

## A Post-Darwinian Fable: Canine Narration in *The Call of the Wild*

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### Abstract

The paper reads Jack London's *The Call of the Wild* as a post-Darwinian fable that challenges the anthropomorphism and sentimentality in the notoriously charged genre of the animal fable. London's post-Darwinian representation of canine narration in an evolutionary continuum seeks to deconstruct the inherent hierarchy embedded in the fable. Through a reconciliation of the animal fable's internal and external conflict, London aims to draw an ethical critique of amoral aspects of social Darwinism that underlies the American industry culture at the turn of the century. The remapping of humanity/animality, progression/regression, and the society/the wild within a bispecies environment for coevolution embodies London's endeavor to rescue the reputation of the genre of fable from a conventional naturalist mode. London's proclaimed vigor and science in the critique of animal fable further aspire to redeem the feminized professionalism of writing.

**Keywords:** Anthropomorphized Genre, Animal Fable, Canine Narration, Culture

### 1. Introduction

In his 1907 essay *Men Who Misinterpret Nature*, President Theodore Roosevelt attacked Jack London's dog stories for being "nature fakery" (p. 367). Taking the fight between lynx and dog-wolf as inconceivable to exist, the President expressed fears that London's beast stories were nothing close to the "heart of the wild" and as animal fables, they failed "the purpose of teaching the natural history" (1926, p. 367). In response to the harsh criticism, London (1908) claims that the writing of *The Call of the Wild* and *White Fang* is simply a "protest against humanizing animals" (p. 109). To better evidence the natural truth, London stresses that the canine protagonists' behavior is directed "by instinct, sensation, and emotion, and by simple reasoning" that differentiates human's abstract reasoning (p. 109). The famous controversy centers on the question that whether London's animal fables contain any truth. Criticism abounds on the dispute for centuries in a sophisticated way among activists for animal rights, sociologists, and others. My aim is not to continue to pursue a scientific investigation of details of natural truth but to interrogate the source of London's ambivalence of natural truth in the form of fables. Despite his public divergence from molding anthropomorphized animal characters, London admits, only after the writing of *The Call of the Wild*, that "I pleaded guilty" for the allegorical nature of the work (p. 252). Jack's unconscious reveals the writer's conflicted mind: how to dehumanize animals or insert scientific observation into a fable that has been notoriously charged as an anthropomorphized genre. According to Pizer (2011), a fable seeks "to establish the validity of a particular moral truth by offering a brief story in which plot, character, and setting are allegorical agents of a paraphrasable moral" (p. 4). It is the allegorical nature that brings the recognizable human traits that please human beings. London finds it hard to escape narrating animality without humanity in the inevitable use of the form of the fable.

This paper intends to investigate how Jack London reinvented the genre of animal fable and how London addressed human-nonhuman relationships in *The Call of the Wild*. London's interrogation of anthropomorphism and sentimentality could extend

the understanding of the relationship between human and nonhuman species at the beginning of the twentieth century. Moreover, London's new perspective of animal fable echoes What Danta (2018) terms as a post-Darwinian fable.

## 2. Review of the Genre of Animal Fable

In the excellent re-evaluation of the animal stories, Danta (2018) proposes that instead of obtaining human superiority by "looking up" to the gods, beast fables better provide a "down to earth" approach to ascertaining a human's place in nature (p. 4). Danta's studies aim to break the vertical metaphor that human beings are higher animals. The tradition can be traced back to the medieval idea of the great chain of being, a Christianization of Aristotle's scale of nature. In line with the distance from God, the great chain of being organizes nature as a static vertical order rising from inanimate matter at the bottom to plants, animals, humans, angels, and finally, God at the top. To maintain the hierarchy, the humanist tradition of praising language as evidence of human superiority over animals has been emphasized by thinkers like Aristotle, Descartes, and Lacan. The fable is originally a process of transforming humans into animals and in Danta's argument, a post-Darwinian fable forces reader to confront their grotesque apehood. The post-Darwinian or grotesque fable thus serves to critique the vertical metaphor of hierarchy and a reconceptualized human place in nature. What Danta's post-Darwinian fable indicates is, in essence, a mitigation of prejudice of anthropomorphism in animal fables. London's canine narration, greatly inspired by Darwinism, compels him to reconsider the contradiction between scientific observation and a biased form of hierarchy. The result is not a reconciliation, but an attempt to achieve a scientific understanding of the anthropomorphism in animal fable.

