the "land of the little sticks."60

Characters are also made to think about physical description:

And his father he saw, large, big-mustached, and deep-chested...61

Many elements of characterization are evident in the following passage of a character's thoughts.

He remembered, when a boy, during a time of plenty, when he saw a moose pulled down by the wolves. Zing-ha lay with him in the snow and watched--Zing-ha, who later became the craftiest of the hunters...61

But the moose. Zing-ha and he had gone out that day to play at hunting after the manner of their fathers. On the bed of the creek they struck the fresh track of a moose, and with it the tracks of many wolves. "An old one," Zing-ha, who was quicker at reading the sign, said, "an old one who cannot keep up with the herd. The wolves have cut him out from his brothers, and they will never leave him..." How Zing-ha and he felt the blood lust quicken! The finish would be a sight to see!

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60"Love of Life," p. 212.
61"The Mexican," p. 239.
Crawling up the wind, Zing-ha bellied it through the snow, and with him crept he, Koskoosh, who was to be the chief of the tribesmen in the years to come. Together they shoved aside the underbranches of a young spruce and peered forth. It was the end they saw.

Then on his darkened eyes was projected the vision of the moose—the old bull moose—the torn flanks and bloody sides, the riddled mane, and the great branching horns, down low and tossing to the last. He saw the flashing forms of gray, the gleaming eyes, the lolling tongues, the slavered fangs. And he saw the inexorable circle close in till it became a dark point in the midst of the stamped snow.

The passage is clearly denoted as material of thought by the expression, "he remembered." Included in the passage are interpretative comment, "Zing-ha, who was quicker at reading the sign"; generalized narrative, "Zing-ha and he had gone out that day to play at hunting"; action, "together they shoved aside the under-branches of a young spruce tree and peered forth"; dialogue, "an old one who cannot keep up with the herd"; detailed physical description, "the torn flanks and bloody sides, the riddle mane, and the great branching horns, down low and tossing to the last"; and even other thoughts, "How Zing-ha and he felt the blood lust quicken! The finish would be a sight to see!"

All the material offered in these thought presentations has the definite purpose of the advancement and development of the plot. A character thinks only about that

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background still affecting him, or that material which will foreshadow or explain future developments in the story; the various elements of characterization that appear through thought presentation, while retaining their force of characterization, are, therefore, primarily material of plot.

This investigation of thought presentation makes especially convincing the fact that London was not consciously aware of techniques of characterization as they appear in this analysis; therefore, when his characters are made to think material that is identified as other elements of characterization, it is rather coincidental because London was concerned only with the foreshadowing effects of the thoughts. Those thoughts fall into divisions of classification, not because the thoughts were so designed, but because the classification was constructed to embrace all material having anything to do with characterization.

Classification and analysis, by their nature, give only an elemental view of an entire subject. To appreciate and understand the part played by the separate techniques that have been discussed, it is necessary to view them as London employed them.

III. A SAMPLE SYNTHESIS OF THE TECHNIQUES

In the preceding pages of this study the various methods of London's character delineation were analyzed and
discussed. In this section those revealed techniques will be demonstrated in context.

The story "The Wisdom of the Trail" was selected for this demonstration because of the memorable character it presents and because it contains all the elements of characterization, combinations of those elements, and brief instances of blends of the elements. The passages presented from the story show the techniques as they are applied to character. Not all of the material of characterization from the story is presented; those portions which are only repetitious are omitted. I would point out that these repetitions that are omitted are unimportant because they are only a little more of the same thing. One can appreciate the use of the technique in three paragraphs as well as in six.

The story. "The Wisdom of the Trail" is the story of the Indian trail leader, Sitka Charley, who has learned the white man's concepts of law and honor and who governs his charges accordingly. He is fortified in his evaluations of the white man's way by his acquaintance with an unusually brave and stoic white woman, and, in the course of the story, his adopted concepts and the example set by the white woman prompt him to mete out the death judgment to two of his own kind for failure to live up to the rigid demands he sets for their conduct.
The synthesis. The portions of the story which contain the selected material of characterization are presented in the left column with my comments and explanations opposite the passages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Fiction</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sitka Charley had achieved the impossible. Other Indians might have known as much of the wisdom of the trail as did he; but he alone knew the white man's wisdom, the honor of the trail, and the law. But these things had not come to him in a day. The aboriginal mind is slow to generalize, and many facts, repeated often, are required to compass an understanding. Sitka Charley, from boyhood, had been thrown continually with white men, and as a man he had elected to cast his fortune with them, expatriating himself, once and for all, from his own people. Even then, respecting, almost venerating their power, and pondering over it, he had yet to divine its secret essence—the honor and the law. And it was only by the cumulative evidence of years that he had finally come to understand. Being an alien, when he did know, he knew it better than the white man himself; being an Indian, he had achieved the impossible. And of these things had been bred a certain contempt for his own people—a contempt which he had made it a custom to conceal, but which now burst forth in a polyglot whirlwind of curses upon the heads of Kah-Chucte and Gowhee. They cringed before him.</td>
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<tr>
<td>London begins the story with interpretative comment and generalized narrative to explain the motives and behavior of his protagonist.</td>
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<td>This background material is suddenly brought up to the time of the story by switching to action.</td>
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like a brace of snarly wolf dogs, too cowardly to spring, too wolfish to cover their fangs. They were not handsome creatures. Neither was Sitka Charley. All three were frightful-looking. There was no flesh to their faces; their cheekbones were massed with hideous scabs which had cracked and frozen alternately under the intense frost; while their eyes burned luridly with the light which is born of desperations and hunger. Men so situated, beyond the pale of the honor and the law, are not to be trusted. Sitka Charley knew this; and this was why he had forced them to abandon their rifles with the rest of the camp outfit ten days before. His rifle and Captain Eppingwell's were the only ones that remained.

"Come, get a fire started," he commanded, drawing out the precious matchbox with its attendant strips of dry birchbark.

Leaving the two to the drying of their footgear, Sitka Charley turned back over the course he had come. He, too, had a mighty longing to sit by the fire and tend his complaining flesh, but the honor and the law forbade. He toiled painfully over the frozen field, each step a protest, every muscle in revolt.

At sight of her a flash of joy

Abstract physical appearance and objective details of physical appearance are given for Sitka Charley and the others at the same time.

The phrase "intense frost" gives a brief description of environment.

Thoughts and the results of those thoughts are presented through generalized narrative.

This short, laconic speech offers a momentary insight into the character and gives the incidents a sense of immediacy.

Thus, in two paragraphs London used all of the eight elements of characterization.

The technique of action appears here, then the sensations and thoughts of the character are presented. Action and sensations are given in a logical combination—the character's mental reactions to the action.
cast its fleeting light across
Sitka Charley's face. He cher­
ished a very great regard for
Mrs. Eppingwell. He had seen
many white women, but this was the
first to travel the trail with him.

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
He knew her feet had been born to
easy paths and sunny lands,
strangers to the moccasined pain
of the North, un kissed by the chill
lips of the frost, and he watched
and marveled at them twinkling
ever through the weary day.

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

Sitka Charley was proud to
know this woman. A new richness,
a greater breadth, had come into
his life with her presence. Hith­
erto he had been his own mentor,
had turned to right or left at no
man's beck; he had molded himself
according to his own dictates,
nourished his manhood regardless
of all save his own opinion. For
the first time he had felt a call
from without for the best that was
in him. Just a glance of appre­
ciation from the clear-searching
eyes, a word of thanks from the
clear-ring ing voice, just a wreath­
ing of the lips in the wonderful
smile, and he walked with the
gods for hours to come. It was a
new stimulant to his manhood; for
the first time he thrilled with
a conscious pride in his wisdom
of the trail; and between the
twain they ever lifted the sinking
hearts of their comrades.

