



Conflicts in Jack London's Novels

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Abstract

This study examines conflicts and class struggles Jack London's novels, goading to illustrate the situation between the working class and the capitalist class. The attitude of the working class towards the capital class—including organization, unionization, and strikes—has caused various social movements. The factors that have led to the conflict between these two classes over centuries are presented in London's works based on a critique of the capitalist system. It is quite possible to examine the 19th century's social and economic structure, where the effects of the Industrial Revolution were heavily felt, through the literary works of that era. Examining Jack London's life and works, given his upbringing within the working class, allows significant inferences about that period. In this study, the class conflict between worker and capital referred in London's works is examined within the context of capitalist system criticism. To determine the negative consequences of the Industrial Revolution on the working class and observe the conditions under which class struggle occurred, important works such as *The Iron Heel*, *The People of the Abyss*, *Martin Eden*, *Valley of the Moon*, *Burning Daylight*, *Lost Face*, and *Mexican* are analyzed. In addition, London's political essays and articles have been consulted for insight into his worldview, and biographical works about him have been used for better understanding. In the light of these findings, the study aims to demonstrate the negative effects of the mechanization era on workers and the role of class conflict historically.

Keywords: *Jack London, Industrial Revolution, Class Conflict, Working Class.*

الصراعات في روايات جاك لندن

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قسم اللغة الإنجليزية، كلية التربية، جامعة ساوة الاهلية، المثنى، العراق

المستخلص

تبحث هذه الدراسة في الصراعات والنضال الطبقي في روايات جاك لندن، بهدف توضيح طبيعة العلاقة والوضع القائم بين الطبقة العاملة والطبقة الرأسمالية. لقد أدت مواقف الطبقة العاملة تجاه الطبقة الرأسمالية — بما في ذلك التنظيم، والعمل النقابي، والإضرابات — إلى ظهور حركات اجتماعية متنوعة. وتعرض العوامل التي أدت إلى الصراع بين هاتين الطبقتين على مر القرنين في أعمال لندن بناءً على نقد للنظام الرأسمالي. ومن الممكن تمامًا فحص البنية الاجتماعية والاقتصادية للقرن التاسع عشر، حيث ظهرت آثار الثورة الصناعية بشكل جلي، من خلال الأعمال الأدبية لتلك الحقبة. كما يتيح لنا فحص حياة جاك لندن وأعماله، بالنظر إلى نشأته داخل الطبقة العاملة، الخروج باستنتاجات مهمة حول تلك الفترة الزمنية. في هذه الدراسة، يتم فحص الصراع الطبقي بين العامل ورأس المال المذكور في أعمال



لندن في سياق نقد النظام الرأسمالي. ولتحديد العواقب السلبية للثورة الصناعية على الطبقة العاملة ومراقبة الظروف التي حدث فيها الصراع الطبقي، جرى تحليل أعمال مهمة مثل: العقب الحديدية (The Iron Heel)، أهل القاع ((The People of the Abyss)، مارتن إيدن ((Martin Eden)، وادي القمر ((Valley of the Moon)، ضوء النهار المشتعل ((Burning Daylight)، الوجه المفقود (Lost Face)، والمكسيكي (Mexican). بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تم الرجوع إلى مقالات لندن السياسية وكتاباته للاستبصار برؤيته للعالم، كما استخدمت السير الذاتية التي كتبت عنه لتحقيق فهم أفضل. وفي ضوء هذه النتائج، تهدف الدراسة إلى توضيح الآثار السلبية لعصر الميكنة (الآلية) على العمال ودور الصراع الطبقي تاريخياً.

الكلمات المفتاحية: جاك لندن، الثورة الصناعية، الصراع الطبقي، الطبقة العاملة.

1. Introduction

Jack London is a writer whose subjects require detailed analysis in social sciences. Born in 1876 and dying in 1916, he worked in many hard jobs from a young age and experienced poverty. He witnessed the harshest period of working life during the Industrial Revolution and reflected the condition of the working class in his works. Some of his writing was inspired by events he witnessed firsthand, and his worldview was shaped through readings and lived experience. To observe the working class, he went to the East End of London disguised as a homeless man, describing his observations in *The People of the Abyss*. His works about social injustice connects the historical and ongoing conflict between laborers and capitalists to a critique of the capitalist system. His literature reflects the industrialization process of society, tackling class conflict, labor-capital contradictions, surplus value, income inequality, unions, strikes, child labor, workplace accidents, and more. Among these, *The Iron Heel* depicts a dystopian society and openly criticizes the system by exposing capitalism's contradictions through a union leader. He also describes a worker losing his arm to factory machinery and many adverse effects of the Industrial Revolution, such as working conditions, wages, and commodity prices.