London's careful understanding is firmly grounded in a dynamic view of Darwinism. As early as high school, London read Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* and Herbert Spencer's Darwin-influenced *First Principles* (1994). It is generally agreed that evolution has greatly influenced London's novels, and in the case of *The Call of the Wild*, probably most predominant are the themes of survival of the fittest and environmental determinism. The canine protagonist is constantly adapting to the laws of the cruel wild so as to survive. But the novel leaves a mystery of why Buck returns to the wild, a regression that counters Spencer's idea of evolutionary progress. The inconsistencies expose London's view of Darwinism is not static. Berkove (2011) notices that Jack London's attitude towards Darwinism is far more complex, maintaining that London is "uncomfortable with evolutionist's amoral aspects" (p. 128). The most dramatic scene is the writing of White Fang as a companion story that reverses the general plot from regression to progression. London's refusal of comfortable settlement of Darwinian, Spencerian, or Huxley's position indicates his negotiation of industry culture and primitive nature in *The Call of the Wild*. Buck mobilizes in regression, a direction from culture to nature. If the traditional fable necessitates a transformation from human to animal as a complete starting and ending process, then London expands the ending from a human-like dog to a wild dog, an enactment of innovating fable from its very end. It is in this free roaming that London explores the problematic humanity and animality manifested in the fable.

Rather than taking the post-Darwinian fable as a vertical metaphor, this paper aims to evaluate London's fable as a horizontal process which that refuses the categorical division between humanity and animality. First, I trace the sentimentalism and anthropomorphism in the fable's traditional recognition which underlies London's unconscious worry of allegorical writing. By basing the story on a dynamic view of Darwinism, the author finds a guide to reconcile the telling conflict in the form of fable writing. Jack's endeavor to separate himself from other animal writers remedies the abuse of the genre of fable from an extremely irreconcilable form between humanity and animality. Furthermore, through incorporating extensive research and scientific observation into the novel, London renders the genre of animal fable from the product of pure imagination to one that demands rigorous physical labor. In this sense, the writer aspires not only to rescue the reputation of the genre of animal fable but also to reaffirm the imperatives of writers' professionalism that once had been corrupted with idleness. In the time of industry culture, London's persistent pursuit of dehumanized animal fable thus becomes exactly an effort to be a "survivor of the fittest" within the market economy.

## 3. "Trouble Is a Friend": The Corrupted Humanized-Animal Fable

When London professes unconscious use of the allegorical nature of the novel, he is more embarrassed than willing to accept the fact that *The Call of the Wild* ostensibly and still belongs to the fable. The guiltiness of using a fable, in London's case, is not an embarrassment of being not serious. The intended divergence from the fable stems from London's insightful ideas about the abuse of the sentimentalized fable and highly humanized animal narration.

As a dog story, *The Call of the Wild* joins a literary subgenre of literary animal stories that have been anthropomorphized for centuries. Anna Swell's *Black Beauty* (1877) marks the first successful animal story. Even though it is written in autobiography, the voice and emotions are evidently human which makes "autobiography" less convincing. Besides the privilege of having an animal to speak and think, writers of animal stories seem reached the same agreement to demilitarize the human world. Compared with the typical narration of the animal transformed from a human, London is much more interested in making the animal world unfamiliar to readers.

The anthropomorphized aspects of the fable are complicated with sentimentality as well. In Ann Douglas's (1995) wonderful research of American Victorian sentimentalist novels, she offers a different insight against the normally biased "sentimentality" (p. 5). Douglas (1995) notices that clergymen and women are united by "the sanction of sentimentalism" to empower them to shatter the stereotypical writing limits (p. 5). It is in this sense that the fable may be abused and discriminated against for the

exhaustive propagation of “matriarchal virtues of nurture, generosity, and acceptance” (Douglas, 1995, p. 11). The writing of animals becomes a tag for female writers’ sentimentality. Even modernist writer Virginia Woolf (1997), before publishing the experimental work of canine biography, expressed her fear of being reviewed as a sentimental “lady prattler” (p. 181). London carefully plots Buck’s brutal growth that evidently exudes masculinity as opposed to the feminization of animal fables. The modification may be seen in London’s most beast stories where the protagonists are male. The same gender as Jack London draws critics’ attention. Berkove (2011) considers it a displaced biography as it shows “Jack London’s own liberation from the pack of men in their competitive society” (p. 116). In his important monograph *Male Call: Becoming Jack London*, Jonathan Auerbach (1996) agrees that “Buck remains London’s most intimate alter ego” (p. 84).