The faces of the two men and
the women brightened as they saw
him, for after all, he was the
staff they leaned upon. But Sitka
Charley, rigid as was his wont,

Comments

Here is more pre­
sentation of the
character's thoughts
and sensations linked
with generalized nar­
rative.

Here is a blend of
the protagonist's
thoughts presenting
interpretative comment
on another character.
Sitka Charley is
characterized by what
t he thinks of the other
person.

Here is a combination
of the character's
sensations plus inter­
pretative comment by the
third person narrator
upon those sensations
and upon the character.
Sitka Charley continues
to be characterized by
his thoughts and sensa­
tions which pertain to
another character.
Since this is material
of characterization for
both persons concur­
rently, it is a very
deft technique.

Here the sensations
of other characters are
presenting interpretative comment in the form
of a metaphor about
The Fiction

concealing pain and pleasure
impartially beneath an iron exter-
ior, asked them the welfare of the
rest, told the distance to the
fire, and continued on the backtrip.

"A few words, my comrades
before we sleep," Sitka Charley
said after they had devoured
their slim rations of unleavened
bread. He was speaking to the
Indians, in their own tongue, hav-
ing already given the import to
the whites. "A few words, my
comrades, for your own good, that
ye may perchance live. I shall
give you the law; on his own head
be the death of him that breaks it.
We have passed the hills of
Silence, and we now travel the
head reaches of the Stuart. It
may be one sleep, it may be
several, it may be many sleeps,
but in time we shall come among
the men of the Yukon, who have
much grub. It were well that we
look to the law. Today Kah-
Chucte and Gowhee, whom I com-
manded to break trail, forgot they
were men, and like frightened
children ran away. True, they
forgot; so let us forget. But
hereafter let them remember. If
it should happen they do not . . ."
He touched his rifle carelessly,
grimly. "Tomorrow they shall
carry the flour and see that the
white man Joe lies not down by the
trail. . . . Ye have heard the law.
Look well, lest ye break it.

Sitka Charley, looking back, saw the
pillared smoke of their fire, and
guessed. And he looked ahead at
those who were faithful, and at
Mrs. Eppingwell.

Comments

Sitka Charley. Further
interpretative comment
and action is given by
the third person nar-
rator.

After four pages of
a six-and-a-half page
story, with only one
previous line of dia-
logue, London turns to
this technique. It is
a typical example of
London's use of dialogue
justifying a chosen
style of language.

Regardless of
colorization dia-
logue is the best means
of presenting the inform-
ation in this passage.
The characterization is
strengthened by the sense
of immediacy given by
the use of dialogue,
especially since the
dialogue possesses the
definite style that
London so often uses.

The statement of a
past occurrence pre-
sented through dialogue
is a brief blend of dia-
logue and generalized
narrative.

Here the character's
action is forecast by
his thoughts.
"So my good comrades, ye have again forgotten that you were men? Good. Very good. There will be fewer bellies to feed."

"Then good-by, my comrades. May ye sit by the well-filled pot, in warm lodges, ere the day is done."

As he spoke he raised his rifle, and many echoes broke the silence. Hardly had they died away when other rifles spoke in the distance. Sitka Charley started. There had been more than one shot, yet there was but one other rifle in the party. He gave a fleeting glance at the men who lay so quietly, smiled viciously at the wisdom of the trail, and hurried on to meet the men of the Yukon.

**Conclusion of the synthesis.** A backward glance over the material of the synthesis shows London's step-by-step process of characterization for this particular story.

The story begins with two paragraphs of interpretative comment and generalized narrative about the main character. A sudden switch to immediate action starts the movement of the story. Then brief description of those characters before the reader's view is linked with information about their environment. Then the technique of thought presentation interspersed with action, a brief line of dialogue to maintain a sense of immediacy of the incidents being related, and blends of

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interpretative comment and generalized narrative are all presented as concurrent means of keeping the story moving and offering characterization. An interesting double technique is used by London wherein he presents one character's thoughts about another person and thus characterizes both with the same material.

After the greater portion of the story has been presented through characters' thoughts, action, and generalized narrative, London turns to his favored stylistic dialogue because of its effective means of characterization and its greater illusion of reality for the entire story.

The final paragraph of the story rapidly brings the action to a definite conclusion and reminds the reader of the main concept underlying the protagonist's behavior. This denouement is accomplished by action and presentation of the character's thoughts.

IV. SUMMARY OF THE TECHNIQUES OF CHARACTERIZATION IN THE SHORT STORIES

This analysis of the techniques of characterization in twenty-two selected short stories revealed the presence of eight basic techniques or elements by which all the material of characterization could be classified. The point of view of a particular story did not prevent London from employing any of those eight elements.
The following table shows the presence of the various elements in the twenty-two stories.

1. Objective details of physical appearance 17 stories
2. Abstract physical appearance 21 stories
3. Action 22 stories
4. Dialogue 22 stories
5. Presentation of thoughts 17 stories
6. Interpretative comment 22 stories
7. Generalized narrative 17 stories
8. Description of environment 19 stories

This analysis of the material of characterization tends to oversimplify London's character delineation. Certainly much characterization is not effected by one element or another. Much material would provoke discussion over which element would properly identify it, and any one sentence might contain a combination of several elements.

It was also noticed that London presented material of characterization in such a way that to identify it analytically, I needed to present the technique as one element functioning as another. This is called a "blend" and describes the process by which dialogue or thought presentation presents any of the eight elements. An examination of such techniques.

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Footnote 64: Three of the twenty-two stories contain very little dialogue; one story had only twelve lines, another only five, and a third but a single line.
indicates that London presents material of characterization through dialogue for three reasons: to intensify the illusion of reality, to justify a chosen stylized language, and to limit the point of view. Material of characterization is presented through a character's thoughts because as thoughts such material becomes the motivation of a character's action.

The entire matter of characterization reminds me of a quotation from Martin Eden which expresses the concept that "making combinations of words mean more than the sum of their separate meanings."65 And so it is with characterization. The impression of a character that London is capable of putting in a reader's mind is more than the sum of the separate elements of characterization.

A synthesis was presented to show the use of the techniques of characterization in context. The various elements were displayed in their natural habitat, so to speak, of complex combinations and blends.

CHAPTER III

TECHNIQUES OF CHARACTERIZATION IN THE NOVELS

The objective of this part of the study is to discover the techniques of characterization that Jack London employed in the selected novels. No other elements of characterization were found in the novels than those in the short stories; therefore, a London novel and a London short story have much in common in methods of characterization. But a novel, because of its greater length, affords the possibility of techniques designed for a more lengthy medium. This study is devoted to discovering and examining London's techniques that are novel-wide, that is, particular techniques that are present throughout a novel.

I. THE SELECTED NOVELS

The novels chosen for this study are The Sea-Wolf, The Iron Heel, Martin Eden, John Barleycorn, and The Star Rover. These books were originally chosen as representative of London's important novels from throughout his writing career; however, during the analysis I discovered that each novel is of a particular type and is therefore of increased value in considering the author's techniques.

The Sea Wolf is basically an adventure novel with large portions of dialogue expounding a materialistic philosophy of a complete individualist.
The Iron Heel is a propaganda piece for the socialistic movement of its day and devotes as much space to political ideas as to the plot, which is concerned with the subjugation of the population of the United States by a small group of powerful capitalists. The book purports to be a manuscript written in 1930 and found and published in the twenty-fifth century.

