

THE CASE OF JACK LONDON: PLAGIARISM, CREATIVITY, AND AUTHORSHIP

Anna V. Deadrick

A Thesis Submitted to the  
University of North Carolina at Wilmington in Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts

Department of English

University of North Carolina at Wilmington

2003

Approved by

Advisory Committee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Cara Cilano

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Christopher Gould

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Keith Newlin

Chair

Accepted by

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Robert Roer

Dean, Graduate School

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	iv
DEDICATION .....	v
INTRODUCTION .....	1
CHAPTER ONE: AUTHORSHIP AND PLAGIARISM.....	4
The Meaning of Authorship.....	4
Changes in the Author’s Status .....	7
What is an Author? .....	10
Plagiarism.....	22
Plagiarism Versus Originality.....	23
The Subject of Plagiarism.....	25
CHAPTER TWO: IS JACK LONDON A PLAGIARIST?.....	30
Is Jack London a Plagiarist?.....	38
Is Jack London an Author? .....	39
Originality and Authorship of <i>The Call of the Wild</i> .....	46
NOTES.....	51
WORKS CITED .....	52

## ABSTRACT

The notion of authorship has undergone many changes from the Middle Ages until today. The demand for originality raises questions what authorship and the legitimate use of source materials in writing are. Plagiarism is often suspected when it seems that a writer abused the materials that helped shape the work of literature. The development of technologies such as the World Wide Web and hypertext casts a new light on the problem of authorship and plagiarism and questions the roles of writers and readers in the creation of a text. This thesis explores the notions of authorship, originality, creativity, and plagiarism within a case study of Jack London's role in creation of his novel *The Call of the Wild*.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My thanks go to Dr. Keith Newlin, whose insightful intelligence and exciting presentation of the material got me interested the subject. He raised issues about the transformation of facts into fiction and the nature of creativity that helped direct my research interests and will definitely affect my future research choices. I am extremely grateful to Dr. Keith Newlin for his tremendous support, motivation, and professional guidance that helped me focus the thesis.

I would also like to thank Dr. Cara Cilano and Dr. Lewis Walker for their comments and advice along the way. Dr. Christopher Gould edited many passages for clarity and proofread the work.

Special thanks go to my parents for their support and encouragement, to my sister for being an example of persistence, and to my husband for facilitating the study time and quiet atmosphere in our busy home. I would also like to thank Jamy Gearhart for her advice and expertise.

I would like to thank the English Department for their provision of financial support for one semester of my study at the UNCW.

Finally, I would like to thank my thesis committee for their guidance, support, and the invaluable knowledge that I received during my studies at the UNCW.

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my daughter Ekaterina, who was born in the beginning of the thesis writing semester. She became the biggest distraction and the greatest inspiration in my writing.

## INTRODUCTION

Original fiction does not appear out of nothing. Borrowing and exchanging of ideas are natural components of creativity. Many writers base their fiction on such source material as newspaper articles, real life stories, and personal experiences as well as experiences of other people that became known to the author. Early story-tellers such as Homer transformed orally transmitted tales into narratives of their own. Among others, Alexander Pushkin collected folk tales while traveling through the Russian countryside interviewing villagers and then combined plots and characters with the fruits of his imagination. The published result, *Pushkin's Fairy Tales*, is a fine collection of authentic poetic stories. Theodore Dreiser used the memories of his own reactions to Chicago and New York, his brother's theatrical activity, his sisters' intricate personal affairs, and newspaper accounts of current events to form the plot of *Sister Carrie* (1900). He also studied other writers, recycled scenes from his previously published articles, and even wove Alfred Stieglitz's famous photograph *Winter on Fifth Avenue* into his narrative, adopting the image for the New York blizzard chapter. And Stephen Crane took his own newspaper account of the steamer *Commodore's* sinking that he himself experienced and later turned it into the short story "The Open Boat."

When source material is thus used as a starting point or inspiration and turned into a work of fiction, questions of authorship and plagiarism might arise, especially if the original facts and events have already appeared in a written form elsewhere. Finding plot parallels, influences, and obvious and possible borrowings of one author from another leads to the question: What does it mean to be an "author"?

London's cycle of Northland stories made his name as a writer and did even more for his reputation and publicly constructed image of a tough traveler and macho adventurer. Contrary to

what one might expect after reading his detailed and realistic stories about the North, London spent only ten months in the Klondike, and his *own* activities provided very little material for future writing. Instead, he relied on oral and written sources to compose his fiction. London repeatedly confessed that he had difficulties coming up with an original idea for a story. He even bought several story plots from Sinclair Lewis.<sup>1</sup> Yet he could masterfully develop and elaborate the idea once he found it. London was among the first to recognize the literary potential of the Klondike Gold Rush for generating plots and characters. His Northland stories reflect events that London learned from reading newspapers and books about the Klondike. For example, London's short stories "To Build a Fire" and "Love of Life" originated from newspaper accounts of, respectively, a tragic accident and a survival story.<sup>2</sup> His naturalistic novel *The Call of the Wild* (1903) "adopted" several canine characters from Egerton R. Young's *My Dogs in the Northland* (1902). London did not even bother to pick very different names for the dogs, and he used practically unchanged several episodes and even some phrasing from Young's book. Those episodes are easy to spot because the language of London's novel often does not hide the borrowing. Soon after the publication of *The Call of the Wild*, *The Independent* publicly accused Jack London of plagiarizing ideas, characters, and even language for *The Call of the Wild*.<sup>3</sup> At another time London was accused of plagiarizing parts of Stanley Waterloo's *The Story of Ab* (1897) for his novel *Before Adam* (1903).<sup>4</sup>

Yet being an author does not mean originating every idea and every detail in one's work. London creatively used source material in his writing. He borrowed themes, ideas, setting, and characters, but he is the author of the resulting stories and novels. In London's case, even though his usage of sources looks much like plagiarism because of obvious parallels between the involved works, the originality of the final product and London's deep involvement in the

creative process lead one to conclude that London is indeed the “author” of these works and not a plagiarist of their sources.



## CHAPTER ONE: AUTHORSHIP AND PLAGIARISM

### The Meaning of Authorship

“Authorship” is used to denote several interchangeable meanings. In the most general sense, authorship is the very process of creation, such as writing fiction, composing music, and developing a scientific theory. The intricate connection to one’s sense of self is emphasized when the term is used to imply the “fathering” of a product – being an author and being known as an author, that is giving one’s name to the created product. This in itself is a twofold problem: the philosophical question of what an author is and the rather practical problem of defining authorship of anonymous or works of obscure origin. In a narrower sense, authorship also means the profession of writing. So, there are three meanings to keep in mind when speaking of authorship: creativity as a process, connection of the product with the human creator and a name, and the profession of writing, the last of these implying economic issue of profit and ethical standards.

Authorship, in the sense of attributing the name of a person to a product of human creativity, has changed greatly over time. It has gone from being almost non-existent in the past to being clearly defined and protected in more recent years, and today the term is undergoing further revision with the advent of hypertext. In his essay “What is an Author?” Michel Foucault writes that the notion of authorship is born when knowledge, art, and science become individualized, when someone claims an idea as his own (101). At some point somebody wanted to be known as “the father” of a new concept or work and marked it with his name. Texts entered the system of ownership, and this gave rise to many rules concerning authorship, ending the period of anonymity in literature (Foucault 108). Foucault explains that in the Middle Ages scientific texts were accepted as valid and published “only when marked with the name of their

author,” while literary texts were usually anonymous. Any scientific statement needed a reference to the individual who produced it to receive adequate attention in learned circles. The reputation of the individual served as a guarantee of the text’s relevancy and authenticity. Openings like “Hippocrates said” established an immediate connection with a revered individual and functioned as markers of truth in scientific discourse. At the same time, “narratives, stories, epics, tragedies, comedies” were “valorized without any question about the identity of their author” because they served primarily to entertain, and there was no concern regarding their relevancy or importance (Foucault 109). A literary work can be anonymous in the sense that we know its recognized author but not those who inspired it. If a story relies heavily on anonymous texts such as legends, myths, and orally transmitted tales, we might never know all the authors who contributed to its creation. The recognized author may be a person who merely recorded a legend or a tale, not the individual who actually created it. In some cases, the tale can be so old that even the name of the person who recorded it is obscure. In the Middle Ages, the anonymity of a literary text alone was often received as the proof of its ancientness, and the authorship of ancient texts was never challenged.

In the seventeenth century the situation reversed, and scientific texts “began to be received for themselves, in the anonymity of an established or always redemonstrable truth” (Foucault 109), while literary texts proudly pronounced their authors and made the authorial identity a matter of interest, importance, and study. This reversal can be easily explained. A scientific text is based on theories that were developed from ancient thought to modern discourse. Survival of those theories proves them right; the name of their originators does not. Science is an intricate system that can guarantee truth. When reading an article in the news about harmful effects of stress, one does not need to know the name of the author. It is human to err.

As an individual, the author can be right or wrong. Her name does not affect the postulates of her article. Therefore, why must one know it? The very context of science, references to “studies” and “experiments,” and connection with the earlier findings will make the data and conclusions of the article sound true, at least for the time being. Yet in earlier times, there was not a previously established body of scientific knowledge for the reader to refer to. Scientific context sufficient for the anonymity of a discourse had not developed. One had to refer to an established name instead of relying on scientific context to gain an audience’s trust and attention. Today, the respected name does not guarantee the validity of the ideas. The scientist’s name works more like a label for a discovery. When we refer to Mendeleev’s Periodic Table of chemical elements, “Mendeleev’s” is more of a name for the table. We do not imply a human author each time we say “Mendeleev’s Table.” The author is not important here because the ideas behind the organization of the elements in this table have nothing to do with Mendeleev as an individual. In fact we usually drop the proper name and refer to the table simply as the “periodical table of chemical elements.”