The persistent tendency to anthropomorphize Buck whether it is because of the shared gender trait, historical bias, or the feminization of the genre itself, mirrors the conflict in London’s devise of a dehumanized agent. A more specific question would be how to negotiate the narration of humanity and animality, two generally assumed as categorically different aspects in an animal fable. The pondering on this problem motivates London to reevaluate the concept of humanity and animality under the vogue influence of Darwinism. The contradiction, to some extent, has been inherent in the genre of fable itself besides the external cause of anthropomorphic use of it. A closer look at the internals of the fable is in order.

The fable, by definition, is a didactic form that “seeks to establish the validity of a particular moral truth by offering a brief story in which plot, character, and setting are allegorical agents of a paraphrasable moral” (Prizer, 2011, p. 3). The history of the fable is constantly associated with Aesop, gradually forming a framework where the beasts speak and represent human qualities. The figure of an animal, thus, is considered to only serve as a metaphor for articulating moral truth. However, this highly anthropomorphic feature of the fable has been challenged in recent criticism. It is still hard to ascertain Aesop’s actual existence. What is constantly acknowledged is his identity of being a hideously ugly slave. As Travis (2011) comments, Aesop’s body seems to “query the conventional definitions of what it means to be human” (p. 38). What Travis indicates is that Aesop may incorporate the ugliness of the body (the similar part of human’s contempt for the animal body) into the writing, a result that engenders a new way of using animality to think of human/humanity. In her remarkable study *Aesopic Conversations*, Kurke (2010) concentrates on the grotesque body power of de-hierarchizing human-animal, but also contesting the “high wisdom” which necessitates a clear distinction between “the abjected and the disempowered” (p. 203). Both Travis and Aesop’s argument critically exposes the unstable anthropomorphism in the fable. The alleged allegorical feature in beast stories has been further interrogated by Danta’s exceptional work of animal fables. In *Animal Fables after Darwin*, Danta (2018) takes the “Erect/grotesque” body as a clue to reveal the vertical metaphor that underpins anthropomorphism in the fable (p. 12). By reviewing fable as a way that cuts down the tie between God and humans, the genre itself offers a much more concrete and reasonable way, a “down-to-earthiness” to think of human/humanity since Darwinism acknowledges human and animal living in an evolutionary continuum. Grounded on the theory of evolution, Danta’s insight into the fable destabilizes the vertical hierarchy as well as the distinction between humanity/animality and uses the metamorphosis to urge a conceptualization of humans.

Danta’s flattened hierarchy indeed anticipates the advocates of animal rights and ethologists. But the problem still exists when Danta deconstructs the binary and renders fables into an animated human story. Jack London, by virtue of consistent clarification of the endeavor to dehumanize animals, experiments in coincidence with one crucial aspect of Danta’s study, the potential fluidity between humanity and animality. I argue that London’s canine narration prolongs the ending point of Danta’s so-called post-Darwinian fable. The great influence of Darwinism and London’s professionalism prompts him to consider the fable always as a horizontal process swinging from humanity to animality. The process marks London’s interrogation of the notion of human and animal as well as naturalists’ writing of nature and culture.

#### 4. “Beast as We All Are”: A Post-Darwinian Fable

London’s remapping of the internal and external tension in the fable is mainly manifested in the protagonist’s growth trajectory: from a pet to a wild wolf-dog. The process of dehumanization is probably most evident in the final return to the wild, an ending that declares the deprivation of any superficial human traits. But London’s another dog story, *White Fang*, and contradicts the assumed logic of dehumanization, constructs a different mode that records a barbarous dog’s transformation into a civilized one. The two canine stories have been equally admitted by London as an effort to redeem the anthropomorphic nature of the fable. The opposite modes of development clearly show that the use of humanity/human traits as the criteria for judging whether a fable is humanized or not fails London’s intention. The paper argues that London distorts the traditional conception of a stabilized binary between humanity and animality within an evolutionary continuum to create a multi-species community, a new perspective to review animal fable.