Martin Eden is an autobiographical novel of London's early twenties and of the beginning of his writing career. John Barleycorn is also autobiographical and offers an enlightening contrast to Martin Eden. John Barleycorn contains many of the same incidents related in Martin Eden, but the elaboration given these common incidents show the modification of material of characterization to the purpose of the novel. While Martin Eden presents the complete growth and development of a personality through the most important years of his life, John Barleycorn presents a single aspect of a character's entire life.

The Star Rover is one of London's ventures into the realm of the supernatural. It links a story of reincarnation with a plot of prison brutality that demonstrates an unusually effective marriage of two plots and character-behavior.

Of the five novels only Martin Eden is presented from an omniscient, third-person point of view. The others are related by a first person narrator, in each instance an edu-
cated protagonist capable of offering intelligent, interpretative comments about any occurrence.

II. THE NOVEL PROBLEM

I have noticed in various critical works and books on creative writing that there is no mention of the problems of characterization throughout a novel. Existing works that have come to my attention restrict themselves to discussions of details, and details are of limited use in considering the problem of a novel-wide characterization. Details of characterization are no more than the elements and their blends and infinite combinations which are the same in short stories and novels and other literary forms such as poetry. This study will bring to light London's book-length techniques of characterization and the relationship of those techniques to the entire novel.

I wish to stress the indefinite separation of plot and characterization. When one considers plot from the dramatic tenet that all action is a result of character, the two concomitants unite into a rather abstract concept of motivation. Thus, one might challenge any definite division of material as plot or characterization. But for this study of characterization, passages of fiction must be identified as characterization—yet, at the conclusion of a novel, or a short story, it is evident that the passage of characteriza-
tion has a certain amount of significance to the plot.

It is my belief that London probably had no mechanical plan of characterization in a novel; rather, I think, an author accomplishes this by what may be called a literary instinct. This literary instinct may be appreciated by considering an episode of a novel and then examining the function that characterization performs in the plot.

The Sea-Wolf contains many incidents which, when they are encountered, appear to advance the main plot of the novel very little. They often seem to have little purpose except to build characterization. Consider this passage which occurs early in the novel.

He sprang for me with a half-roar, gripping my arm. I had steeled myself to brazen it out, though I was trembling inwardly; but the enormous strength of the man was too much for my fortitude. He had gripped me by the biceps with his single hand, and when that grip tightened I wilted and shrieked aloud. My feet went out from under me. I simply could not stand upright and endure the agony. The muscles refused their duty. The pain was too great. My biceps was being crushed to a pulp.

He seemed to recover himself, for a lucid gleam came into his eyes, and he relaxed his hold with a short laugh that was more like a growl.

My left arm was numb, as though paralyzed, and days passed before I could use it, while weeks went by before the last stiffness went out of it. ... What he might have done I did not fully realize till next day, when he put his head into the galley, and, as a sign of renewed friendliness, asked me how my arm was getting on.

"It might have been worse," he smiled.

I was peeling potatoes. He picked one up from the pan. It was fair-sized, firm, and unpeeled. He closed his hand upon it, squeezed, and the potato squirted out between his fingers in mushy streams. The pulpy remnant he dropped back into the pan and turned away, and I had a sharp
The primary conflict of the book has moved very little. A reader only gets a better view of the people in the story. Two-hundred and twenty pages later this same characteristic is used again and this time for plot.

Wolf Larsen came on deck. We noticed something strange about him at once. The indecisiveness, or feebleness, of his movements was more pronounced. His walk was actually tottery as he came down the port side of the cabin. At the break of the poop he reeled, raised one hand to his eyes with the familiar brushing gesture, and fell down the steps—still on his feet—to the main deck, across which he staggered, falling and flinging out his arms for support. He regained his balance by the steerage companionway and stood there dizzily for a space, when he suddenly crumpled up and collapsed, his legs bending under him as he sank to the deck.

"One of his attacks," I whispered to Maud.
She nodded her head; and I could see sympathy warm in her eyes.

We went up to him, but he seemed unconscious, breathing spasmodically. She took charge of him, lifting his head to keep the blood out of it and despatching me to the cabin for a pillow. I also brought blankets, and we made him comfortable. I took his pulse. It beat steadily and strong, and was quite normal. This puzzled me. I became suspicious.

"What if he should be feigning this?!?" I asked, still holding his wrist.

Maud shook her head, and there was reproof in her eyes. But just then the wrist I held leaped from my hand, and the hand clasped like a steel trap about my wrist. I cried aloud in awful fear, a wild inarticulate cry; and I caught one glimpse of his face, malignant and triumphant, as his other hand compassed my body and I was drawn down to him in a terrible grip.

My wrist was released, but his other arm, passed around my back, held both my arms so that I could not move. His free hand went to my throat, and in that moment

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I knew the bitterest foretaste of death earned by one's own idiocy. Why had I trusted myself within reach of those terrible arms?  

The reader has no doubt about the seriousness of the predicament because he has long before been dramatically shown the power of Wolf Larsen's hands. The first incident was not necessarily written with the later one in mind. If the two incidents were that specifically-related, London would have his narrator reflect to the former incident when the second one occurred. But that is not the case; rather, London's literary instinct enabled him to create the character trait when convenient and then use that trait whenever needed. A reader receives characterization and plot in a novel through an impression of concomitance; a literary instinct creates characterization and plot through a sense of expediency.

A particular character trait is planned, of course, with its resultant effect to the plot of the novel; literary instinct determines the time of presentation of that trait. To further illustrate this, Ruth Morse, of _Martin Eden_, is created as an educated representative of a wealthy bourgeois society. She views the culture of her society as a worthwhile end in itself; in fact, that culture and the sham that accompanies it are the greatest values in her thinking. This aspect of her personality is presented in the following passage

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2Ibid., pp. 296-97.
"You're right, Martin," Olney said. "You know what you're after, and Ruth doesn't. She doesn't know what she is after for herself even.

"Oh, yes," Olney rushed on, heading off her objection, "I know you call it general culture. But it doesn't matter what you study if you want general culture. You can study French, or you can study German, or cut them both out and study Esperanto, you'll get the culture tone just the same. You can study Greek or Latin, too, for the same purpose, though it will never be any use to you. It will be in culture, though. Why, Ruth studied Saxon, became clever in it—that was two years ago, and all that she remembers of it now is 'Whan that sweet Aprile with his schowers soote'—isn't that the way it goes?

"But it's given you the culture tone just the same," he laughed, again heading her off. "I know. We were in the same classes."

"But you speak of culture as if it should be a means to something," Ruth cried out. Her eyes were flashing, and in her cheeks were two spots of color. "Culture is the end in itself."

"But that is not what Martin wants."

"How do you know?"

"What do you want, Martin?" Olney demanded, turning squarely upon him.

Martin felt very uncomfortable, and looked entreaty at Ruth.

"Yes, what do you want?" Ruth asked. "That will settle it."

"Yes, of course, I want culture," Martin faltered. "I love beauty, and culture will give me a finer and keener appreciation of beauty."

She nodded her head and looked triumph.

"Not and you know it," was Olney's comment. "Martin's after career, not culture. It just happens that culture, in his case, is incidental to career. If he wanted to be a chemist, culture would be unnecessary. Martin wants to write, but he's afraid to say so because it will put you in the wrong.

"And why does Martin want to write?" he went on. "Because he isn't rolling in wealth. Why do you fill your head with Saxon and general culture? Because you don't have to make your way in the world. Your father sees to that. He buys your clothes for you, and all the rest. What rotten good is our education, yours and mine and Arthur's and Norman's? We're soaked in general culture, and if our daddies went broke to-day, we'd be falling
down to-morrow on teachers' examinations. The best job you could get, Ruth, would be a country school or music teacher in a girl's boarding-school."