Jack London grew up within the working class and experienced the hardships of labor through physical work. He witnessed closely the destructive effects of the Industrial Revolution. His desire to become a writer intensified because of these harsh conditions, and he began to submit writings to magazines regularly.

"I was born in the working class. I discovered enthusiasm, passion, and ideals early and made it my concern in childhood to fulfill them. The environment around me was rough, harsh, and savage. I had no perspective of my own, but my eyes were set upward. My place in society was the lowest. Here, for body and soul, there was nothing but filth and misery; both body and soul were equally hungry and tormented" (London, 2018: 20).

Jack London wrote some of his works with autobiographical features, narrating events he witnessed through the lens of class consciousness and criticism of the capitalist system. In this context, *The Iron Heel* is a significant work explaining capitalist production relations, industrial processes, surplus value, and worker exploitation. It also shows the harsh conditions created by the economic system



on workers, with many instances of union organization and strikes. Through all these, London expresses his economic system criticism in his works.

Additionally, he went to *East London* and lived as a homeless person, vividly portraying the poor working class's situation in *The People of the Abyss* (1903). These days deeply affected his political consciousness. After physically demanding years, London traveled across America, recounting these experiences in *The Road* (1907). His novels particularly *The Iron Heel* (1908) and *Valley of the Moon* (1913) focus on the working class, class consciousness, and class conflict. In these works, he relays characteristics of the social structure of that period.

Some literary works cannot be solely examined as literature but also reflect the era they were written in, filtered through the author's personal lens. Writers like Charles Dickens, Emile Zola, John Steinbeck, Maksim Gorki, Herman Melville, and Upton Sinclair, alongside London, depict social structures and labor life of important historical periods like the Industrial Revolution, the Great Depression, and Tsarist Russia. These works serve as witnesses to labor processes experienced at various times and places and remain relevant sources for scientific studies on these subjects today.

2. Jack London's Life and Era

Jack London (John Griffith London) (Born January 12, 1876, San Francisco, California – Died November 22, 1916, Glen Ellen, California) was an American writer and journalist. He gained great fame and was among the bestselling authors of his time. His difficult childhood and youth were channeled into his works with keen observational power. His experiences particularly in the Yukon region and California significantly contributed to his writing, allowing him to produce many lasting works.

Living through the years from 1876 to 1916, London experienced a harsh era. In the 1893 economic crisis in the United States, the population was approximately 62 million; unemployment went from 2 million to 3 million in just six months. Yet by 1897, national income had risen by 4.5%, consumption by 3.8%, and net capital ratio by 9.6%. The increase in net capital ratio surpassing income and consumption indicated the state's saving tendencies and a decline in purchasing power.

Jack London himself was subject to these social hardships. The 1893 economic crisis revealed capitalism's brutality, with poverty and social injustice growing profoundly. The working class suffered hardships for the benefit of the capitalist class's profit, often accepting low wages such as ten cents per hour. There was a complete contradiction between hard labor and pay. During this economic depression, London worked at a hemp factory earning ten cents an hour. He noted in his 1905 article titled *Revolution* that about seven million unionized workers existed internationally, showing the labor class's strength in class struggle.



Workers organized to demand an 8-hour workday but faced harsh repression. In the United States, around 10 million people lived in inadequate housing and nutrition; 80,000 children worked in textile factories, and over 1.7 million child laborers existed.

London started working hard labor before age 14, including factory work and later oyster piracy and other dangerous jobs. This harsh life toughened him and made him stronger. At 17, he became a sailor and later a seal hunter, developing survival skills. Eventually, he tired of life-threatening work and returned to work in a hemp factory, earning four cents an hour but persisting in the intense labor rhythm.