London tries to establish a possibility of independent canine narration, the writing of a dog itself primarily through his shrewd realization of the complexity of the so-called differentiation from humans. “BUCK did not read the newspapers”, the beginning of the novel starts with a clear emphasis on the dog’s incapacity of language (London, 2009, 53). This whole trait has been consistent in the muteness of the canine protagonist. Lack of language however never prevents Buck from communicating with humans. By using a free-indirect style, London allows readers to probe into the dog’s consciousness as well as its difference from human’s. Buck’s expression of love, unlike his masters’ “murmured oath”, is to “seize Thornton’s hand in the mouth” and leaves an indentation that “was akin to hurt” (p. 106). The repetition eventually builds a shared understanding that “Buck understood the oaths to be love words, so the man understood this feigned bite for a caress” (p. 106).

London's narration of such a consensus stems from not a fabulist's imagination but observation. Besides the accordance with the fact that animals are incapable of language, in *The Other Animals*, London (1908) justifies the treatment from his acute observation of his own dog Glen's learning experience of human signals. In another scene when the master Thornton faces death, an idea easily grasped by humans, Buck sees it as "a cessation of movement, as a passing out and away from the lives of the living" (p. 129). Confronted with death, Buck finds "a great void in him, somewhat akin to hunger, but a void which ached and ached, and which food could not fill" instead of the exact feeling generalized by humans (p. 129). As Buck's reaction and mind indicate, London attempts to establish a canine perception that is obviously different from humans. The depiction nevertheless has been collaborated by what ethologist Jakob von Uexküll (2013) terms Umwelt for an organism's perceptual world. Umwelt certainly facilitates London's construction of canine subjectivity. By placing the difference between humans and animals within an evolutionary continuum, London continues to discover the fragility of canine narration free of human color.

What complicates the canine narration is the unavoidable entanglement of humanity. As a naturalist writer who holds a firm belief in environmental determinism, London plants the theme of "survive of the fittest" into the main plot of Buck's growth. Chapter two's title "the law of club and fang" encapsulates Buck's accommodation to the surroundings. From the balmy south to the cold north, Buck is enslaved as transportation of emails. It takes huge pains for Buck to learn how to survive, but with the intelligence and physical strength inherent in his ancestors, he gradually becomes a leader for his peers as well as a countable partner for the master. Buck's glorious life thus fits perfectly into the traditional nineteenth-century Bildungsroman, a process where Buck acquires the identity via moral education of Darwinism (Castle, 2019, p. 143). In this respect, Buck is a dog essentially subjected to the laws of nature which also governs the human world.

What perpetually undermines the prosperous life is Buck's strange calling from the wild. Seen as only the tools for several owners, Buck finally meets Thornton who happens to rescue his life. The cordial relationship between them seems a perfect entertaining ending for the reader, because the mutual love, in Buck's eye, is a genuine emotion that prevails even in the original comfortable life in Judge's house. But as Buck enjoys Thornton's company or "the soft civilizing influence", he realizes "the strain of the primitive, which the Northland had aroused in him, remained alive and active" (p. 106). Eventually, while grieving for the owner's sudden death, Buck returns to the wild as a wolf-dog. The overwhelming popularity and trendy use of the title indeed show London's confidence derives from not his egotism but his attraction to the wild. The wild ending, abrupt as it may be, arrests critics' great attention. Bruni (2007) considers London's insertion of atavism to be an allegory of "anxieties about the loss of the frontier and the resulting depletion of American masculine vitality" (p. 25). As Earle Labor (1967) notes the appeal of the novel relies on human's unconscious longing for primitive simplicity and freedom. The allegorical meaning indicated by Bruni and Labor nevertheless returns to the anthropocentric nature of the fable which London strives to divert. London's ensuing work, *White Fang*, represents his deliberate response to shattering the allegorical understanding. By reversing the direction from progression to regression, London seems to announce his public discontent with the misinterpretation of atavism in Buck's journey to the wild.

The wild, in this fashion, is no more a mystifying forest but reduced to a basic environment shared by humans and animals in an evolutionary continuum. Progression or regression thus are rendered from temporal movements into co-habitual living space. The human society and the wild are divergent only in the sense of their various development stages. This evolutionary understanding of the wild or the society helps London to construct what Donna (2003) Haraway terms "the companion species" between humans and animals (p. 22).