"And pray what would you do?" she asked.

"Not a blessed thing. I could earn a dollar and a half a day, common labor, and I might get in as instructor in Hanley's cramming joint--I say might, mind you, and I might be chucked out at the end of the week for sheer inability."

Martin followed the discussion closely, and while he was convinced that Olney was right, he resented the rather cavalier treatment he accorded Ruth. A new conception of love formed in his mind as he listened. Reason had nothing to do with love. It mattered not whether the woman he loved reasoned correctly or incorrectly. Love was above reason. If it just happened that she did not fully appreciate his necessity for a career, that did not make her a bit less lovable. She was all lovable, and what she thought had nothing to do with her lovelableness.3

The reader is impressed with Martin's devotion to Ruth despite her beliefs and opinions. But her faulty values have been created and shown to the reader. Later, because of such beliefs, Ruth breaks their engagement. In the final pages of the novel, when Martin Eden's fame has provided the cultural and social requirements he lacked before, Ruth's standards of propriety allow her to come back to him. This character trait separates them and brings an attempted reconciliation.

"Vulgarity--a hearty vulgarity, I'll admit--is the basis of bourgeois refinement and culture. As I say, you wanted to formalize me, to make me over into one of your own class, with your class-ideals, class values, and class-prejudices." He shook his head sadly. "And you do not understand, even now, what I am saying. My words do not mean to you what I endeavor to make them mean. What I say is so much fantasy to you. Yet to me it is vital reality. At the best you are a trifle puzzled and amused

that this raw boy, crawling up out of the mire of the abyss should pass judgement upon your class and call it vulgar."

She leaned her head wearily against his shoulder, and her body shivered with recurrent nervousness. He waited for a time for her to speak, and then went on. "And now you want to renew our love. You want us to be married. You want me. And yet, listen—if my books had not been noticed, I'd nevertheless have been just what I am now. And you would have stayed away. It is all those damned books—"

"Don't swear," she interrupted. Her reproof startled him. "He broke into a harsh laugh. "That's it," he said, "at a high moment, when what seems your life's happiness is at stake, you are afraid of life in the same old way—afraid of life and a healthy oath."

She was stung by his words into realization of the puerility of her act, and yet she felt that he had magnified it unduly and was consequently resentful. They sat in silence for a long time, she thinking desperately and he pondering upon his love which had departed. He knew, now, that he had not really loved her. It was an idealized Ruth he had loved, an ethereal creature of his own creating, the bright and luminous spirit of his love-poems. The real bourgeois Ruth, with all the bourgeois failings and with the hopeless cramp of the bourgeois psychology in her mind, he had never loved."

In the early passage, an aspect of Ruth's personality, her value of "culture," was presented along with Martin's devotion to her. In the denouement that aspect has contributed in a large amount to the plot of the novel and her behavior. Thus, character traits are presented, perhaps singularly, and later used and commented upon as a motivation for action. Literary instinct guides the presentation and unites character with action and plot.

While literary instinct may be offered as an explana-

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4 Ibid., pp. 394-95.
tion of the basis of London's techniques of characterization, the results of that instinct can be seen in the analysis of the techniques that operate throughout his fiction.

III. THE TECHNIQUES

The reader must bear in mind that the novel's characters are drawn by the same methods as are the short story characters.

There is only one technique that can be considered peculiar to London's examined novels: that is the technique of incidents. Other techniques are equally pertinent to the short stories and have been presented and discussed in the short story section; however, thought presentation, dialogue, and generalized narrative are used to such a great extent in particular novels that these elements are discussed as techniques of the novels. The use and function of these elements are not unlike their use and function in the short stories; but because thought presentation, dialogue, and generalized narrative do so much characterization throughout particular novels, I believe a discussion of their employment is necessary.

The technique of incidents. An incident refers to any event, scene, or bit of action that is presented as happening before the reader's vision. Although it may be subordinate, an incident may contribute to the progression of the main plot.
Plot usually is presented by incident, but many incidents present characterization and little plot progression.

All of the novels examined include character delineation by means of incidents. London contrived incidents that contribute, in varying degree, to the progress of the plot; but always the incidents aid in the reader's understanding of the characters. This is the primary book-length means of characterization that is evident in the novels examined; however, there is considerable variation in this technique. The variations are due to the purposes of the incidents and depend upon the particular novel. Basically, the incidents differ in relationship to the main plot of a novel. Some incidents do not advance the plot at all. Others are so much involved in the development of the main story that characterization is quite secondary. Of course, the incidents contain different elements of characterization, but they are primarily composed of action, dialogue, and generalized narrative.

Since the novels are all of different types, it would be erroneous to assume that the differences in this technique only constitute developments in London's literary style or ability. For instance, although The Star Rover was written in London's last years, the fact that its incidents of

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5 I do not infer here that incidents of characterization never occur in London's short stories; but they appear so seldom and are of such brevity as to be inconsequential. A novel incident may span several chapters.
characterization are also perfect plot progression is not just evidence of his superior compression of all material. Rather it is because *The Star Rover* does not have space for extraneous material of characterization. The novel has two plots and several unrelated internal stories to carry, and any matter of characterization worth elaborating into an incident needs to develop one or both of the plots. More discussion of this particular novel will be presented later.

The adventure novel *The Sea-Wolf* contains many incidents whose primary objective is to delineate character. The conflict between the two main characters, one wishing to escape from the other, is the main plot which is little affected by many of the adventures that befall the narrator-protagonist, Humphrey Van Weyden. Many of the incidents involve the hero-villain, Wolf Larsen, and are only observed and commented upon by the narrator. An incident, in which the narrator is only an observer, is exemplified by a five-page, chapter length, episode which does not promote the main plot one inch, but the reader becomes better acquainted with the dominant characteristics of the personalities involved. The brutality of Wolf Larsen is presented, and the courage of cowardice that has been earlier attributed to the Cockney cook is exemplified. A new character is brought into the scene to allow her to react to the incident and thus develop her characterization. The narrator is able to describe the
entire affair with his interpretative comments. As far as a normal reader is concerned, the main plot has not progressed; however, groundwork has been laid for future plot happenings and some foreshadowing accomplished. The incident presents another example of Wolf Larsen's cruelty to his crew; and several chapters later when they desert him, their behavior is quite plausible to the reader. The final paragraph of this chapter of characterization offers a short passage of definite foreshadowing. The chapter presents an incident wherein Wolf Larsen drags the ship's cook through the sea at the end of a long rope. Before the cook can be pulled back to the ship, a shark tears off his right foot. Wolf Larsen instructs the narrator to care for the cook while he catches the shark.

For his task he elected a vengeance on the shark. A heavy swivel-hook, baited with fat salt-pork, was dropped overside; and by the time I had compressed the severed veins and arteries, the sailors were singing and heaving in the offending monster. I did not see it myself, but my assistants, first one and then the other, deserted me for a few moments to run amidships and look at what was going on. The shark, a sixteen-footer, was hoisted up against the main-rigging. Its jaws were pried apart to their greatest extension, and a stout stake, sharpened at both ends, was so inserted that when the pries were removed the spread jaws were fixed upon it. This accomplished, the hook was cut out. The shark dropped back into the sea, helpless, yet with its full strength, doomed to lingering starvation—a living death less meet for it than for the man who devised the punishment.6

The fate of Wolf Larsen is a similar living death, and it

6_The Sea Wolf_, p. 181.
occurs one hundred pages later.