In the case of literary texts, we do not read them for entertainment only. Scholarly readers take a more active approach to the text and attempt to interpret it and analyze its components. They are interested in sources and possible influences. They want to recognize trends of thought disguised in the narration and apply the conclusions to real life. This quest often brings the reader back to the author as the starting point of the text’s existence, as “the father” of the text. If one is interested to know more about a text, getting acquainted with its parent might help. If we want to better understand a book, learning more about the author can give us clues. Even when we read just to pass the time or to escape boredom, the author’s name becomes important. We might want to know more about the author because we want to read other, similar books or

simply because he is a celebrity. We extend our excitement about the book to the person who wrote it and often see the author as one of his own characters. If we enjoyed the book, we naturally want to know more about the author because we are grateful for the pleasure of reading. Prior knowledge of the author and his interests can also help us to decide if his book is worth buying and whether we are likely to enjoy reading it. Initially, this new fascination with the author was one of the effects of the rise of individualism through capitalization and industrialization in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As we become more and more interested in the connections within the text and in the connections of the text with other discourses, we turn to the author. As our interest in the author grows, we insist on authorship and become less tolerant of anonymity in the writing field. Foucault notes that today anonymity in literature is acceptable only as a challenge for scholars to rediscover the author of the anonymous piece or as an attraction of enigma (109-110).

#### Changes in the Author's Status

The anonymity of literary works of previous centuries can often be explained by the amateur status of writing. Works like *The Song of Roland*, *Beowulf*, *The 1001 Nights*, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, as well as collections of anonymous poetry and folktales, have long been a part of classic world literature. In America, "A Slave's Story" was written by a former slave owner at the bedside of a dying slave and then anonymously published in *Putnam's Monthly Magazine* in 1857. In 1890, another anonymous work, "Three Noted Chiefs of the Sioux," appeared in *Harper's Weekly*. Likewise, "The Indian of Commerce," an anonymous essay suggesting a classification of American Indians, was published in 1901. Amateur writers did not profit from their occupation and did not insist on their authorship. However, as soon as it became possible to

claim a product of writing as a piece of property, authors sought to establish and protect their ownership rights by “branding” their property with their names, their mark of ownership. In *The Profession of Authorship in America* William Charvat explains the long-lasting anonymity of literary works in America as stemming in part from the influence of British aristocratic attitudes toward literature. According to this tradition, embraced on the American continent as well, literature was viewed mainly as “a by-product of learning or study, which presupposed leisure” (Charvat 6). A gentleman would take satisfaction and pride in his writing, but he would not write for money nor would he bother to put his work in print. The work of a gentleman was meant not for the market but for a small circle of peer. However, such gentlemen would often patronize writers of humbler origin in the form of gifts, jobs, subscription for their works, and the privileges of identification with upper classes. A patronized writer might in turn write for the open market and sell his works, “but because society despised him for doing so, he published anonymously” (Charvat 7). At the same time, if a work published anonymously enjoyed some popularity, it became subject to open piracy, and the anonymous author was robbed of honestly earned money. Another way to make decent living by writing, to sell literature by subscription, “had never been very profitable, and because subscription-hunters were considered nuisances, it contributed to the degradation of the author’s status” (Charvat 9).

In the early years of the United States, the profession of writing held many possibilities, but for authorship to become a true profession, authors needed protection. Registered association between an author’s name and a text established a literary work as a piece of property and granted some degree of protection. Joel Barlow entered was the first American writer to contribute to the profession of authorship by helping to set a copyright law enacted in the United States. In a January 10, 1783, letter to Elias Boudinot, President of the Continental Congress,

Barlow urged Congress to protect the rights of authors by enacting a copyright law. In England, a copyright law protected a book for fourteen years after its publication, and Barlow urged passage of a similar law in America (Charvat 6). Within a month, Connecticut passed a copyright law, and by 1790 all other states were obliged to follow similar guidelines enforced by federal law. Works of writing officially became property. Literary property was protected by this law for fourteen years, and then the protection was renewable for another fourteen years. These laws affirmed the importance of the individual “owner.” Authorship was on the way to becoming a profession.

“Profession” implies “profit.” When Barlow and his followers sought to become professional writers, they wanted writing to be their primary occupation. As a primary occupation, writing would have to support them financially. So, for authorship to be professional, it had to be a profitable vocation. Even after the copyright law was enacted in America, neither Joel Barlow nor his close followers succeeded financially because the market was not ready to accommodate them. Charvat argues that even though modern scholars criticize Barlow’s work as derivative, it was not his lack of originality that caused his failure to profit by writing but the social and economic conditions of that time. Supply simply outweighed the demand. In America at the end of the eighteenth century, poetry was well-loved and versification universal. Two types of poetry enjoyed popularity: one type followed strict standards of form but was otherwise very undemanding. It allowed any literate person in any field express his thoughts in a “poetic form” (Charvat 11-12). Neither editors nor publishers would pay for these verses. The other type of poetry, more complex and aesthetically pleasing, was enjoyed and purchased by poetry lovers. They cherished the works of already established British poets such as Pope and Milton, keeping the national market out of reach for aspiring authors (Charvat 11-12).

Charvat writes that authorship did not gain full professional status until the 1820s, when collaboration between writers and publishers met the readers' ability to buy or rent books, all three factors creating a successful market pioneered by Washington Irving and James Fenimore Cooper (30). Joel Barlow's desire to put his name on his books, to be acknowledged as an author, signaled changing attitudes toward authorship as an occupation. Writing ceased to be a leisure activity and became a profession.

What is an Author?

In order to understand the institution of authorship and its implications, we must examine the relationship between text and author and how authorship can be claimed, questioned, or stolen. Interestingly, dictionaries and other reference sources often avoid using the word *author*. Instead, more specific terms such as *novelist*, *short-story writer*, or *essayist* are substituted. While compilers of encyclopedias do not hesitate to state that so-and-so *wrote* a particular book, they prefer not to say that he or she *authored* it. Evidently, authorship is an elusive category, and an *author* is somehow different from a *writer*. Speculating about this distinction in terms of general usage and grammar, we can say that a *writer* is the one who writes. Writing is a process, so the one involved in it is already a writer even before the process results in anything tangible. I am a *writer* because I *write* in my diary, I *write* emails, and I *write* bad poetry that nobody ever sees. *Writer* sounds anonymous and neutral in terms of the quality of the product. If one automatically jots down texts, such as, for example, job announcements or advertising information, one can still be called a writer. Creativity is not implied here, only the function of writing. Think of a typewriter.

Also, *writer* suggests repetition – a short story writer has to write more than one story to earn this title. At the same time, *author* emphasizes a product – “a child” rather than a writing process. Repetition is not suggested. Emily Bronte wrote only one novel, *Wuthering Heights*, so how can she be called a novelist – a *writer* of novels? She did not make writing her occupation but she *fathered* this particular novel, so she is the *author* of *Wuthering Heights*. Not surprisingly, *author* is always the *father*; the history of authorship or any other professional occupation typically has a male beginning. There is a connection with *authority* echoed in *authorship*. The one who has the authority is traditionally the man; hence an author is a father. In the beginning of time a male God had the word; later He passed authority over the word to male authors. Author as father emphasizes the male gender of authorship and makes us wonder who the mother is. If an author is a father, the authority in control over the product of writing, then the mother would be someone who gave life to the product and then quietly stepped aside, yielding all control and rights. Could this be an inspirational source – a work or another writer who inspired the work in question and then disappeared in the shadow? Yet usually there are several sources that inspired a particular work. Shall we then say that a work has a father and multiple mothers? Or shall we reconsider parental roles in creating and authoring the work?

The Grimm brothers wrote many fairy tales, but they collected much more than they created. They gave their names to the collection of old Germanic tales, and they are definitely an authority when it comes to these stories. They are the recognized authors of such fairy tales as “Rapunzel,” “The Frog King,” “Cinderella,” and “Little Snow-White.” The unknown story-teller who put an original tale together is not cited as its author. When a story is edited, cleaned up, or retold later on, it acquires a new author, be it Walt Disney or Gregory Maguire. The Grimm brothers pass their authorship to the new re-teller and take their place among other “sources.”



Different from *writer*, the word *author* always involves publicity and a name. Saying that a person is the *author* means connecting a proper name with a particular work and making it publicly known. A statement such as “Emily Bronte is the author of *Wuthering Heights*” suggests either that the audience is familiar with the name Emily Bronte or that the audience is familiar with the book. If the audience is ignorant of both the name of the person and the name of the novel, a statement “Emily Bronte wrote *Wuthering Heights*” would be more successful because it simply states the physical act – a person wrote a book.

We have already said that *author* is the *authority* in the sense that he supposedly controls the meaning of his work and is in charge of it. Also, if a writer claims authorship, he immediately claims to be the authority on the subject, or one becomes an authority in the process of authorship. Speculating further, *author* echoes in *authenticity*. Referring to one as an *author* would be vouchsafing the authenticity of the work, which is not the task of encyclopedias. Reference publications state the minimal existing connection between people and literary works and thus opt for *writer*, leaving it up to the scholars and interested others to explore the concept of *authorship*.

The Romantics are responsible for developing the link of *author* to *creativity* because of their emphasis on the value of individual perception. One aspect of authorship is addressed by Wordsworth in his preface to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*. Answering the question of what a poet is, Wordsworth stresses the qualities distinguishing poets/authors from the common crowd. Poets possess “more lively sensibility, . . . more enthusiasm and tenderness, . . . greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul” (441). Wordsworth’s poet meets the general idea of a creative person, an artist, for he is “a man pleased with his own passions and volitions . . . who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him” (441). An

artist enjoys observing the passions of the world and even creating them himself (Wordsworth 441). Keats adds to this a sense of beauty as a necessary characteristic of a poetic person and points out that the latter has no identity, for he speaks for something or somebody else in his creations (“Letter to George and Thomas Keats” 494). The Romantics also developed the notion of a poet as the one who perceives or expresses beauty. These two aspects, creativity and beauty (or aesthetic pleasure resulting from the perception of beauty), have endured and contribute to modern ideas of authorship.