London reveals the inseparable interconnection between species through continuing indications of the wild. In addition to the wild calling Buck constantly feels, the novel starts with an epigraphy that emphasizes on the return to the primitive: "Old longings nomadic leap, Chafing at custom's chain; Again from its brumal sleep Wakens the ferine strain" (p. 1). The stanza derives from a New York-based poet John Myers O'Hara, "Atavism," which was published only one month before London started to write *The Call of the Wild*. O'Hara's poem expresses romantic atavism: it is a call to people who have been in the city too long to seek in the wilderness the animal thrill that reinvigorates life. Before Buck's abduction, the opening stanza seems to be an analogy to domesticated humanity and a chained pet dog. Buck's return to the wild may be easily detected, but another convert motion penetrates the whole novel as well. Grounded in the time of the gold rush, Buck's movement from Alaska, Dawson, and Bennett witness humans' discovery of nature. Besides the longing for insatiable wealth, Buck's ideal partner Thornton adventures into "a fabled lost mine, the history of which was as old as the history of the country" because it is a "mystery" to be discovered (p. 116). The call then not only echoes with Buck but also with human beings. When Thornton's exploration ends with an accidental murder, Buck determines to be a complete wanderer in the forest as a wolf-dog. The dog's eventual answer for the calling of the wild may be decoded as free of human contact. London's evolutionary view of the wild traces Buck's smooth transition into the wild exactly because he embodies the law of club and fang, the law of hunting, all the laws he comprehended through the close entanglement with the human species. The wild, for him, is a prehistorical co-habitual space shared by multiple species.

London's demystifying of the wild also represents an endeavor to redefine the culture/nature as a naturalist writer. Contrary to the publishing company President's doubt about the confusing title, *The Call of the Wild* receives immediate success and becomes an overnight classic. In a market flooded with dull back-to-nature literature only appealing to the few, critics saw the significance of London's work. An anonymous reviewer in *Literary World* deems that London finds "a new key in which to sound the praises of nature and animal life" (Labor, 1996, p. 2). The new key has been further identified by Kate B. Stillé's writing for the *Book News Monthly*, emphasizing "the deep underlying truth" and "nameless thing we feel" (Labor, 1996, p.

2). What Stillé implies is that it is not only the particular details but also the overall feeling that marks the real truth readers feel throughout the reading. This covert natural truth becomes praise that it embodies London's originality and his power "lies not alone in his clear-sighted depiction of life, but in his suggestion of the eternal principles that underlie it" (Labor, 1996, p. 3). The eternal principle, other than the rigid imitation of nature, is unanimously agreed as London's firm belief in Darwinism. But what differentiates Buck's stories from other nature stories that have been unavoidably influenced by Darwinism is London's critique of the amoral side of Darwinism.

## 5. Towards a Bispecies Environment and Coevolution

Buck's apprehension of the law, as well as the laws of the human world, are indicators of London's devotion to environmental determinism, and most critically, the universality of the natural law for various species. Such a general understanding of London's belief could be applied to any of his contemporary nature stories and may be not sufficient to explain his idea of natural truth/laws because London's attitude towards Darwinism, as indicated by Berkove (2011), "was not static" (p. 127). London is primarily unsatisfied with the definition of the popularized phrase "survival of the fittest". The fittest, the approach to perfection and progress, as indicated by Berkove, emphasizes species/society's morphological changes and concerns not about individual and morality. Horowitz (1997) in this vein dramatizes London's reclaim of individuality as "anti-evolutionary", which may oversimplify the ethical question raised by Spencer and Huxley (p. 339). The internal debate in social Darwinism actually draws London's attention. In a letter to Cloudsley Johns, he urged Johns to "compare the controversy of men like Spencer and Huxley, etc., to the ordinary newspaper controversies between correspondents" (London, 1988, p. 165). London's admiration of Spencer and Huxley reveals more of his dynamic view on Darwinism.

London's difficulties with the Spencerian idea of evolution are evident in Buck's ending, which evidently contradicts "survival of the fittest" because it leads to the wild not to civilization. As Naso (1977) comments, London's impression does not prevent him from some aspects of Spencer's philosophy that counters his own conviction that "love and loyalty" are valuable in human relationships (p. 29). The reclaim of morality in *The Call of the Wild* takes on a different form. Even in the brutal natural selection, it is London's intention to retain the emotions, love, loyalty, or pride that motivate human and nonhuman, or different species of divergent physical or cognitive faculties to understand each other. The ethical side of Buck's natural growth shows London's juxtaposition between Spencerian and Huxleyan ideas. According to Berkove (2011), as an evolutionary conservative, Spencer regards society's progress as akin to cosmic progress that requires no external interference, while Huxley proposes the "horticultural process" against the "cosmic process", which creates "artificial conditions of life, better adapted to the cultivated plants than are the conditions of the state of nature" (p. 33). London clearly grasped and found common ground with Huxley's argument.