He later pursued writing seriously, submitting work to magazines, and gained literary awards for stories like his survival tale during a typhoon in Japan. An intense work ethic was evident, including a stint working in a coal mine for 10 hours a day, seven days a week, earning only 30 dollars a month. After giving up working such jobs, he traveled across America recounting experiences in novels like *The Road*.

3. Jack London's Political Position

Jack London, who spent most of his life in the United States, shaped his worldview based on the events he experienced since childhood. London witnessed that the working class, born into the lower class, worked like slaves throughout their lives and were never granted equal opportunities. Starting physical labor at a very young age pushed him to think and question and to begin forming his worldview. The Oakland Library had an important place in his life. From childhood, London was an avid reader, also reading classics like *Anna Karenina* and *Madame Bovary* during his years in the navy. He spent his spare time reading political books and began forming political consciousness by reading the *Communist Manifesto*. In his essay titled "How I Became a Socialist," Jack London explained the stages of the formation of his political views. He said that he belonged to the working class and worked physically for a long time. Observing employers' attitudes towards workers, he hated working life and conditioned himself fully to become a writer. His experiences caused him to take a stance against the outside world. In his 1905 essay "Introduction to the Class Struggle," London made the following commentary about socialism:

"Capitalists should first and always know that socialism is not based on the equality of people but on inequality. Then it should be known that no spirit will be born clean until socialism becomes possible. It should also be known that socialism does not seek what ought to be but what exists as a problem. Conscience demands what is just with relentless determination—neither more nor less—only what is just" (London, 2018: 50, 51).

In the same essay, he also made a powerful propaganda regarding class struggle: "In the bourgeois mind, class struggle is terrifying and dreadful; yet socialism is exactly this—a worldwide struggle between propertyless workers and property-owning masters. The working class, as part of the social evolution process and



according to the nature of matter, must rebel against the dominance of the capitalist class and overthrow it. This is the threat of socialism, and by accepting socialism and considering myself its supporter, I risk losing my respectability” (London, 2018: 50).

It is also known that London once had an individualistic side, which he developed through reading Nietzsche. In fact, he portrayed Martin Eden as an individualistic character in his book. Politically, he gave importance to Karl Marx’s views and embraced socialist thought. Besides, he increased his interest in evolutionary theory by reading works by Herbert Spencer and Charles Darwin. It is said that London wrote in his notebook during those years: “The history of humanity is full of the struggle between exploiters and the exploited... just as Darwin’s studies show the development of humankind, the history of this struggle between classes shows us the development of economic civilization” (Stone, 2012: 84).

Throughout his life, Jack London always felt anger towards the bourgeoisie and capitalism and expressed his critiques. He was very aware of how the system worked and how workers who earned their living with physical strength were exploited. During his years of oyster piracy, one night he and his friends looted the boat of other fishermen. Defending his action, he expressed what he thought about capitalism:

“What I did was theft, I admit it, but it was entirely compatible with the spirit of capitalism. The capitalist steals from his peers through tax cuts, abuse of trust, or buying senators and supreme court judges. I was just a little uncultured. That was the only difference. I used a weapon” (London, 2018: 22).

London, whose views solidified during his youth, continued to participate actively in class struggle after gaining fame. He donated to socialist associations and spoke at conferences. In his mature years, in his 1905 essay titled Revolution, he stated:

“Revolutionaries have a sharp morality and great respect for humanity, but they have very little respect for death. They refuse to be directed by a cult of death. Their disbelief in the established norms of the ruling order greatly surprises bourgeois understanding. Revolutionaries disdain the beloved moral rules and sweet ideals of bourgeois society” (London, 2010a: 9).

4. Jack London’s Working Conditions in His Works

Jack London used his observational skill and experiences while constructing his works. Having worked at factories for years and earned his living with physical strength, he was the closest witness to the harsh working conditions. Additionally, the intense working conditions physically and mentally wore him down. To escape this situation, he later started dedicating all his strength to writing. The working conditions he described in his works led to workers' organization and demands for new rights. Employers who did not want workers to organize responded with pressure and violence, causing class conflicts.