Thinkers and scholars have long been fascinated with the notion of authorship, and they continue to explore it today. In 1818, Keats said that the poet has no identity (“Letter to Richard Woodhouse” 494). Poetry is universal; it should appear to the reader as a remembrance of his own. Keats writes that the poet does not appear in his works but fills “some other Body” speaking to the reader as something other than an individual person (“Letter to Richard Woodhouse” 494). In 1968, Roland Barthes developed the idea of the author’s loss of identity and proclaimed that the author is dead. He argued against fascination with an authorial identity and attributed the desire to explain the text through the author to critics. Indeed, when in doubt, critics turn to the author’s life and personality, trying to prove an argument. Thus, issues of authorship are the subject of criticism. The choice of one interpretation cuts off other possible meanings. Since explanation of the text restricts its meaning, the author becomes an instrument of this restriction. Barthes saw the author as one of many possible codes that we impose on the text by trying to explain it. Author as authority is in control of meaning. Control is always limiting. By “killing off” the author, Barthes intended to turn readers solely to the text in its multiplicity of meanings. He argued that meaning is produced by the reader, not by the author,

and that in order to approach the text with an untainted perception, we need to distance ourselves from the author, leave the author in the past of the book (Barthes 1130-32).

Addressing similar issues, Michel Foucault in his essay “What is an Author?” points that the concept of authorship has not always existed but came into being at some point in time and therefore can also pass out of existence in the future. There was a time when an author’s identity did not matter, and this time can return. Exploring the connotations of the author’s name, Foucault shows how our knowledge of the author’s identity shapes our understanding of the text, and he wonders how our perception of the text would change if the association between the name and the texts were broken (105-107). For example, would our understanding of *Oliver Twist* differ if we find that it was written not by Charles Dickens but by some obscure writer? Foucault claims that one of the most important characteristics of the author function, an idea of author behind the text or author-text-reader relationship in the society, is the problem of attribution or establishing the connection between a particular text and “a certain rational being” (108-110). He also explains that the author is still important for modern criticism because critics tend to explain events present in the text, their transformation, and their unity through the notion of author (105-113).

Like Ronald Barthes, Foucault prophesizes that the authorial function will disappear and questions of authorship and authenticity will not matter in a changed society (119). Invention of the printing press allowed fast reproduction of works and made authors worry about their property. It is logical to assume that further developments in the technology of writing are a part of Foucault’s changed society. We live in a society that fits the description. It is now possible to reproduce and spread texts not only through printing and copying machines but also through the computer and the World Wide Web.

Though the question of authorship today has not lost but actually gained significance, one can see how Barthes and Foucault's prediction has come true in the form of a hypertext.

Hypertext, the text with links to other resources, gives the reader of today the power to shape the meaning of a text by following different threads, limiting, expanding, and varying the content of the selection. This text will most likely have multiple authors and some parts of it may even be anonymous. The hypertext can be interpreted in various ways due to its fluctuating content and the absence of the entity restricting the range of interpretations.

Apart from philosophical views about the meaning of authorship, there are commonly accepted and widely held ideas of what an author is. *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines an author first as an originator, inventor or constructor, then as "one who begets, a father," and third as "a writer" – "one who sets forth written statements." Another less used but still interesting meaning is that of a "ruler, commander," "one who has authority over others" ("Author" 1: 571).

A law dictionary defines an author as "one who produces, by his own intellectual labor applied to the materials of his composition, an arrangement or compilation new in itself." The author is "a beginner or mover of anything; hence efficient cause of a thing; creator, originator; a composer, as distinguished from an editor, translator or compiler" (Black 121). These definitions emphasize origin, originality, and intellectual labor as authorial characteristics. They seem to be the features that distinguish an author from a scribe, for example. A scribe does not originate the text he copies, he does not bring anything individual into it, and his labor is merely mechanical, not intellectual.

Origin is a deceptively easy category to determine. If a work never existed before one person wrote it, he originated it. Unfortunately, it is not that simple. Ronald Barthes denies the notion of authorial origination – the creation of something that did not exist before. He argues

that the text consists of “several writings none of which is original: the text is a fabric of quotations, resulting from a thousand sources of culture” (1132). As for the mechanism or shape of a work, typically a writer uses an existing genre and follows its conventions or at least roots his work in some established category. There are writers whom we consider the originators of certain genres: Poe, Wells, Conan Doyle, but numerous others have followed already familiar conventions of an established genre. These conventions are limited, repeated, and not a signifier of the text’s origin.

Content is also not an accurate indicator of whether the text originates with the proclaimed author because much of what a text contains is influenced by outside sources. Many writers – Stephen Crane, Ernest Hemingway, Theodore Dreiser, and Joyce Carol Oates to name just a few – base their fiction on newspaper accounts or real-life stories; they employ personal experiences as well as the experiences of other people.

Theodore Dreiser used the memories of his own reactions to Chicago and New York as well as his brother’s theatrical activity, his sisters’ intricate personal affairs, and newspaper accounts of current events to form the plot of *Sister Carrie*. He also studied other writers, recycled scenes from his previously published articles, and even wove Alfred Stieglitz’s famous photograph *Winter on Fifth Avenue* into his narrative, adopting the image for the New York blizzard chapter. Apart from the *factual material*, some *ideas* behind *Sister Carrie* did not start with Dreiser either. Views of the Chicago economist and sociologist Thorstein Veblen circulated in the society and pervaded intellectual discussion at the time that Dreiser started his career. In *Sister Carrie* Dreiser demonstrates familiarity with Veblen’s *The Theory of the Leisure Class* and, arguably, illustrates its concept of “conspicuous consumption” through many episodes in

which Carrie makes “invidious comparisons” between her clothes and those of others. There is always someone more expensively dressed, and this ignites Carrie’s striving for a better life.

Thus, a big portion of the novel does not start with Dreiser but with fellow journalists, his siblings Emma and Paul Dreiser, the photographer Alfred Stieglitz, and the economist Veblen. But even though some plot events and ideas behind the plot existed before Dreiser put them into his writing, nobody contests his authorship of *Sister Carrie*. The way he incorporated the sources granted him the title of “author.”

Joyce Carol Oates’s short story “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?” was inspired by a Bob Dylan song and a real event that she read about in *Life* magazine. Oates transformed the serial killer Charles Schmid from Tucson, Arizona, into a mysterious and almost supernatural character – Arnold Friend. Oates borrowed Friend’s description from Schmid’s picture in *Life* magazine. Like Schmid, Friend is short but noticeably muscular and tanned. He is older than the surrounding teenage crowd. He stuffs his boots with rags and cans to seem taller; he uses makeup to appear younger and to create a look that would strike the teenage imagination. His queer gait, the result of all that stuffing of boots, and strange exaggerated speech are peculiar details emphasized in the story. Moreover, Schmid and Friend both drive gold cars (Quirk 414, 415). Oates’s fictional victim, Connie, washes her hair right before Friend’s arrival, just as the real victim did.

Oates incorporated many major and minor details concerning Schmid, his victims, and the crime itself, telling the tale from the point of view of a potential victim. She borrowed key facts from the article but gave them additional significance. For instance, Oates used facts about Schmid’s three teenage victims but blended them into one character to give focus to the story. Oates eliminated Schmid’s accomplices from her story, leaving Friend with one silent

companion, Ellie. This directs the reader's attention to Arnold Friend, leaving the silent companion to add a sinister quality to the atmosphere of the story. The parents of Alleen Rowe, a real victim, were not at home, which explains why she was able to leave the house at night. Connie's absent family illustrates the gap between parents and their teenage children. Oates leaves her story open ended. Those familiar with her source conclude that Connie will die. Those who are not familiar with it may think that she will run away or merely lose her innocence. Oates also adds another dimension to her story by adding a riddle of numbers 33, 19, 17 painted on a Friend's car. If one counts books of the Old Testament in reverse order, one comes to the 33<sup>rd</sup> book, Judges. Verse 19, line 17 in Judges reads, "And when he had lifted up his eyes, he saw a wayfaring man in the street of the city: and the old man said, Whither goest thou? and whence comest thou?" The riddle explains the title and connects Friend with larger implications in Judges. A little detail like this changes the reader's perception of the story, casts a different light on its many details, and ties them together in a new meaning. Everything comes together; Arnold's clumsy gait, his gold car, his ironic name (Friend), seduction, and persuasiveness, as a supernaturally demonic character emerges. Oates's creativity transforms the basic sources into an original narrative and thereby establishes her authorship of "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?"

This brings us to another important aspect in distinguishing an author – originality, yet another ambiguous concept. For example, the copyright law refers to the *products of one's own intellect* as being original, even though anyone seems capable of producing (with one's own intellect) something not original. Jane Gaines in *Contested Culture: The Image, The Voice, and The Law* regrets that laws have reduced the notion of originality to the mere fact of a work's origin, eliminating the factors of uniqueness, individuality, and novelty (58). James Boyle,

author of *Shamans, Software, and Spleen*; *Law and the Construction of the Information Society*, continues to explore the concept of originality and argues that originality is the novelty that an author “adds to the raw material provided by culture and common pool” (54).

Originality is defined by *The Oxford English Dictionary* as the quality of being “independent of and different from anything that has appeared before; novelty or freshness of style or character” (“Originality” 7: 203). *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary* adds “the power of independent thought or constructive imagination” to the definition of originality (“Originality,” def. 3). Writing about the writer’s philosophy of life, Jack London explained that one gains it “by drawing the materials... from the knowledge and culture of the world” (*No Mentor* 9). If usage of sources, even in the form of printed matter, nevertheless creates the effect of freshness, then the work can be described as original and the writer can claim its authorship.