The value of such an incident is manifold: foreshadowing is accomplished, groundwork is laid for later plot action, characters are intensified, and a new characterization is begun by the new person's reactions to the others' behavior. London's literary instinct is operating to full advantage in such an incident.

Incidents are not always designed for characterization. The most important phases of the novels' plots are given by these dramatized scenes occurring before the reader's vision. Of course, the characterizations are strengthened in such incidents, but London undoubtedly is concentrating upon presenting plot. Previous incidents have already established characteristic behavior for the personalities.

Such an incident as described above occurs at the turning point in the plot of *The Sea-Wolf*. For two-hundred pages the main plot has been the conflict between Van Weyden and Wolf Larsen; Van Weyden has existed with one primary thought—to escape from the sealing schooner that chance has put him aboard. He finally finds his opportunity to escape and takes the girl of the story with him. For the next several pages the conflict becomes that of Van Weyden against the North Pacific. It is important that during the scene of this plot change there is no change in the characters. Earlier incidents have prepared Van Weyden and the girl for
this action, and they behave just as they might be expected to behave.

The Iron Heel contains little material of characterization by any technique. There is no portrait of any character offered; the protagonist, Ernest Everhard, is given only abstract physical description, and his wife, the narrator of the novel, is never physically described.

In The Iron Heel there are no incidents of characterization that are comparable to typical incidents in The Sea-Wolf; however, London does accomplish a certain amount of characterization through incidents. Early episodes present so much propaganda and basic plot that a reader is little aware of the people involved. Later incidents, while presenting aspects of the narrator's character, provide material of importance to the basic plot. Most of the incidents of The Iron Heel present individual experiences representative of a general political truth which the book is discussing.

This minimum of characterization does not detract from the quality of the book, since the purpose of the novel is not to present colorful characters in an adventure story but to present socialistic propaganda through the medium of a novel.

The autobiographical novel Martin Eden employs incidents for part of its characterization and plot development. A separation of characterization and plot in this novel would
be difficult, if not impossible. This novel is such an intensive character study that the plot is the intellectual development of the protagonist; therefore, any bit of characterization about the hero is plot.

Linked with the main plot is a love affair with a girl of a higher social level than the hero's. The immediate realization of the hero's development is his economic success as a writer and his resultant ability to marry the girl.

In conjunction with incidents London uses a great deal of thought presentation and interpretative comment by an omniscient third-person author. This thought presentation is regarded as a separate technique and is discussed in a later section.

Many incidents appear in Martin Eden as if existing simply for their own sake; but when such incidents are considered as a contribution to the entire novel, it is obvious that by such incidents a reader gains a much more extensive knowledge of the protagonist. There are only a few scenes in the book in which Martin Eden is not present. In those few scenes, characterization of minor personalities is presented, but primarily such scenes are offered as groundwork for later plot developments involving Martin Eden.

Three chapters of Martin Eden are devoted to presenting the hero's experiences in a small laundry where he labors three months doing a great amount of work under unpleasant
conditions and for little money. The intellectual growth stemming from the entire incident is nothing more than Martin Eden's resolution not to become a beast of toil and never again to labor for a living. London is easily capable of offering the basis for such a resolution in less than twenty pages, but he accurately regarded his hero's experiences as interesting to a reader. Also, the undercurrent of social criticism throughout the novel is brought to the surface by such an incident. And another factor not to be ignored when considering such an incident is that London actually worked in such a laundry during the time in his life which the novel describes.

In a novel concerned with the intellectual maturation of a character, London considered anything pertinent to the character's development to be material for the novel. Under London's competent hand many small incidents are made interesting to a reader.

E. M. Forster points out five human biological processes that can be presented in a novel: birth, death, food, love, and sleep. It is interesting to note that of these elemental processes, Martin Eden contains all but birth. None of the other novels contain so many of these aspects of

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human activity. Because Martin Eden is such an intensive study of a human being, all these aspects of his life are necessary. The book is limited to the mature period of the hero's life and there would be no point in presenting his birth. Only one incident of his childhood is presented and that is to illustrate the fighting tenacity of Martin Eden's personality. Food is important in the hero's story because of his poverty. Love is involved because he is primarily inspired to his accomplishments because of his love for the young woman of the higher, more attractive social position. Sleep gets much discussion in the novel because of the hero's denial of sleep to himself while studying and writing. He usually sleeps only five hours a night. Again this is London's own experience, and a point he often prided himself upon. Death by suicide is the culmination of the novel and the primary point London wished to present to his readers; i.e., an individualist cannot long exist without a tie to something other than himself.

John Barleycorn shares little in common with Martin Eden although they are both autobiographical novels. The mechanical differences between the two are the points of view and the presented aspects of the heroes' personalities. John Barleycorn is written in the first person, and it is about Jack London and his experiences with alcohol throughout
his life. Martin Eden is also about Jack London, but it concerns practically all aspects of his personality. On the other hand, John Barleycorn presents only that aspect of London's personality that is pertinent to his drinking.

A characterization built around one aspect of a personality is likely to present only a flat, dimly seen, character, and such characterization is usually inadequate for a novel's protagonist.

The title-character, John Barleycorn, is liquor personified and is primarily characterized by his effects upon the author. Although John Barleycorn has no appearance, he does possess the human quality of speech. The following short excerpt shows the sort of dialogue London gives to his imaginary character.

"You see," said John Barleycorn. . . . "There is no equity in life. It's all a lottery. But I put the smile on the face of life and laugh at the facts. Smile with me and laugh. You'll get yours in the end, but in the meantime laugh."9

Incidents as a technique of characterization are present in John Barleycorn, but as has been pointed out, the entire novel is concerned only with an aspect of the author's character and the majority of incidents are designed for that single aspect.

9 Ibid., pp. 280-81.
The laundry experience is again mentioned in John Barleycorn but with a noticeable difference. What extended over three chapters in Martin Eden is told in five pages in John Barleycorn. The reason for mention of the incident in the later novel is the urge to drink which the labor at the laundry engendered in London. That is the sole purpose of the incident, and it is limited to establishing that point. The other aspects of personality that the incident can present are ignored in John Barleycorn.

London wrote only three novels after The Star Rover, and two of them are dog stories; The Star Rover is considered his last important novel. The importance of the novel to this study is its adept union of two plots and the integral part that characters perform in those plots. In none of the other examined novels do the characters build the plot out of themselves so convincingly.

Briefly, the novel is concerned with a man sentenced to hang after eight year's imprisonment in San Quentin Penitentiary. Darrell Standing is a former college professor who has killed a man over a woman. In prison he becomes the scapegoat in an imaginary dynamite plot. The prison warden subjects Standing to days of torture in a strait jacket in an attempt to learn the hiding place of the dynamite that does not exist. The novel's outer plot is concerned with the warden's fear of the dynamite and his attempts to find it
through Standing. Standing endeavors to live through the
torture and to demonstrate his superiority to the warden and
the barbaric treatment of prisoners. While undergoing the
days of body-constriction in a strait jacket, Standing learns
that he can induce a hypnotic state that removes all bodily
pain and allows his mind to drift off into dreams of other
experiences that he has known when his spirit occupied the
body of persons living years before he was born. The develop­
ment and explanation of these dreams, which present the rein­
carnation theme, is the inner plot. These two plots link
together through the activities of the involved characters.
The warden's determination to get the dynamite is the main
facet of his personality; it is his purpose in the novel to
provide the stimuli that prompt Standing to develop his
hypnotic dreams which present the primary point of the novel,
reincarnation.