Looking at the working conditions and the state of workers described in London's works, in the story "Mexican" the following expressions are found:

"He saw six thousand hungry, pale-faced workers; small children of seven or eight years working for ten cents a day. He saw the men working in the dye houses, these walking corpses. He remembered his father calling dye houses 'suicide chambers' and saying that working there for a year meant death" (London, 2016c: 27).

These statements show that child labor was at significant levels and started at very young ages. All workers had a state of soullessness and had become alienated from themselves. Alongside working long hours and bearing heavy workloads, workers also worked under dangerous conditions. It is known that workers in dye houses were exposed to serious dangers and that this situation often led to death.

Another important story by London is "Turncoat," where a child worker named Johnny starts working in increasingly mechanized environments. Johnny started working at the age of seven in a textile factory, earning 2 dollars a week under the piece-rate system. The job gradually monotonized him, to the extent that he stopped dreaming.

In the novel *Burning Daylight*, mine workers generally earned 5 dollars a day, but the main character Elam Harnish paid his workers 16 dollars daily. These workers worked 8 hours a day (London, 2010b: 101, 102). Another worker, Jones, earned 1 dollar 60 cents for a day's 12-hour woodcutting work (London, 2010b: 154). One of the novel's main characters, Miss Mason, worked as a stenographer and earned 65 dollars a month (London, 2010b: 165). Mason, working at Elam Harnish's office, later got a raise to 75 dollars a month (London, 2010b: 174), and six months later, her salary increased to 90 dollars (London, 2010b: 197).

In another novel, *The People of the Abyss*, an Irishman named Eyethorne working in a cafe in East London earned 5 shillings a week despite working from 7 in the morning to 11 at night, with food included (London, 2015: 134).

London mentions that many families lived on 21 shillings or 5.25 dollars a week in England at that time (London, 2015: 177, 178). In the same novel, women working in a jacket factory earned about 25 cents for 12 hours of work, and in a trousers factory, wages were between 75 cents and 1 dollar (London, 2015: 181). It is also noted that women made up a considerable part of workers in East London, with some women working 14-hour days and earning 5 shillings weekly (London, 2015: 183).

Examining the wages of workers living in London, Jack London explains the situation as follows:

"Those working in rich trading houses earn 1.50 dollars for 16-hour days six days a week including meals. Sandwich vendors earn 27 cents a day to get by. Street sellers and fruit vendors generally make between 2.50 and 3 dollars a week. Unskilled workers, except dock workers, earn less than 4 dollars weekly.



Dock workers earn between 2 and 2.25 dollars weekly on average. These figures are from a royal commission report and are all accurate” (London, 2015: 182).

Looking at other works mentioning working conditions, *The Iron Heel* indicates the presence of Chicago women who earned 90 cents weekly wages (London, 2016a: 53). In another important work, *Martin Eden*, it is mentioned that the protagonist Martin earned 30 dollars washing and ironing clothes (London, 2016d: 158). In the same novel, in the chapter titled Jackson’s Arm, a worker named Jackson is described losing his arm to machinery. He recounts the accident:

"I held the belt with one hand and reached for the stone with the other. I thought I had disengaged the belt from the gear, but it was still caught. As I reached urgently to grab the stone, the gear gripped my arm and twisted it... The belt did not come off" (London, 2016a: 40). Work accidents generally happen near the end of shifts, when workers are extremely tired due to overtime (London, 2016a: 40). Long working hours and unsafe working environments have caused irreparable harm to workers.

In *The Iron Heel*, London harshly criticizes capitalism's deadens and calls the despotic regime described in the book "the Iron Heel":

“You and labor and all of us will be crushed under the iron heel of unprecedented despotism in human history. Yes, Iron Heel is a fitting name for this despotism” (London, 2016: 136).

Excessive production pressure negatively affected workers and provoked rebellion. Workers’ reactions led to strikes and unionization efforts. Consequently, workers organized, and the working class began to fully emerge. The capitalist class responded with harsh sanctions and interventions to advance the class conflict. In workplaces where strikes occurred, owners sent strike-breakers—paramilitary groups employed to suppress strikes violently under management orders.