Evaluating a piece of writing as “fresh” seems to involve a great degree of subjectivity, but there is another criterion – presence of independent thinking and constructive imagination – that can determine whether a literary work is original. In other words, writers claiming the authorship of a work that is constructed from materials originating outside of their imagination need to show creativity in their approach to the sources, an old theme, or a pre-existing basic plot. And that is what Dreiser did. He took certain situations from his sisters’ lives and supplied his own story line. For instance, Dreiser used the experience of his older sister Emma, who fled to New York with a Chicago saloon clerk named L.A. Hopkins, as a major part of his plot. But he changed the nature of the elopement by emphasizing Hurstwood’s social status and character and portraying Carrie as innocent and pure in spite of her engaging in what were generally considered amoral actions. Dreiser also leaves the reader to wonder whether Hurstwood accidentally locked the safe because he was driven by a subconscious desire to take the money or



whether the incident was the result of blind fate, like the way that Carrie's luck takes her still higher up the social ladder. The reader does not know for sure if Carrie runs away with Hurstwood knowingly or if she is deceived by him. This vagueness adds dimension to the characters and taps into economical and psychological theories of his time. Dreiser did not know what happened to Hopkins after Emma left him. But the writer carefully developed Hurstwood's decline, following naturalistic theories as well as describing his own fears of unemployment and degradation. Dreiser might be using Veblen's or Darwin's ideas as the background for the action, but he illustrates these ideas with his own examples. The naturalistic tendencies are evident when Dreiser explores the connection between age and wealth. Young but poor Carrie struggles to survive and finally proves to be the "fitter" character, while rich but-past-his-prime Hurstwood sinks, losing his money, social status, and health. Illustrating Veblen's notion of "conspicuous consumption," the fictional Mr. and Mrs. Vance host wastefully ostentatious dinners. Likewise, Carrie constantly yearns for better clothes. Dreiser used Alfred Stieglitz's photograph *Winter on Fifth Avenue* for his setting, but the mood created by the setting was Dreiser's creation. He created – labored with his mind and soul – made choices and changes, interpreted facts, and developed ideas.

The evidence of Joyce Carol Oates's creativity lies in her narrative point of view and rendering of characters. Telling the story in the voice of the victim and presenting her thoughts, Oates provides insights into the teenage psyche. She organizes widely reprinted facts and the result is astonishing – in place of a freaky wannabe pop idol/serial killer, there stands a devil incarnate, horrible and alluring at the same time. The connection to the news stories is obvious, but the open ending of the story and the prevalence of questions over answers regarding

characters and their motives arouse oscillating interpretations. What better evidence of creative imagination can there be?

Freud gives more insight into the intellectual work of creative writers by comparing the creativity first to a child's game and then to an adult's daydreaming. His author designs a world similar to that of a playing child – through rearrangement of elements. Both play and authorship involve reconfiguring elements to produce new and pleasurable wholes (Freud 712). The writer plays with different meanings, forms, and words. The child chooses and moves blocks and toys or enacts roles. Freud writes that creative activity can be initiated by “a strong experience in the present” that evokes memories of earlier experience and provide more and more material for writing (Freud 712, 715). A playing child will act out his part relying on his observations of adults, other children, or animals. A writer can weave information and impressions from different sources into a coherent and original whole. Jack London also sees writing as arrangement of familiar elements of knowledge and culture, but he personalizes such arrangement with a “stamp of self” and builds the elements into “an individual philosophy of life” (*No Mentor* 8). London's advice clearly establishes a strong connection between the author and his text – one that is much more complex than most people's notion of “originality.”

So, the three most important aspects in ascribing authorship are origination, that is the creation of something that did not exist before; evidence of one's own intellectual effort; and perception of the results as new or original, revealing independent thought and imaginative construction.

## Plagiarism

Because authorship is regarded as the most intimate form of ownership involving discourse, we consider literary theft a serious offence. However, since intellectual property is an easily accessible domain, unusual or appealing ideas lure appropriators. We acquire and pass forward intellectual products through the everlasting process of learning. That makes it especially difficult to distinguish between lawful sharing of information and ideas and despicable stealing of the fruits of another person's mind and soul.

Thomas Mallon in his comprehensive study of literary plagiarism, *Stolen Words*, states that imitation lies at the base of plagiarism (3). Imitation however is a commonly accepted practice in scholarship. Discussing different theories of art, Ernst Cassirer shows how language and art are in part imitation, and he writes that "imitation is a fundamental instinct, an irreducible fact of human nature, . . . [an] inexhaustible source of delight" (926). Art and language start off as imitation. Even the imitation of ugliness, as in the case of satire, can bring pleasure to the imitator. Imitation is one way to reproduce reality; at the other pole lies an artist's subjectivity. Cassirer shows the evolution of art as a move from imitation to subjective expression; imitative art evolves into "characteristic" or original art (927-28). Monks of the Middle Ages and their scribes spent their lives copying valuable works by hand. Writers of the past used to practice imitation or simply re-writing of their great predecessors' creations to perfect their style. Literature students of today devote great effort and time to analyzing other writers' style, language, and subject matter in order to imitate what they study and admire. Even the very composition of literature is defined as an imitation of life. The better we become as imitators, the greater the risk that "we [will] take pleasure in imitations of life, and our imitative capacities make us want to imitate not only life but life's imitations too" (Mallon 3). Mallon points out that

“novelists are really supposed to plagiarize . . . reality,” not other representations of it (21). Mallon closely connects the need to establish authorial identity with the desire for profits. Indeed, authorship became important when the public became willing and able to pay for literature. Stealing authorship turned into stealing money out of the writer’s pocket. Mallon points out that plagiarism existed for centuries in the form of imitation, writing down oral narratives, translations from other languages, re-writing historic chronicles, collaboration, etc. It became “a truly sore point” only when money got involved, that is when the invention of the printing press allowed authorship to become a profession (3-4).

### Plagiarism Versus Originality

The term “plagiarism” derives from “plagiary” which used to mean kidnapping of a child or a slave (*OED* 7: 932). Ben Johnson was the first to use the term to mean kidnapping a literary creation – as though it were a child of its author (Mallon 6). Throughout his study, Mallon argues that plagiarism is as horrible a crime field as the actual kidnapping of a helpless creature. Academic scholars condemn plagiarism. They urge students to cite sources carefully, and to value the originality of ideas.

Because it is really new or at least perceived as fresh, originality “set itself down as a cardinal literary virtue sometime in the middle of the eighteenth century and has never since gotten up” (Mallon 24). The expectation and even demand that a writer create original works, this “fearful legacy to the great Romantics,” caused a phenomenon that Harold Bloom termed “the anxiety of influence” – nervous fear of failure to compete with great literary precursors while being original (Mallon 24). The cure for the anxiety of influence, according to Mallon, is “to loot boldly, in broad daylight” but to “alchemize” stolen material to the point of creating

something authentic using the gathered loot as a stimulus initiating further creation (25, 26). This is what Dreiser and Oates did – they appropriated many sources and probably would not deny the appropriation. But they “alchemized” and produced unique creations marked, as London calls it, with “a stamp of self.”

So it seems that there is nothing wrong with borrowing as long as one uses one’s own mind to “digest” the borrowed material during the creative process, and as long as the final product can be perceived as original. Then what is plagiarism? Doesn’t this type of borrowing generally appear within a more or less original context, for example, as a stolen passage in an otherwise original work? This evokes the question of boundaries within which borrowing can extend before it turns into plagiarism, the question of the form such borrowing can take, and the question of what kinds of material can be borrowed. These boundaries, forms, and content constitute the key distinctions between inspirational borrowing and plagiarism.

Mallon cites the definition of plagiarism in Samuel Johnson’s *Dictionary of the English Language*, dated 1755: “theft; literary adoption of the works or thoughts of another” (11). The *MLA Style Manual* (1998) reprints Alexander Lindsey’s definition of plagiarism as “the false assumption of authorship: the wrongful act of taking the product of another person’s mind, and presenting it as one’s own.” Failure to acknowledge used sources “when repeating another’s wording or particularly apt phrase, paraphrasing another’s argument, and presenting another’s line of thinking” constitutes plagiarism (Gibaldi 151). There even exists a form of self-plagiarism when one reissues a previously published work and presents it as new (Gibaldi 152).

Plagiarism and copyright infringement of a literary work overlap in their basic definitions, but they should not be confused with each other. To put it simply, plagiarism might or might not constitute violation of copyright. If unauthorized borrowing occurs from a work

unprotected by copyright, plagiarism is present while copyright infringement is not. Copyright infringement is always a matter of the law, while plagiarism is a moral and ethical offense and often an issue of scholarship, which in some cases does, but in most cases does not, have legal consequences. Proven plagiarism in academe usually results in resignation or loss of a position and public castigation (Gibaldi 151-2).

Detecting copyright infringement is made easier by legal guidelines: “the purpose and character of the use . . . , the nature of the copyrighted work, the amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole, and the effect of the use upon the potential market for or value of the copyrighted work” (Black 702). Plagiarism is a more complex issue, and though there are guidelines allowing us to identify plagiarism in its crudest form, sometimes the extent and character of borrowing make it possible to appeal the charge of plagiarism and claim innocence.

### The Subject of Plagiarism

When analyzing a work of literature chosen at random, it is always possible to find certain aspects that appear somewhere else in other published work. This might be a theme, an idea, a particular event, or even a trend of thought. These broad similarities allow us to delineate genres. Repetition of words and structures defines literary devices. On the one hand, repetition of laconic sentences and congested thought is characteristic of Hemingway’s style. But on the other hand, repetition of humanlike references (“thought,” “felt,” etc.) in a dog story serves merely to satisfy readers’ expectations about the type of text. Repetition of themes and ideas distinguishes schools of thought (e.g. Romanticism, modernism) among writers. However, when a *sequence* of ideas and images, a cluster of sentences, or even a particular sentence is repeated,

suspicion of plagiarism arises. Pattern is the key. Repetition of one idea can be coincidental, but repetition of a pattern suggests plagiarism.

Works do not exist in vacuum, and neither do their writers, which accounts for what we call influence. The concept of intertextuality suggests that there are no original texts at all; every text is indebted to previous texts. A “new” text is little more than an arrangement of allusions to and quotes from older utterances. The processes of influence and writing through quotation are ongoing because texts exist only in relation to other texts and between a writer and a reader. On the technical side of writing, the creative process is initiated by the desire to communicate a message. For the communication to happen, participants need a language. The language operates through repetition of small elements such as syllables, words, sentences, as well as the conventions of language and usage. Repetition of these elements in communication is natural and necessary because the reader will recognize a word only if he has met it somewhere before – if there is repetition. So, repetition of simple elements like words registered in the dictionary and even minimal sentences does not necessarily indicate plagiarism, though it is a necessary condition for plagiarism. Yet other elements such as newly coined words or a complex sentence structures account for originality of the work. Borrowing such elements would be more like literary theft – plagiarism.