Each character that appears in the book, exclusive of
the dream personalities, has action and functions that con­
tribute directly to the progression of the outer plot. Only
during the dream sequences does a reader lose sight of the
progression of the plot. All incidents of the outer plot
advance that plot with two exceptions. Incidents describing
Standing's games with flies while in solitary, and his games
of chess with other solitary confinees through a tapping
code contribute more to presenting the conditions of the
prison than they do the main plot. But this is another purpose of the book—to show the horrible conditions in prisons of that day and to indicate the high caliber of some of the men confined in those prisons. London discusses the prison conditions in connection with the progression of the outer plot. No direct pleas for reforms are in the book, but the conditions are dramatically presented.

As was mentioned earlier, the compression of plot and characterization cannot be attributed entirely to London's perfection of technique since it is obvious that this book contains so much material; i.e., two plots, the barbaric prison conditions, and the unrelated short story adventures of the protagonist's spiritual ancestors. Rather, this novel demonstrates that London could compress his material when it was necessary or desirable.

Incidents of this novel are arranged to switch the reader's attention from the prison environment to a dream sequence which dramatically illustrates the reincarnation theme. The characterization that is accomplished by the technique of incidents occurs in the scenes set in the prison between dream flights. Actually, most of the material of characterization for the protagonist is given through his

first-person generalized narrative and his interpretative comment upon his current and preceding existence. But since some characterization is accomplished throughout the novel by these incidents which occur in the prison, such technique cannot be ignored.

Here, as an example of the incidents of the outer plot, is a portion of a scene in Standing's solitary cell where he has been subjected to the strait jacket for several days. He has just been awakened out of a dream in which he was a French playboy of the seventeenth century. Standing's dialogue with the warden culminates in this:

"As for me," I went on, "I laugh at you, and I wish no worse fate to the loom-room that that you should take charge of it yourself. Why, you've got me down and worked your wickedest on me, and still I live and laugh in your face. Inefficient? You can't even kill me. Inefficient? You couldn't kill a cornered rat with a stick of dynamite—real dynamite, and not the sort you are deluded into believing I have hidden away."

"Anything more?" he demanded, when I had ceased from my diatribe.

And into my mind flashed what I had told Fortini when he pressed his insolence on me. [From his preceding dream]

"Begone, you prison cur," I said. "Take your yapping from my door."

It must have been a terrible thing for a man of Warden Atherton's stripe to be thus bearded by a helpless prisoner. His face whitened with rage and his voice shook as he threatened:

"By God, Standing, I'll do for you yet."

"There is only one thing you can do," I said. "You can tighten this distressingly loose jacket. If you won't, then get out. And I don't care if you fail to come back for a week or for the whole ten days."

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After this incident, Standing drifts off into another dream adventure of another time and place.

Such an incident delineates character effectively and promotes the plot. Surely, only such an unusual prisoner as the protagonist is would speak so insultingly to a warden. His interpretative comments upon himself and his stated ability to ignore the pain of the torturing strait jacket are not as impressive as this bit of dialogue. And the reader is aware of plot progression at the same time as he is informed of characterization. The torturing is going ahead, the warden is still seeking knowledge of the dynamite, the dreams are occurring and affording interpretations of the novel's reincarnation theme. These incidents are more closely related to the main conflict of the story than many incidents in the other books. The Sea-Wolf's incidents were often far removed from the main conflict, only presenting a small adventure with overtones which later reverberate in the main plot; The Iron Heel and John Barleycorn contain incidents designed to reflect only upon a small aspect of the major conflict; Martin Eden's incidents were too often presenting a single aspect of the hero's personality that was not directly allied with plot progression; but the incidents of The Star Rover are so closely allied with the major conflict of the outer plot that the story progresses through each incident, with the two exceptions noted earlier.
The dream sequences, although they appear on the surface as stories completely divorced from the matter of the outer plot, contain prominent traits of characterization found in the protagonist. Each character that Standing dreams about displays a trait that is seen in Standing. A French playboy-swordsman has a great deal of sarcasm and fighting courage; a young pioneer boy possesses an unusual amount of courage and daring; an English sailor shows the patient determination that Standing has; an ancient religious fanatic who denies himself all body comforts displays the stoicism that Standing accomplishes; a cave-man and a later Englishman show the influence a woman can have upon them, which was the origin of Standing's difficulties; a northern sea-rover adventuring in Jerusalem at the time of Christ shows a logical mind unable to accept religion; and nearly all these dream characters possess the blood-lust anger that is Standing's. In this manner these unrelated incidents contribute to the characterization of the novel's protagonist.

London uses incidents for preparation for a character. *The Sea-Wolf* contains two and a half pages of dialogue and generalized narrative about the narrator's and his companions' past relations with women. This is placed four chapters before Maud Brewster arrives in the novel. London apparently preferred this method rather than bringing the girl into the novel and then discussing the men's various
backgrounds and attitudes toward such a lady. Through this technique a reader can more accurately appreciate the characters' reactions when the girl arrives.

**The technique of generalized narrative.** Two of the five novels contain this element of characterization throughout to the extent that it needs to be considered as a book-length technique of characterization. Generalized narrative is the predominant method of presenting *The Star Rover* and *John Barleycorn*. Both are first-person point of view novels.

Generalized narrative is a very expedient means of covering much time and many occurrences, but it has the quality of gliding over the surface of any bit of action or scene and giving a reader only a glimpse of the matter. London used this technique in *John Barleycorn* because there were so many incidents to cover that could not be dramatized—nor needed to be for the novel's purpose. Following is an example of generalized narrative that fills *John Barleycorn*.

At the hall, on Eighth Street near Broadway, we got into the firemen's shirts and helmets, were equipped with torches, and growling because we weren't given at least one drink before we started, were herded aboard the train. Oh, those politicians had handled our kind before. At Hayward there were no drinks either. Parade, first, and earn your booze, was the order of the night. We paraded. Then the saloons were opened. Extra barkeepers had been engaged, and the drinkers jammed six deep before every drink-drenched and unwiped bar. There was no time to wipe the bar, nor wash glasses, nor do anything save fill glasses. The Oakland water-front can be real thirsty on occasion.

This method of jamming and struggling in front of the
bar was too slow for us. The drink was ours. The politicians had bought it for us. We'd paraded and earned it, hadn't we? So we made a flank attack around the end of the bar, shoved the protesting barkeepers aside, and helped ourselves to bottles.¹²

Such a presentation of material does not make for any clear idea of character. The scene itself might easily fade from a reader's mind after he has read on a little further. But this is the method used throughout John Barleycorn. Unless the novel were doubled or tripled in length, generalized narrative is the only procedure that London could use to present all the occurrences in his life that pertain to his drinking.

John Barleycorn is a novel of restricted purpose. It is designed not to entertain, but to inform; and because of this purpose this ineffective characterization seems adequate.

The Star Rover contains a predominance of generalized narrative through which the narrator-protagonist presents the story. London inserts incidents in the train of generalized narrative when he wishes to stress a point or to impress a particular scene upon a reader's mind. In fact, his narrator gives the clue for a cessation of generalized narrative and the presentation of a dramatized scene. "There was the time he double-jacketed me. It is so rich in incident that I must tell it."¹³ The reader is then given a short incident

with dialogue and action. Since there is much material of an
informative nature in The Star Rover—discussions of sus-
pended animation, reincarnation, and prison conditions—a
first-person generalized narrative is the most expedient
method of delivering it. The same method is used to present
much material of characterization, especially background.