Class conflict between labor and capital directly relates to the capitalist economic law of surplus value. In *The Iron Heel*, London explores this via a shoe factory example:

“Consider a shoe factory. The factory buys leather for \$100 and turns it into shoes. The purchase value of the leather is \$100. When the shoes leave the factory, assume their value is \$200. What happened? One hundred dollars were added to the leather’s value. How was this created? Capital and labor combined to create this \$100 value. Capital provided the factory, machines, and covered all expenses. The worker provided the labor. The joint effort created this \$100 value. Now they will share this value. Statistical figures show fractional numbers; let's round for ease. Capital gets \$50, labor gets \$50 as wages. We will leave the noise of this sharing dispute aside” (London, 2016a: 127-128).

London notes in a footnote that both classes want the maximum possible share, and disputes are expected. The problem of sharing production outputs under capitalism is the basis of class conflict.



The book's protagonist, union leader Ernest Everhard, discusses the surplus labor going to capitalists' pockets as a key exploitation factor. Mandel explains this with Marxist value theory:

“Surplus value is the monetary form of social surplus—the unpaid portion of the wage worker's production appropriated by the owners of the means of production” (Mandel, 1998: 10).

Similar to medieval serfs working partly on their land (paid labor) and partly on the lord's land (unpaid surplus labor), exploited workers produce wealth enriching the ruling class.

Marx and Engels famously stated:

"The history of all previously existing society is the history of class struggles. The oppressor and oppressed have faced each other constantly, sometimes covertly, sometimes overtly, resulting in either revolutionary reconstitutions or mutual destruction" (Marx & Engels, 2012: 38-40).

Accordingly, class conflicts shape society's course.

Looking at other works that mention working conditions, it is stated that the weekly wage of women working in Chicago in *The Iron Heel* was 90 cents (London, 2016a: 53). In another important work, *Martin Eden*, it is mentioned that the character Martin would be paid \$30 for laundry ironing work (London, 2016d: 158). In the same novel, in the chapter titled *Jackson's Arm*, a worker named Jackson has his arm severed by a machine. Jackson describes the accident:

"I held the belt with one hand and reached for the stone with the other. I thought the belt had come off the cogwheel; I looked to see if it was free. But the belt was stuck in the cogwheel. Suddenly it grabbed my arm and twisted it. The belt did not come off" (London, 2016a: 40).

It is said that work accidents generally occur near the end of the shift, when workers are very tired due to overtime (London, 2016a: 40).

It has been observed that long working hours and unsafe working environments cause irreparable damages to workers.

In *The Iron Heel*, *Jack* London harshly criticizes capitalism's dilemmas and gives the despotic government described in the book the name *Iron Heel*:

“You and labor and all of us will be crushed under the iron heel of an unprecedented despotism in the pages of human history. Yes, *Iron Heel*, we can give this name to despotism. It is a fitting name indeed” (London, 2016: 136).

Excessive production pressure creates negative effects on workers and causes them to react. These reactions resulted in strikes and unionizations. Consequently, workers started organizing and the working class began fully forming. The capitalist class, wanting to dominate the organized working class, advanced the class conflict through harsh sanctions and interventions. Employers sent strikebreakers to strike areas to prevent strikes. These strikebreakers, working at employers' command, were tasked with violently suppressing strikes in factories.



5. Types of Conflicts in London's Novels

The class conflict between labor and capital is directly connected to the capitalist economic system's fundamental law of surplus value. In *The Iron Heel*, London discusses this topic with the example of a shoe factory:

“Let’s consider a shoe factory. This factory buys leather and makes shoes out of it. Suppose it buys leather for 100 dollars. This is the purchase price of the leather. When the shoes leave the factory, suppose their value is 200 dollars. What happened? 100 dollars was added to the leather’s value. How was it added? Let’s examine. Capital and labor combined to add this 100-dollar value. Capital provided the factory, machines, and paid all expenses. Labor provided the labor. Through the joint effort of capital and labor, this 100-dollar value was created. Since capital and labor jointly produced this 100 dollars, now they must share it. According to statistics, this share shows fractional amounts. For simplicity, let’s round off. Capital receives 50 dollars, labor under the name of wages, receives 50 dollars. We will leave aside the noise over this sharing dispute” (London, 2016a: 127-128).

London footnotes that both classes want as much as they can get from this sharing and disputes stem from it. This problem of sharing the joint product under capitalism constitutes the basis of class conflict.