Further analyzing what part of a narrative, if borrowed, would constitute plagiarism, we must distinguish between form and content. Content includes themes, ideas, and sources. Form implies language and images created through language.

Rereading a modern definition of plagiarism, it is easy to note that the present condemnatory attitude to it stresses not so much content as form. Mallon agrees that “not the matter but the manner” can be plagiarized (10). The theme of a literary work is not a personal

invention of the writer. Theme designates relationships between the conflict of the book and reality; it is the direction where the plot is going. This direction can be the same for many different plots. Theme does not define the work, and thus one writer can take the theme from a work of another and take his plot in the same direction. It may seem to be borrowing in the sense that the writer's work responds to a certain degree to the someone else's work. But it is not really borrowing, much less stealing, since themes come from life; it is not a personal invention.

The same is true for general ideas such as "a man can teach a dog to obey by punishing undesired and rewarding desired behavior." Such ideas cannot be borrowed or plagiarized, for even though they were originated by somebody, they belong to a common pool of thought. An idea can be lifted by anybody from this common pool or even from a published source and developed differently. "Treatment" is what counts. On the other hand, a specific expression of ideas can be plagiarized. Plot is the expression and orderly arrangement of ideas, and therefore a particular plot can be stolen, and its theft can be proved. Such a plagiarizable arrangement of ideas may also be known as a "line of thinking," "development of an idea," approach, or argument. Specific facts may travel freely from one story to another. Like ideas, facts constitute information belonging to a common pool. A person may be the first to record a fact, but further reference to it by another writer is not plagiarism. Even if facts are taken from a written account that involved intellectual labor and bears the mark of individuality such as a newspaper article with a byline, the borrowing of factual material is still legitimate so long as no one can legitimately claim that the presentation or treatment of the facts has been lifted as well. Other source materials – tales, subjective accounts of events, mass media stories, and cultural artifacts – can also be treated as common knowledge. Even though a *selection* of source materials – facts and ideas chosen to convey a particular message – may suggest some intellectual labor,



borrowing the whole selection is still legitimate as long as the outcome is original – the message or treatment is different from that of the initial source. Thus, Oates borrowed not a single detail but many facts from the article in *Life*, but her treatment is so different from media presentations of the same information that hardly anybody would accuse her of plagiarism. Another aspiring author is welcome to take the same facts and treat them differently to write her own story. This writer can use materials either from the newspaper article or from Oates's story as her sources. But such acceptable borrowing pertains only to facts and general ideas. Borrowing an original detail, such as the code of numbers painted on the car, which corresponds to biblical verses, would be plagiarism. The strategy of coding messages through numbers that correspond to a biblical passage is not original. But Oates's specific pattern and its literary use in her story is. Because such coding has happened before in other contexts, we are able to interpret the code in Oates's story. Painting numbers on a car is not original either. Only the combination of inscription, numeric code, and biblical verses in connection with the demonic nature of the character is a sign and result of creativity and as such is plagiarizable.

Verbal expression is the result of language use. Language belongs to everybody and at the same time to nobody, so a singular recurrence of a particular sentence might not result from plagiarism. I pulled a random sentence which I considered “basic” – a simple statement – from London's *The Call of the Wild* and looked for online texts containing the same sentence. I found the same sentence “The driver was perplexed” in three other texts – a spiritual poem, a short story, and an electronically published novel. Since the context was absolutely different and the sentence is so simple, I had no reason to suspect any author of plagiarizing London or each other. Yet when there is a borrowed arrangement of sentences, or when a peculiar phrase, a sentence, or a newly coined word is borrowed, then a suspicion of plagiarism may arise. What proves a case

of plagiarism is the scope of borrowing and the context. Imitating a writing technique, for example stream-of-consciousness narration, is also acceptable. Though it is technically borrowing a characteristic manner of writing, stream-of-consciousness belongs to a common pool of knowledge. Verbal images stand separately. An artistic image such as a metaphor is constructed through comparison of objects on the basis of some real or imagined resemblance, and this combination gives rise to emotional connotations that affect readers' perception of a character, an object, or an event. There are commonly known or trite images which circulate in the public domain together with ideas and facts and constitute common property. However, there are also original choices of objects for comparison reflecting the authorial attitude to his creations – an individual evaluation of specific objects or situations. Borrowing original images or original development and interpretation of trite images would also be robbing an author of his intellectual effort, results of his creative impulse.

## CHAPTER TWO: IS JACK LONDON A PLAGIARIST?

Many readers including Jack London's fans will be surprised to learn that one of his most famous books is heavily indebted to another writer. In February 1907, *The Independent* published a sensational article that detailed significant parallels between London's *The Call of the Wild* (1903) and Egerton R. Young's *My Dogs in the Northland*, published in 1902. Even a cursory glance at the parallel passages as they appear in the article brings to sight striking similarities between Young's and London's works. Both books explore a similar subject – dogs' survival in the North during the Klondike Gold Rush. London's main character, Buck, resembles Young's Jack and Rover Two in breed, appearance, strength, intelligence, and devotion. All three learn to survive against the harsh Northland, endure strict masters, and cope with fearsome rivals. All three fight for and achieve leadership. They often succeed where even native huskies fail.

Most if not all supporting characters in *The Call of the Wild* also find their prototypes among Young's canine companions. Curly, an overly friendly, docile dog in London's narrative, corresponds to Young's Cuffy. Not only do these two Newfoundland dogs display similar traits, but they also have similar sounding names. Both books include cowardly dogs among their characters. London's Billee is the opposite of his belligerent brother Joe. Billee is too friendly and inoffensive. He turns to run when he can't appease his opponent and cries when he is bitten (57-58). Young describes his dog Rover I: "Rover . . . was the most chicken-hearted coward I ever saw. The very sight of the whip set him off in a paroxysm of howlings, and a stern, sharp reproof was met with any amount of comical dog sobs" (173). Rover I, a large animal, would not fight even the smallest dogs.

Some examples really stand out, like that of London's cheating dog Pike that does not pull the sleigh hard enough and hides under the snow in the morning to shirk his share of work. Pike has two prototypes in Young's narrative, Caesar, who refuses to pull the sleigh, and Koon, who hides under the snow. Both books describe an angry one-eyed dog that loves the toil of the trail and cannot stand being approached on his blind side – London's Sol-leks and Young's Voyager. London also borrowed the image of a broken-hearted dog and that of a dog doctor from Egerton Young.

London adopted a great number of minor plot details from Young's *My Dogs in the Northland*. London's Buck travels to a buyer by an express train. He is neither fed nor given water, which, together with confinement, turns him into a roaring beast. He arrives on the third day of his travel. Four people carry the cage-like crate with the dog and then retreat to the top of a wall to watch in safety. All these details are taken from the chapter about Rover II in *My Dogs in the Northland*. London's "man with a red sweater" (49) breaks Buck in much the same way Young disciplines his Rover II and Jack. London's Buck learns to build a nest in the snow and then uses his acute sense of wind direction to find a leeward place for sleep. Young's Rover I follows the same practice of building a sheltered nest in the snow. A "dainty eater" (62), Buck is often robbed of his food before he can finish it. His sleeping nest was once invaded too. Rover I, "a dainty, slow eater" (177), turns to human help to rescue his food and sleeping grounds.

Both books depict hungry huskies attacking a camp and devouring the grub, including bacon, a leather whip, and a pair of moccasins. Another episode describes regular night howling of huskies and appears first in Young's book and then in London's novel. Dogs in both narratives fall through the ice and then have to be "unthawed" by the fire on the trail. Dog snow shoes are an unusual comic detail that appears in both books. Young writes that "Rover . . . had

not the hard, firm, compact feet of the Huskies” (191). London echoes the detail: “Buck’s feet were not so compact and hard as the feet of the huskies” (70). Buck gets a pair of dog snow shoes just as Young’s Rover II does. These shoes work so well to protect the dogs’ tender feet from the snow and ice that Rover “would deliberately throw himself on his back, and putting up his feet, eloquently even if mutely, thus plead for his warm shoes”(Young 193). Like Rover, “Buck lay on his back, his four feet waving appealingly in the air, and refused to budge without them” (London 70). Breaking a dog into a sleigh, fighting for leadership, and river ice melting from the bottom are among other episodes adopted by London to form the framework of *The Call of the Wild*.

In other places, London’s borrowing extends to the language itself. London either makes superfluous changes in word choice, closely paraphrases, or reorganizes, and sometimes transplants whole phrases intact.

Young:

[Rover II] had had neither food nor drink . . . .  
The result was he became simply furious with his confinement and neglect (184).

London:

Buck neither ate nor drank . . . (48). For two days and nights he neither ate nor drank, and during those two days and nights of torment, he accumulated a fund of wrath . . . (49).

When at length Rover had eaten his full allowance he would leisurely return to his carefully prepared nest-like resting place in the snow, and almost invariably he found it

But when Buck finished his ration and returned, he found his nest occupied (66).

occupied (178).

[Voyager] ever resented being silently approached on his blind side (144).

Once harnessed, there was a great transformation in him [Voyager]. This sullen, sulky, timid dog became the most alert and active of them all (145).

At every blow struck on the outside of the box, he [Rover II] would spring at the place inside . . . (188).

[Huskies] cared not for the . . . clubs and execrations hurled at them in the rear (57).

[T]he ice wears thin from below and there is the danger to all who venture on it . . . (162).

[Sol-leks] did not like to be approached on his blind side (58).

They [Sol-leks and Dave] were new dogs, utterly transformed by the harness. All passiveness and unconcern had dropped from them. They were alert and active, anxious that the work should go well . . . (60).

Buck rushed at the splintering wood . . . .  
Wherever the hatchet fell on the outside, he was there on the inside . . . (49).

The clubs fell on them [huskies] unheeded (67).

[The ice] ate away from beneath . . . . And amid all this . . . like wayfarers to death, staggered the two men, the woman, and the huskies (103).