The back and forth on Spencerian and Huxleyan's idea of evolution motivates London to reflect on naturalists' writing plots. Just when Buck thinks he has found the perfect partner and Thornton arrives at the perfect mine, London obliterates the evolutionary perfection by inserting the native Indian's murdering plot. The previous perfection is what Huxley terms as "misleading illusions" and what's left is Buck's ethical progress. The ethical progress in Buck's case derives from not only the hereditary traits but also from the interconnection with other species. The transition between nature and culture, as Auerbach (1996) notices, represents a self-transcendence that cannot be contained by conventional naturalist mode. By considering the wild/society as the co-habitual living environment, Buck's self-transcendence is his realization that the law of nature cannot be solely applied to the human world. The canine protagonist embraces a highly individual harmonization with not the laws of nature/culture, but the laws of bispecies. London's unstable representation of nature/culture aims to produce coevolutionary progress for bi/multispecies. Vermeij (1994) defines coevolution as "two interacting species or groups of species change in response to each other" as well as their interaction with the environment (p. 219). Scientist often works with coevolution within the framework of the ecosystem. London's coevolutionary view of the laws of the bi/multispecies seems to foreshadow the concept of the importance of an ecosystem where species interact on the same planet. When social Darwinism works to naturalize the notion of human mastery for the purpose of progress, London's dismantling of humanity/animality, progression/regression, and nature/culture to be a coevolutionary process in bispecies environment stands his review of amoral aspects of Darwinism.

What drives the critique of social Darwinism to some degree stems from London's endeavor to rescue the form of anthropocentric animal fables as well as writers' professionalism. In a time when beast fables have been abused for sentimentality or moral truth, London's remapping of the animal fables aspires to update the sentimentalist public from the crisis of what Ann Douglas terms as a feminized American culture. Not only did London incorporate a masculine canine protagonist's highly manly experience of growth, but he also exposed the vigorous attempt to redefine the sentimentalism in animal fable as well as the sentimental public. Many turn-of-the-century American men think that the market, increasingly abstract and rationalized, could no longer offer the grounds to define manhood, particularly in terms of those ideals of self-reliance, diligence, and mastery at the heart of nineteenth-century liberal individualism. Seeking to test manhood in noneconomic arenas (the wilderness, war, sports), turn-of-the-century Americans such as Teddy Roosevelt struggled to combat a mounting spiritual crisis in masculinity by trying to naturalize dominance. Indeed social Darwinism facilitates the naturalization of human mastery and manliness by upholding the binary's privilege, but London captures the core issue of the public's perception that sentimentalism renders the profession of writing to be an occupation of idleness and fakery-maker. London determined to tackle one of the most notoriously attacked genres of anthropomorphism and sentimentalism, animal

fable as a laborious research to demonstrate the decency of writing. As noted by Christopher Wilson (2010), Progressive Era writers including London are participating in an emerging culture of professionalism that treated writing as a discipline and business. In the time of industry culture, London's style of naturalist writing becomes, as indicated by Howard (2017), not "an exhibit in the gallery of literary types" but a "dynamic solution" to the anthropomorphized animal fable, crisis of sentimental public as well writer's professionalism (p. 2).

## 6. Conclusion

As a typical animal fable, Jack London's *The Call of the Wild* departs from the traditional mode of anthropomorphic animal stories and deconstructs the internal hierarchy among human and nonhuman species. London's canine narration not only shows the ambiguity between animality and humanity but also uses a nonhuman perspective to reflect on human life. London's literary reinvention of animal fable aims to rejuvenate animal fiction from anthropomorphism and sentimentality. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the masculinity embedded in Buck's returning to the wilderness as well as the literary creation of a post-Darwinian fable represent London's endeavor to redeem the writer's professionalism. For London, the promotion of a new type of animal fiction becomes a challenge to the public's presupposition of human-centeredness in animal fable. It is an update to the American public at the beginning of the twentieth century: writing animal fiction is a serious profession.

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