No; I shall never be Dean of any college of agri-
culture. And yet I knew agriculture. It was my profes-
sion. I was born to it, reared to it, trained to it; and
I was a master of it. It was my genius. I can pick the
high-percentage butter-fat cow with my eye and let the
Babcock tester prove the wisdom of my eye. I can look,
not at the land, but at the landscape, and pronounce the
virtues and the shortcoming of the soil.14

In the next chapter London's narrator sets the novel's
style in motion:

I am Darrell Standing. They are going to take me out
and hang me pretty soon. In the meantime I say my say,
and write in these pages of the other times and places.15

This style of presentation, by generalized narrative, con-
tinues throughout the book and, with the occasional incidents,
constitutes the novel's techniques of characterization.

The technique of thought presentation. An outstanding
feature of Martin Eden is the extensive thought presentation
and interpretative comment by the omniscient third-person
author. In fact, Martin Eden might be called a "thinking"
 novel, as The Sea-Wolf might be called an "action" novel,

14 Ibid., pp. 5-6. 15 Ibid., p. 8.
and The Iron Heel a "speaking" novel. Incidents provide the omniscient author an opportunity to present characters' thoughts. Martin Eden's thoughts are the most plentiful, of course, but many minor characters receive the same treatment.

Through this presentation of the protagonist's many and varied thoughts, and the author's interpretation of those thoughts, a wide and intensive knowledge of the hero is effected. From the first page until the last, Martin Eden's mind is exposited by the author until the hero is revealed in such detail that he is known and understood through the many thoughts and sensations that have crossed his mind.

London had the advantage of recreating his own youth in this book, but the origin of the material does not subtract from the power of the technique.

In two short chapters London creates a character that is more completely understood than any complex fictional character I can recall. Martin Eden's mind is made to reveal his thoughts engendered by the strange stimuli of an unusual environment. Here is a short example:

He glanced around at his friend reading the letter and saw the books on the table. Into his eyes leaped a wistfulness and a yearning as promptly as the yearning leaps into the eyes of a starving man at the sight of food. An impulsive stride, with one lurch to right and left of the shoulders, brought him to the table, where he began affectionately handling the books. He glanced at the titles and the authors' names, read fragments of text, caressing the volumes with his eyes and hands, and, once, recognized a book he had read. For the rest, they were strange books and strange authors. He chanced upon
a volume of Swinburne and began reading steadily, forgetful of where he was, his face glowing. Twice he closed the book on his forefinger to look at the name of the author. Swinburne! he would remember that name. That fellow had eyes, and he had certainly seen color and flashing light. But who was Swinburne? Was he dead a hundred years or so, like most of the poets? Or was he alive still, and writing? He turned to the title-page...yes, he had written other books; well, he would go to the free library the first thing in the morning and try to get hold of some of Swinburne's stuff. He went back to the text and lost himself. He did not notice that a young woman had entered the room. The first he knew was when he heard Arthur's voice saying:--

"Ruth, this is Mr. Eden."

The book was closed on his forefinger, and before he turned he was thrilling to the first new impression, which was not of the girl, but of her brother's words. Under that muscled body of his he was a mass of quivering sensibilities. At the slightest impact of the outside world upon his consciousness, his thoughts, sympathies, and emotions leapt and played like lambent flame. He was extraordinarily receptive and responsive, while his imagination, pitched high, was ever at work establishing relations of likeness and difference. "Mr. Eden," was what he had thrilled to—he who had been called "Eden," or "Martin Eden," or just "Martin," all his life. And "Mister!" [Original italics] It was certainly going some; was his internal comment. His mind seemed to turn, on the instant, into a vast camera obscura, and he saw arrayed around his consciousness endless pictures from his life, of stokeholes and forecastles, camps and beaches, jails and boozing-kens, fever-hospitals and slum streets wherein the thread of association was the fashion in which he had been addressed in those various situations.16

Throughout the novel the author is always deep inside the mind of his hero to present his thoughts and to offer comment upon them.

This thought presentation differs from the same technique in the short stories only in degree of its quantity.

16Martin Eden, pp. 3-4.
And the result is that a novel filled with this technique has the opportunity of offering a multitude of thoughts and sensations upon as many incidents. But because of its omnipresence in *Martin Eden* it is accurate to consider it a technique of characterization in that novel.

The other four novels of the group contain little thought presentation, primarily because no characters in them need to be presented in such depth.

The technique of dialogue. It was mentioned earlier that *The Iron Heel* was primarily a "speaking" novel. The purpose of the book limits matter of characterization by any other technique. Dialogue deserves special mention in this study of techniques of characterization because it accomplishes the greater part of what little characterization exists in *The Iron Heel*. It is important, primarily, due to the lack of other techniques.

The dialogue in *The Iron Heel* is a non-imageal technique because it is limited to politics and economics which are rather unusual subjects by which anyone could be given a very broad characterization; nor is there much action accompanying the dialogue since most of it takes place at dinners, speaking engagements, conferences, and on front porches. The first half of the novel is made up of these long discussions in which the protagonist presents his ideas and plans of socialism and its coming revolution. What little
is known of the protagonist is learned through what he says, what his wife, the narrator, says about him, and her abstract physical descriptions of him; however, his words are occasionally strengthened by interpretative comments. His speaking mannerisms are often described in this way:

I roused at the first sound of his voice. It was as bold as his eyes. It was a clarion-call that thrilled me. And the whole table was aroused, shaken alive from monotony and drowsiness.

There follow three paragraphs of attack upon the capitalistic clergy and their blindness to current conditions. Then the narrator again comments:

As Ernest talked he seemed in a fine passion; his face glowed, his eyes snapped and flashed, and his chin and jaw were eloquent with aggressiveness. But it was only a way he had. It always aroused people. His smashing, sledge-hammer manner of attack invariably made them forget themselves.17

The lasting impression of the novel's hero is his speaking ability through which his fine intellect is manifest. But London must have considered what was said and told in the book more important than who said it. Evidence for this argument is the unusual forward in the book which points out that the hero is really not the important man that the narrator indicates; rather he was only one of many that contributed to the overthrow of the capitalistic system and the final establishment of the "Brotherhood of Man."

By their nature short stories are prohibitive of any elaborate character change. London's short stories present little character change except when the theme of the entire story is concerned with that change. In the novels, however, more complex characters are presented and more changes in those characters can occur.

The most complex character is Martin Eden. He changes from an uneducated sailor, to a dedicated, energetic, young intellectual, and again to a disillusioned, tired cynic who commits suicide.

These changes in character are presented by the same techniques that accomplish most of the characterization throughout the novel--incidents and thought presentation. The first change from the nearly illiterate sailor to the educated writer is accomplished through many incidents which allow the change in Martin Eden's speech and manners to develop. Thoughts accompanying these incidents show the subtle changes of intellect and trigger interpretative comments by the author that elaborate upon the changing mentality of the hero. The final change occurs in thirty pages of incidents and thoughts. Two important incidents set in motion his mood of futility and indifference. His fiancée breaks their engagement and a close friend dies. Other incidents present his resultant lack of interest in living. Success
comes to him but it is meaningless. In another incident he tries to return to his former life and former friends but finds no interest there. He is made to mutter "Life is, I think, a blunder and a shame." It is--a blunder and a shame." More incidents are furnished to trigger more thoughts and comments by the author. Dialogue and thoughts present the fact that Martin Eden is empty of any desire for living. Finally, the hero drowns himself and when his last sensation vanishes from his mind the book ends. His final impressions are these:

There was a long rumble of sound, and it seemed to him that he was falling down a vast and interminable stairway. And somewhere at the bottom he fell into darkness. That much he knew. He had fallen into darkness. And at the instant he knew, he ceased to know.19

The Sea-Wolf contains more limited examples of character change in the personality of the narrator, Humphrey Van Weyden. An examination of his change from a literary dilettante and coward to a competent, strong, and self-confident individual shows the use of the same techniques that mark the entire book. Incidents with generalized narrative and interpretative comments present the changes in character just as those techniques present most of the characterization throughout the book. With this evidence coupled with an examination of the other novels it can be stated that London accomplished character change through the same methods that

he created character. As far as technique is concerned, a change in a character is no different from the construction of a character.