The juxtaposition of passages from both books in *The Independent* seemed to prove that, in composing *The Call of the Wild*, London plagiarized from *My Dogs in the Northland*. In case there were any doubts left, the introduction to the article says: “Our readers will remember that Mr. London has recently been accused of plagiarizing part of his current novel, ‘Before Adam,’ from Stanley Waterloo’s ‘Story of Ab, the Cave-Man.’” The reminder that London had already been accused of plagiarism immediately set the accusatory mood of the article. Even today, the article is shocking. After all, *The Call of the Wild* is one of London’s most well known novels, and it is widely translated and taught in high schools and colleges all over the world. It is included in anthologies of American literature as a vivid example of American naturalism and Jack London’s writing. How can a great book by a great writer be the result of plagiarism?

*The Call of the Wild* is not an isolated example of Jack London’s use of previously published works. A year earlier London had to explain the composition of his story “Love of Life,” published in *McClure’s Magazine* in 1905. The *New York World* pointed out striking similarities between London’s story and Augustus Bridle’s and J.K. MacDonald’s article “Lost in the Land of the Midnight Sun,” published four years earlier in the same magazine. The setting of London’s story is identical with the time and location of Charles Bunn’s true adventure. The general plot of “Love of Life” mirrors the major events of Bridle’s and MacDonald’s article. Like Charles Bunn, the main character of London’s story injures his ankle; carries and gradually disposes of many belongings, including a treasured item; and comes very close to death. He is deserted by his comrade, pursued by a wolf, and is rescued by chance. There are similarities of season, fauna, bodily sensations, equipment, and minor plot events. For instance, both men use their pants to fashion shoes for their raw feet, throw rocks at birds in an effort to get food, and follow a stream in the course of their travel. London also recycled much of the language of the

article. Phrases originally used by Bridle and McDonald appear in London's narrative either unchanged or slightly paraphrased. Charles Bunn "forgot [his companions] Tremblee and Bell and the cache. The fifty-pound pack on his back had no weight. It was simply a day of murderous hunger" (156). London's nameless character "was not concerned with the land of little sticks, nor with Bill and the cache under the upturned canoe by the River Dease. He was mastered by the verb 'to eat.' He was hunger-mad" (150). Bunn "tore the bottom from his trouser legs as high as the knee to wrap up his feet" (157). London's man "ripped off his pants' legs to the knees and bound them about his feet" (151).

In a letter to S. S. McClure, editor of *McClure's Magazine*, London acknowledged the borrowing but argued that using newspaper and magazine publications is "a common practice of authors . . . recommended by all the instructors in the art of the short story" (London, *Letters* 568-71). He pointed out that "Lost in the Land of the Midnight Sun" is "a narrative of fact, . . . not fiction, . . . not literature" (London, *Letters* 568-71). London claimed that he merged "the facts of life" from Bridle's and McDonald's narrative with the information collected elsewhere, including his personal experience and his knowledge "of the hardship and suffering and starvation of hundreds and thousands of other men" (London, *Letters* 565-71). London concluded that anyone is free to extract the factual content from journalistic accounts and turn it into fiction.

When, prior to publishing the accusations of plagiarism, the editor of *The Independent* wrote to London to alert him, London urged the editor to print both the accusation of plagiarism and his response. London's defense is interesting because it raises questions of authorship and legitimate uses of sources. He extends the understanding of a legitimate source from newspaper and magazine publications of true accounts, as in case with "Lost in the Land of the Midnight



Sun,” to any non-fiction publications. In his opinion, anything that is not a fruit of a writer’s imagination constitutes factual material and can be used to create fiction. London wrote the following to the editor of *The Independent*:

By all means go ahead and publish that article that accuses me of plagiarism of many passages in *The Call of the Wild*. So far as concerns the source of much of my material in *The Call of the Wild* being Egerton R. Young’s *My Dogs in the Northland*, I plead guilty. A couple of years ago, in the course of writing to Mr. Young, I mentioned the same fact, and thanked him for the use his book had been to me.

I wish, however, that you would get the writer of the said article to include in it a definition of what constitutes plagiarism.

Mr. Young’s book, *My Dogs in the Northland*, was a narrative of fact, giving many interesting true details of his experiences with dogs in the Northland. Fiction-writers have always considered actual experiences of life to be a lawful field for exploration – in fact, every historical novel is a sample of fictional exploitation of published narratives of fact.

Take an instance from the article accusing me of plagiarism, now in your hands – that of the dog that lay down on its back with its paws in the air and begged for moccasins. This happened to one of Mr. Young’s dogs, and I exploited it in my story. But suppose that I am in the Klondike. Suppose this incident occurs with one of my dogs. I can utilize this material in a story, can I not? Agreed. Now suppose it doesn’t happen with my dog, but with some one else’s dog, but that I happen to see that incident. May I use it? Again agreed. Now, however, I do not

see the incident, but the man with whose dog it occurred tells me about it. May I use it? Again agreed. A step further, instead of telling about it, a man writes the incident, not in a story, but in a plain narrative of incidents. May I use it in a story? And if not, why not?

Another instance. In the course of writing my *Sea-Wolf*, I wanted to exploit a tumor and its ravages on the brain of a man. I asked my family physician for data. It happened that he was the author of a brochure upon tumors on the brain. He turned this brochure over to me. In it was everything all written out. I used the material. Was it plagiarism? His brochure was not fiction. It was a compilation of facts and real happenings, in a non-fiction form.

And so it was with Mr. Young's *My Dogs in the Northland*. Really, to charge plagiarism in such a case is to misuse the English language. To be correct, "sources of materials used in *The Call of the Wild*" should be substituted for "Plagiarism" (London, *Letters* 667-68).

London readily acknowledged that he used Young's book as a source and claimed that he had actually thanked Young for allowing him to use the material, which the latter later denied. London also wrote to Egerton Young trying to vindicate himself. London insisted on the appropriateness of his borrowing "the facts" – characters and incidents from Young's book. However, London never commented on his borrowing of language – particular words and sentences that he adopted with slight paraphrase or even without any changes.<sup>5</sup>

The publication in *The Independent* and London's reply to it raises many questions. If writers want to create a true representation of life in their stories, where can they take their material from? What sources are off limits? Who owns the facts after they are recorded? Do

writers have to acknowledge the sources of their information? What is original, and who is the author of a story based on source materials?

Is Jack London a Plagiarist?

In his letter of explanation, Jack London challenged the authors to define plagiarism and insisted on his sole authorship of *The Call of the Wild*. Previously, we explored the current definitions of authorship and plagiarism and came to understand that literary authorship involves one's name and the origin, "fathering," the authority of the writer, and the authenticity and originality of a work; and that plagiarism is an appropriation of language and/or thought. An author is a recognized authority on the subject of his writing. His or her name is associated with the literary work in question. Though the actual origin of the text can be found in many precursory sources, an author originates or "fathers" his work in that one original form known to us. Authorship is closely related to originality. Originality is a question of origin, freshness of perception, individuality of treatment, or evidence of creative intellectual work done by the writer. If a writer takes an old theme or a common event and creatively treats it so that the final product is perceived as new and fresh and bears the mark of the writer's individuality, then the writer becomes the author of an original piece. Originality is a desired quality, but it often results from combining new and traditional elements. For example, a new treatment of an old theme can result in an original story about star-crossed lovers in modern New York, as in *West Side Story's* updating of *Romeo and Juliet*, or a traditional approach to a new subject can produce an original narrative, such as a hypothetical story about struggle for survival among prison inmates.

We also agreed that there is a common pool of knowledge or a territory of public domain. A writer is free to use this common pool of information. Published works generously supply the

common pool with facts and characters, often inspiring other writers. While borrowing basic ideas is usually acceptable, borrowing the pattern or sequence of ideas is not. The pattern or sequence of ideas constitutes the chief evidence for plagiarism. Borrowing somebody else's argument is stealing somebody's thought. At the same time, general ideas, themes, subjects, actual characters, and setting cannot be plagiarized even if they are borrowed from another work because they also belong to the common pool of knowledge and information or public domain accessible to anyone. To recap:

- A basic idea cannot be plagiarized because ideas belong to the public domain, but a sequence or individual arrangement of ideas constitutes a pattern. A borrowed pattern or a specific treatment of ideas is plagiarism.
- The theme and subject of writing can be freely appropriated by an author after a previous author has already explored it, because themes and subjects do not belong to an individual; they constitute the facts and situations of life. Borrowing the specific treatment of the theme or the subject is borrowing the pattern and therefore is plagiarism.
- A real-life character or setting also belong to the common pool of knowledge, and it can be used as a source by different writers.

Is Jack London an Author?

Thomas Mallon describes the anxiety of influence that seizes upon some writers who fear being derivative and inferior to their predecessors. Mallon advises these writers "to loot boldly, in broad daylight" (25-26). Oates followed the advice and "looted" the article in *Life* for the setting, conflict, and characters of "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" She carefully sorted out the facts and retained the most intriguing details, such as Schmid's makeup

and stuffed boots, his peculiar eloquence, and his strange fascination with teenage girls and popular music, making them the focal point of her own story. Oates drew upon biblical verse for the title of her story and the numerical riddle inside the narration. She also acknowledged that her writing was inspired by Bob Dylan's song.

I find Mallon's words about bold looting fully applicable to London as well. London drew on many sources in his writing. More than that, finding it difficult to come up with an original idea but being able to splendidly develop one, London was on a quest to find things to write about. He made the most of his short experience in the Klondike, scoured the writings of other Klondike authors, and meticulously clipped newspapers looking for the seeds from which he could grow his stories. His practice shows a tremendous amount of work prior to composing and a determination to "hunt down" ideas for his writing, but this practice is not unusual among fiction writers. The history of Oates's composition of her story "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" is an example of source study and adaptation very similar to London's writing of "Love of Life." Oates and London kept the cast of characters very close to that of original stories and developed their plots in the same direction as their sources. Both transplanted unchanged a number of minor details of setting, character, and plot.

The second part of Mallon's statement, that an author should "alchemize" (25 - 26) the loot to create something authentic, also describes London's and Oates's approach. In "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" Oates merges several victims into one character, Connie. She also blends the images of real-life victims with a general idea of a teenage girl who is often irrational and impulsive, interested in pop music, and longing for romance and adventure. When Oates entered Connie's mind to look at the world through the teenage girl's eyes, much of what Connie saw derives from Oates's knowledge and her perception of teenage

culture. She reduced the number of accomplices to one silent, sinister figure in Friend's shadow, his friend Ellie. Oates was initially intrigued by a number of striking details of Schmid's case, but she developed these details in a new way and took her story where Schmid and Alleen Rowe had never been – the world of the supernatural. The same "alchemizing" is easily seen in London's work. London gathered material from all possible sources including printed matter such as newspapers, magazines, books, and brochures. But from the borrowed material he molded a meaning that was all his. Almost every usage of a borrowed character, event or description, in *The Call of the Wild* has a reason to be in the story because in some way it contributes to the overall meaning.

Before we look at the specific characters of *The Call of the Wild* borrowed from Young's narrative, let us consider several points. In contrast to London's well organized and coherent novel, Young's book is a collection of dog stories, each of which can be read separately from the others. There is no conflict within or among them. The narration does not convey any central theme. Each chapter describes a different dog. A typical chapter starts by telling the readers how a dog was acquired and ends by telling how the dog died or how it was given to another owner. Young's narration is interesting primarily because it describes real-life adventures and contains his observations and memories. Egerton Young carefully wrote down the events that happened to him and his many dogs while he was a missionary in the North. As far as we know, he did not deviate from facts, and the dogs of his story are the real dogs that he had. His published narrative is accompanied by the pictures of him and his dogs. London's dogs are fictional creations even though they strongly remind one of Young's companions. When the facts about a real dog accorded with London's understanding of a character, he kept the detail. Otherwise, he changed it or omitted it.

Young's Jack of *My Dogs in the Northland* is a St. Bernard simply because that is what he was in real life. London's Buck is a half St. Bernard and a half shepherd. Perhaps London reasoned that a larger gene pool would produce a healthier dog, better able to adapt to a changing environment. His smaller size allowed Buck to survive on a smaller ration than a purebred St. Bernard would need. This adaptability enables Buck to go through all the changes London has in store for him. At first, Buck is a civilized dog unfit for the harsh conditions of the North and to the labor of the trail. However, he has some potential for adaptation, physical build, strength, and, most important, imagination – traits that London borrows from Young's Jack. The meager amount of food that a husky can survive on is not enough for Buck, so he learns to steal from other dogs and even from the men although it goes against his "civilized" principles.

Young's Jack and Rover II do not fundamentally change throughout the narration. They learn discipline and new tricks, but they do not develop new personalities. In the end, they are the same good-natured and friendly dogs as they were in the beginning. They are still human companions and servants, and they belong to the world of people to the end.

Also, Young's dogs do not die heroically. Jack dies of an infected wound, and Rover II of distemper. Their deaths are accidental. But London's Buck survives numerous battles and adventures to become a pack leader and a legend. Buck's survival is London's conclusion, from whatever angle one approaches the novel. The dog achieves mastery; the fittest survives; the influences of civilization recede; and Buck returns to his biological roots, to a primordial animal state.

London also changes the fates of other characters borrowed from Young to support his purposes. He kills off Curly early in the novel to teach Buck another law of the new world. Dave does not die as quickly as his prototype Voyager; London has him perish slowly to emphasize

the dog's adamant love of work and his inability to live without it. Sol-leks dies still in the traces, falling through the ice together with the train and his masters. London also introduces new characters who do not have prototypes in *My Dogs in the Northland*: Buck's masters, the mail carriers Perrault and Francois; the amateur travelers Hal, Charles and Mercedes; and, finally, his last and most beloved owner, Thornton.

Many episodes of *The Call of the Wild* are written to show how Buck is slowly changing from a civilized dog to a primordial animal. In *My Dogs in the Northland*, huskies howl at night and annoy Young and his companions. The men get used to it and are not longer disturbed by it. That is all there is to it – just another sketch of routine life in the North. But when London's Buck finally joins the choir of howling huskies in a similar episode, it is to show the reader his gradual descent into a primitive nature. The story of the heart-broken Voyager is another curious incident in Young's narration. London turns this into an illustration of what happens to a dog without Buck's imagination. Even if spared other misfortunes, the dog whose sole purpose in life is to work sooner or later becomes unable to do so and dies as a result of displacement. But a dog with imagination can adapt to many changes, as Buck does to the law of fang and club.

When London took the characters from *My Dogs in the Northland*, it was not literary theft or plagiarism, simply because the characters were real, not fictional. London did not steal anything produced by Young's imagination, though he took many facts from Young's detailed and true narrative and "alchemized" them –stretching the truth sometimes, exaggerating the details, supplying an alternative ending.

London often used different source materials and combined or changed the details to produce a desired effect. His Buck blends features of Young's Jack and Rover II. London also mentioned that there was a real-life dog he actually met who contributed to the creation of Buck.



Young's disciplining methods were far more humane than those of the "man in a red sweater," who beat Buck senseless. There were never any friendly feelings between the man and Buck; the episode is meant to teach Buck the "law of the club." But Young writes with affection for his dogs and depicts their devotion to him. In London's book, there is one master that wins Buck's devotion and more – Thornton. There is much more than devotion between the two; for Buck, there is almost supernatural admiration, a willingness to give his life for the man and for Thornton, sincere friendship and love. This relationship with the man becomes the last link holding Buck to the civilized world he once fully belonged to. Buck is away from the camp for long periods of time, but the connection with Thornton makes him return again and again. Even after the connection is forcefully severed and Thornton is killed by the Indians, Buck does one more thing that places him apart from the rest of the animal world: he avenges Thornton's death and keeps his memory. The death of Young's Jack is not glorious – the dog dies when he cannot cleanse his wound because it is too far on his back. But London's Buck survives all the hardships and remains to rule a pack of wolves and to become a legend.

These minor and major deviations from the borrowed material create a story with multiple meanings. Even as an animal story for children, *The Call of the Wild* is focused and intense, unlike Young's amusing but anecdotal narration. As a children's story, Buck's tale has a moral; it urges one to learn and make the best of the situation. Interesting details provide continuous entertainment when something happens on every page. As a naturalistic novel, London's story encompasses and illustrates the principles of naturalism. As far as a common reader can tell, the narration is true to life. There are interjections of a more or less scientific nature when London comments on the motives of his characters. The narrative deals with a society constituted by the team of dogs and men and the moral values they exhibit. *The Call of*

*the Wild* is often interpreted as an autobiographical narrative. Buck's struggle to adapt, learn, and survive is compared to Jack London's trying to survive and succeed in the world of writers.

When London borrowed the characters and episodes from Young, it was a perfectly legitimate usage of "the facts of life." However the question of parallel language remains. Technically speaking, London appropriated some of Young's language. Because the genre of fiction does not provide any conventional form of citation within the narrative, parts of London's text look like plagiarism if taken out of the novelistic context. The article from *The Independent* does just that in order to create an accusatory effect. Furthermore, one can argue that there are, after all, not that many ways to state the same fact. For instance, in how many different ways can one explain that a dog could not stand being approached on its blind side? Young's dog "resented being approached on the blind side," and London's dog simply "did not like to be approached on his blind side." The very nature of this detail inevitably evokes such vocabulary as "blind side," and "approach." On the other hand, in other instances London could have easily paraphrased or otherwise invented new language to avoid parallelism with Young's narrative. Since London himself claimed that once he found the idea for a story, he could easily develop it, why did he not avoid appropriating Young's language? Was it the result of sloppy note-taking or was London simply too lazy and self-assured to change the language more thoroughly?

However, to say that London stole Young's intellectual labor is an exaggeration because the passages that London used in *The Call of the Wild* are merely statements of facts. There are no figures of speech or complex sentences involved that demonstrate creative effort on Young's part. Young simply recorded the facts, and London used them as the foundation for his novel. Finally, the somewhat overdone language borrowing resulted in the narrative that meets our criteria of originality: the novel is perceived as new, and London significantly contributed to its

creation intellectually and emotionally. In other words, if we agree that London's usage of source materials for *The Call of the Wild* produced an original work, there is no "literary theft." Agreed, London slightly deviated from fair use when he appropriated Young's utterances unchanged, but London pursued different goals, and the thought behind utterances similar to Young's was original.

### Originality and Authorship of *The Call of the Wild*

Much of the theme of *The Call of the Wild* depends upon London's adaptation of the evolutionary theories of Charles Darwin. The Darwinist point of view is obvious in London's presentation of such moments as "the law of club and fang" (55), the fight for survival and domination and Buck's primitive instincts and inherited memories. Yet London has not been accused of plagiarizing Darwin's ideas. But Darwin's theories are based on facts and ideas – not much different in their basic form from Young's observations. The essence of borrowing from Darwin and borrowing from Young is the same, though the impact may seem different. Darwin's ideas were in wide circulation, and when one recognizes them in London's narrative, one sees them as shared knowledge, not theft. If every reader knew as much about Young's dogs as about Darwinism, the obvious parallels would probably be treated with the same stance as we treat recognizable characters in a historical novel – the similarities are natural and acceptable. What matters more in a literary work is the individual treatment of an idea or fact. The authorial contribution to the old and known makes for the originality and brings us the pleasure of discovery.

London's novel is undoubtedly original in its effect – it is perceived as different from *My Dogs in the Northland* in its genre, in its agenda, and in its plot. And of course, it reads

differently from any Darwinist work. The way the details, incidents, and characters are chosen and combined, “alchemized” as Thomas Mallon would say, creates a whole story rather than separate narratives and gives an effect of freshness, like something that one is reading for the first time. Though many details are taken from *My Dogs in the Northland*, London treats them differently than Young. London applies Darwinist ideas to the facts of life he found in Young’s narrative, altering here and there to achieve the desired effect. He does not stop there but also gives other new meanings to the borrowed incidents and thus completely appropriates them, makes them his own. Like a Freudian child, London plays with different meanings in the text, enacts different roles. He hints at the parallels between his own fight for survival and that of Buck and shares the love of adventure and learning with the dog character. Later in life, London seems to share the nobility and wisdom of older Buck.