V. STATIC AND CHANGING CHARACTERS

In the examined novels few changing characters were found; two have already been discussed--Martin Eden and Humphrey Van Weyden. Others are Maud Brewster, the girl in *The Sea-Wolf* who changes only in that she develops a love for Humphrey; Avis Everhard, the narrator of *The Iron Heel*, who changes only as she adopts new political doctrines and falls in love with Ernest Everhard; and the narrator of *John Barleycorn*, who changes only in his enlightenment about the many complexities of his unpredictable companion.

I wish to point out that in London's fiction there is a difference between changing characters and complex characters. A complex character may exist without changing. Wolf Larsen is such a character. He is brutal, crude, and animalistic; but he is clever, intelligent and philosophic. But Wolf Larsen never changes from his materialistic outlook and its resultant behavior. He is unpredictable because of his complexity, but his materialistic philosophy is his guiding force.

Completely static characters often serve a purpose of characterization and plot development for other characters.
Through action with one character, another more important person is further characterized. The Cockney cook in *The Sea-Wolf* serves such a catalytic function. He is a completely static character and can be used in incidents throughout the book to reveal characteristics of other more important personalities. The first change in Humphrey Van Weyden's character is effected through his activities with the static character of the cook. Many other examples of such interplay of characters could be cited. Another static character that functions in this manner is Mr. Morse, the father of Martin Eden's fiancée. He is always self-satisfied, didactic, class-conscious, and mercenary. His stand concerning his daughter's marriage to Martin Eden is never doubted, and he is finally instrumental in separating the two lovers. He remains static but contributes to a change in the daughter's behavior and a resultant change in Martin Eden.

There are other functions of London's static characters, such as sources of information which a narrator could not know; but these functions are not techniques of characterization. Actually, a character is the result of the technique; but inasmuch as one created character delineates another, the result can serve as the technique.

VI. SUMMARY OF THE CHARACTERIZATION TECHNIQUES IN THE NOVELS

This second part of this study has presented an
examination of five novels of different types which were chosen from throughout London's writing career. It was evident that no other elements of characterization existed in the novels than those which were discussed in the short story section. In fact, the novels and the short stories accomplish characterization by the same basic means; the difference lies in the novel's greater length and resultant possibility for intensified characterization through particular techniques. The novel's greater length also allows an insight into the unification of plot and characterization. London presented and used character traits according to his literary instinct which seems to be governed by a fine sense of expediency.

All of the five novels accomplish characterization by means of incidents which are placed throughout a novel to illustrate a character trait or change and to progress the plot if desired. Also, certain novels contained thought presentation, dialogue, and generalized narrative to such great extent that those elements were considered novel-length techniques. *Martin Eden* accomplishes much characterization through elaborate thought presentation linked with interpretative comment by the omniscient author; *John Barleycorn* and *The Star Rover* used the expedient means of generalized narrative to present much material of characterization as well as plot; and *The Iron Heel* wrought most of its characteriza-
tion through the speech of its protagonist.

In brief conclusion, the purpose of each novel determines the predominance and function of these techniques. Where characterization is slight, it is because propaganda or subject matter is of primary interest; where characterization is obvious and impressive, such characterization constitutes the story itself or is required to substantiate the action of the story.

The final evaluation of this purposeful degree of characterization is a recognition of London's keen literary instinct and technical competence.
CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY

In order to discover Jack London's methods of characterization I selected for study twenty-two short stories and five novels from throughout his writing career. This selected fiction is only a fraction of his total work, which includes one hundred and fifty-two short stories, nineteen novels, and many essays, articles, and poems; but since my chosen material represents his more popular short stories and five different type novels, I feel that my analysis of this fiction is generally applicable to London's creative styles and techniques.

First, the short stories were analyzed in great detail and revealed eight basic techniques or elements of characterization: objective details of a character's appearance, abstract physical appearance, action, dialogue, presentation of a character's thoughts, interpretative comment, generalized narrative, and description of a character's environment. All matter of characterization in the selected fiction, and probably all fiction, can be identified and classified among these elements; however, characterization is seldom accomplished through single elements. These elements are made to work together in an infinite number of combinations. Also, all elements may be presented through a
character's dialogue or thoughts, thereby delineating character through "blends." Thus, dialogue and thoughts often function, not only as themselves, but as other elements at the same time.

An examination of material presented through thoughts and dialogue reveals that London offered characterization through dialogue for three reasons—to intensify the illusion of reality, to justify a chosen stylized language, and to limit the point of view: material is presented through a character's thoughts for still another reason—to show the motivation of a character's actions.

These simple techniques, the elements, blends, and their infinite combinations are the means by which a London character is created upon the printed page.

The novels afford a sharper insight into the divisions of characterization and plot. The function of character in the plot is more apparent in London's more lengthy medium. Characterization is created and united with plot through what has been called London's literary instinct. Rather than a mechanical plan of characterization, London seems to possess a fine sense of expediency and a knowledge of the most appropriate time and method to offer material of characterization.

A London novel creates its characters through the same techniques as a London short story, but the novels possess the unique technique of incidents whereby London creates a
scene or a series of scenes that present to a reader certain character traits. Once these traits are established, they may contribute as later motivation for a character's actions. A short story's brevity usually prohibits such incidents.

Four of the novels in this group contain generalized narrative, dialogue, and thought presentation to such great extent that these elements are regarded as novel-length techniques in those books. Through generalized narrative London presented so much material of characterization and plot in The Star Rover and in John Barleycorn that this technique is responsible for characterization throughout these novels. Similarly, thought presentation presents a large part of the characterization in Martin Eden, and dialogue accomplishes much characterization in The Iron Heel.

The extensive use of the above-mentioned elements is a result of the purpose and the style of the respective novels. John Barleycorn and The Star Rover both contain much material that could not be presented through any other means but the expedient generalized narrative; The Iron Heel's purpose is presentation of socialistic propaganda, and the book's way of presenting that propaganda is by its protagonist's speeches. Martin Eden is the one novel that possesses a deep and intensive intellectual characterization, and thought presentation is necessary to bring the subtle aspects of personality before a reader.
Character change in London's fiction occurs through the same means as character construction. The style and the predominant techniques of a particular novel or short story determine the methods of character change.

There are few changing characters in the fiction examined for this study; the outstanding one is Martin Eden whose development and character presentation is the theme of novel bearing his name. Many static characters are used as means of characterization for other more complex characters. London created incidents involving a static character with a more important complex character in order to build or change the important character. The static character remains constant and furnishes stimuli which affect the character upon whom the reader's attention is focused.

The final impression resultant from these techniques of character creation is purpose. Jack London seldom diverts his readers on tangents of fanciful characterization, and never uses elaborate characterization where it is not necessary. London's short stories contain only those aspects of characterization that contribute to the action and the plot of the story. For instance, a character's physical appearance is never given unless that appearance is pertinent to a character's actions or other character's reactions. And even in the novels, where space would allow elaborate characterizations, only that material that contributes, that builds the entire
novel, is used.

The selection of material and its presentation is governed by London's literary instinct of which the most prominent factor is expediency. He creates only that characterization needed for a particular story or novel; yet never does he create a character inadequately equipped to perform the actions given him.

All these factors of fiction reflect London's creative craftmanship--his stature as an author has been justifiably challenged, but his craftmanship is often superb.
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