London’s combination of Young’s facts and Darwin’s theories is a creative act. As far as we know, London independently invented and developed certain scenes, for example the supernatural understanding between Buck and Thornton, Thornton’s rescue, Buck’s careful plotting to undermine Sol-leks’s leadership in the sleigh team, etc. These scenes are evidence of London’s own intellectual effort. Though the majority of characters are borrowed, but for London’s impact on his characters, it would be impossible to read the novel as an autobiography.

Definitely, *The Call of the Wild* meets several criteria of originality – the novel is certainly perceived as new; it is different from Young’s book in genre, style, plot and form; London changes the borrowed facts to enrich the novel with meaning that witnesses his individual intellectual work.

London’s own understanding of authorship is also revealed in *The Call of the Wild*, for he definitely put “the stamp of self” – individual treatment – on the narrative and did not deviate

from his general philosophy of life. London advised a beginning writer to use “the world with its traditions” and to take “straight from the source” (*No Mentor* 8). He followed his own advice, even though sometimes he interpreted the term “straight from the source” to mean lifting facts from printed sources. The “stamp of self” is London’s recognizable style. His working philosophy is his public image of a man who has been to the extremes and who knows what life is about. London also postulated that having “something to say” allows the author to use in his works “that which is not himself but which is viewed and weighted by himself” or, in other words, to use the source materials creatively (*No Mentor* 9).

The originality of *The Call of the Wild* shines through London’s style and treatment. The novel conveys London’s views and ideas he was fascinated by; it allows multiple interpretations. One of these interpretations is connected with London’s own persona and thus ties the novel with London on yet another level. Knowing how much of the story was actually borrowed from *My Dogs in the Northland*, one can but admire the creative work behind the emerged characters and rendered situations. London is the undeniable author of his novel, and yet the book is so heavily indebted to *My Dogs in the Northland* that it calls for acknowledgement on London’s part.

In terms of the previously used parental metaphor, London would definitely be the “father” in terms of authority, naming, recognized ownership and other rights to his creation. But there is also Egerton Young, the “mother,” who gave life to *The Call of the Wild*’s characters and situations. Without Young’s *My Dogs in the Northland*, Jack London’s *The Call of the Wild* would never have been written. What London did to the facts he found in Young’s story is similar to how Oates used the *Life* article. Both extracted the factual material and created something new. In both cases, one can argue that the general development of the fictional narrative resembles the non-fictional publication. London and Oates preserved many original

details. As a matter of fact, they constructed a carcass from the given details and then grew flesh on it by using their imagination. And yet nobody accuses Oates of plagiarism, while London faced the charge more than once. Why do their approaches receive such different treatment? If illustrating ideas of Darwin with fictional situations is acceptable, if composing fiction about historical personas is also acceptable, then why is London blamed for using the facts recorded by Young in his novel? The only accusation that makes sense is that London indeed borrowed some of Young's language more or less intact. It is necessary, however, to consider the context of the borrowing. London appropriated factual material which I argue constitutes legitimate use of sources. While transplanting the facts from *My Dogs in the Northland* to *The Call of the Wild*, London was supposed to change the wording of the facts. Yet he was not consistent and kept some of Young's language in the process of faulty note-taking or sheer laziness. However, the scope of language borrowing and the original context of the novel protect London from charges of plagiarism. Knowing how much of *The Call of the Wild* was not actually originated by London does not undermine either the novel's value or London's position among the greatest writers of our time. If we expect a writer to realistically re-create life in his fiction, we must also expect him to study and use sources.

London's use of sources is on the borderline of legitimate. As London asked in his letter to the editor of *The Independent*, the question of the borders is left unanswered – when does one have to stop when appropriating factual material from a printed source? Should all non-fictional publications count as commonly accessible sources of facts or should any be open to limited use only? Should the authorship be divided when the text originates from several recognized sources? Perhaps we should redefine “authorship” itself.

In the light of recent technological advances which affect the creation and distribution of texts, the view of the author as the authoritarian father in control of the textual meaning seems outdated. What if the author is instead the mother of a text, a living person who indeed gives birth to a literary work after being impregnated with many ideas and after she “alchemizes,” blends, and develops them inside her mind until they grow into a whole organism able to continue on its own? After the text emerges, the proud mother can stand aside and only watch how her child grows rich with interpretations or inspires other works. The mother has no real control over its meaning once the text comes out in public.

The previous literary heritage together with other possible sources will then pose as multiple fathers who inspire the text by giving their seeds of thought to the mother. Fatherhood of a literary work can be claimed, proved, or excluded just like biological parenthood. The motherhood is undeniable, but she does not claim the text to be her sole property, because it is obvious that she used some help in creating her child. Nor does she try to keep the child under her control knowing that to grow and live it needs to exercise its free will.

If this attempt to redefine authorship fails altogether or if a new definition becomes outdated too, that could be the sign that authorship is a useless category in the world of modern writing. The reader partakes in the creation of hypertext perhaps a bit less than its other “authors,” but then only the reader has access to the growing product. Hypertext is like a tree planted from a seed in the garden, spurred to grow by the sun, air, and nutrients. The reader becomes the gardener who does not simply watch the tree grow but who cuts and shapes it to his liking.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See Franklin Walker, "Jack London's Use of Sinclair Lewis Plots Together With a Printing of Three of the Plots," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 17, no. 1 (November 1953): 57-54. Jack London, *No Mentor But Myself: Jack London on Writers and Writing*, eds. Dale Walker and Jeanne Campbell Reesman (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1999), 127-28, rpt. in *Letters From Jack London* (1965).

<sup>2</sup> Jack London's short story "To Build a Fire" was first published in *The Century Magazine* 76 (August, 1908): 525-534. This is the revised version of a children's story first published in the *Youth's Companion* on May 29, 1902. The story is based on an event described in Jeremiah Lynch's autobiographical book *Three Years in the Klondike: A Gold Miner's Life in Dawson City, 1898-1901* (1904).

"Love of Life" was first printed in *McClure's Magazine* 26 (December 1905). It is based on Augustus Bridle's and J.K. MacDonald's article "Lost in the Land of the Midnight Sun," published in *McClure's* 18 (Dec. 1901): 152-60.

<sup>3</sup> See "Is Jack London a Plagiarist?" *The Independent* 62 (1906): 373-75.

<sup>4</sup> Stanley Waterloo accused London of plagiarizing his novel *The Story of Ab*. See JL to Waterloo, October 20, 1906, and February 15, 1908; and JL to B.W. Babcock, December 3, 1906, *The Letters of Jack London*, vol. 2.

<sup>5</sup> See *New York Times Saturday Review of Books* (March 1907): 146 and Jack London, "Letter to Egerton R. Young," *The Letters of Jack London*, 679-80.



## WORKS CITED

- “Author.” *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1989.
- Barthes, Ronald. “The Death of the Author.” *Critical Theory Since Plato*. Revised Edition. Ed. Hazard Adams. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992. 1130-1133.
- Black, Henry Campbell. *Black’s Law Dictionary*. 7<sup>th</sup> ed. Ed. Bryan A. Garner. St. Paul, MN: West Group, 1999.
- Boyle, James *Shamans, Software, and Spleens. Law and the Construction of the Information Society*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1996.
- Bridle, Augustus and J.K. MacDonald. "Lost in the Land of the Midnight Sun." *McClure's Magazine* 18 (Dec. 1901): 152-60.
- Cassirer, Ernst. “Art.” *Critical Theory Since Plato*. Revised Edition. Ed. Hazard Adams. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992. 926-943
- Charvat, William. *The Profession of Authorship in America: 1800-1870*. New York: Columbia UP, 1992.
- Foucault, Michael. “What is an Author?” *The Foucault Reader*. Ed. Paul Rabinow. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984. 101-120.
- Freud Sigmund. “Creative Writers and Daydreaming.” *Critical Theory Since Plato*. Revised Edition. Ed. Hazard Adams. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992. 712-716.
- Gaines, Jane. *Contested Culture. The Image, The Voice, and The Law*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina UP, 1991.
- Gibaldi, Joseph. *The MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1998.
- “Is Jack London a Plagiarist?” *The Independent* 62 (1906): 373-375.
- Keats, John. “Letter to George and Thomas Keats.” *Critical Theory Since Plato*. Revised Edition. Ed. Hazard Adams. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992. 494.
- , “Letter to Richard Woodhouse.” *Critical Theory Since Plato*. Revised Edition. Ed. Hazard Adams. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992. 494.
- London, Jack. *The Call of the Wild, White Fang and Other Stories*. Ed. Andrew Sinclair. New York: Penguin, 1981.

- , *The Letters of Jack London*. Ed. Earle Labor, Robert C. Leitz, III, and I. Milo Shepard. Vol. 2. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford UP, 1988.
- , *No Mentor but Myself: Jack London on Writers and Writing*. Eds. Dale L. Walker and Jeanne Campbell Reesman. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1999.
- Mallon, Thomas. *Stolen Words. Forays into the Origins and Ravages of Plagiarism*. New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1989.
- Merriam Webster Online Dictionary*. 2003. Merriam-Webster, Incorporated. 13 November 2003 <<http://www.merriam-webster.com/cgi-bin/dictionary?originality>>.
- “Originality.” *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1989.
- “Plagiarism.” *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1989.
- Quirk, Tom. “A Source for ‘Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?’” *Studies in Short Fiction* 18.4 (1981): 413-420
- Salzman, Maurice. *Plagiarism: The “Art” of Stealing Literary Material*. Los Angeles: Parker, Stone and Baird, 1931.
- “Singular Similarity of a Story Written by Jack London and One Printed Four Years Before a New Literary Puzzle.” *New York World* 19 April 1906: 1E
- Wordsworth, William. “Preface to the Second Edition of Lyrical Ballads.” *Critical Theory Since Plato*. Revised Edition. Ed. Hazard Adams. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992. 437-446.
- Young, Egerton R. *My Dogs in Northland*. London: S.W. Partridge & Company, 1902.