The protagonist of *The Iron Heel*, union leader Ernest Everhard, discusses surplus labor, the portion of labor value that goes into capitalists' pockets, as a key factor in exploitation. Mandel explains this with Marxist value theory:

“Surplus value is nothing other than the monetary form of social surplus—i.e., the unpaid portion of the wage worker’s production that goes to production means owners” (Mandel, 1998: 10).

As Mandel illustrates with example, medieval serfs worked three days a week on their own land providing necessary labor, and three days on their lord’s land performing unpaid surplus labor. This labor enriches the feudal class by exploiting workers and peasants (Mandel, 1998: 11).

Marx and Engels said:

“The history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggles. The oppressor and the oppressed have met each other in constant opposition, sometimes secretly, sometimes openly, and this confrontation has ended either in a revolutionary restructuring of society or mutual destruction of the conflicting classes” (Marx & Engels, 2012: 38-40).

In the continuation of the heated discussion he started with the shoe factory example, Ernest elaborates on the problem of consumption of the shares that capital and labor receive.

“Labor consumes all the products that their wage can buy” (London, 2016a: 129). The working class needs to spend its wage completely to survive, while the capitalist class does not consume all of its share. The working class must spend a large part of its income and save a small part for hard times, such as



illness, old age, and essential needs. The capitalist class also does not consume their entire share.

Ernest, the union leader, explains this situation as:

“If capital consumed its share, total capital would not increase. It would remain the same. But if you look at American economic history, you will see that total capital shows continuous growth. Therefore, capital does not consume its entire share” (London, 2016a: 129).

Then the discussion moves on to what happens to the excess production for capitalists. The labor who consumes their entire wages cannot absorb the entire excess product value. Likewise, capitalists can consume only up to a certain point. The surplus production that remains will be sold abroad. This surplus production is sold to underdeveloped countries to find new markets (London, 2016a: 130-131).

Developed countries have traded among themselves for years and now have to sell to underdeveloped countries. In exchange, they receive money or gold. But when underdeveloped countries have no money or gold for trade, Ernest asks Bay Kowalt how trade can be conducted. The answer is stocks and concessions. Underdeveloped countries must purchase the goods they need, and they pay through granting certain concessions.

Ernest explains the matter with the example of the United States and Brazil:

“The United States buys stocks and concessions in Brazil in exchange for their surplus production. This means that the United States becomes the owner of the railways, factories, mines, and lands in Brazil” (London, 2016a: 132).

Countries that give concessions will eventually develop their resources and become countries with surplus production. In turn, these developed countries will search for other underdeveloped countries to sell to. This cycle continuously progresses. Eventually, all countries' resources will develop to the point where there is no surplus production left to sell to any country. Ernest asks how countries will get rid of their surplus products in such a situation, addressing Bay Calvin and Kowalt.

In this debate, where trade laws are applied and capitalism's limits are tested, no solution is found for this question. Ernest suggests that the way out of surplus production is throwing the surplus goods into the sea. Calvin and Kowalt find this solution correct but ridiculous. Ernest remarks that the small bourgeoisie fighting against monopolies cannot achieve this solution through machine-breaking. The capitalist class as economic monopoly will never allow machines to be destroyed and they are more powerful than the small bourgeoisie.

Machine breakers, known as Luddites following the Industrial Revolution, arose to fight the monopolies. Ernest states that the methods of machine breakers wanting to return to the pre-industrial era are primitive. The current struggle method is not to destroy machines but to possess them, as the middle class tries (London, 2016a: 134-136).



According to Marx (2012: 50), machine breakers continue to attack, aiming to return to pre-industrial society by damaging production tools, foreign goods, machines, and factories.

In a chapter of the book, Ernest and Bay Asmunsen engage in a discussion. Ernest explains social classes by their sizes. According to him, the three largest social classes are: the capitalist ruling class (plutocracy), the middle class (small bourgeoisie), and the proletariat which sustains itself via labor power (London, 2016a: 137).

Bay Asmunsen criticizes by saying the working class is weak in terms of income. Yet Ernest points out that the majority of society is proletariat, and the middle class is diminishing. He also mentions that social wealth is transient and emphasizes the working class's natural muscular strength.

Ernest describes the middle class's state in this conflict as:

“But your strength is fragile. It can be taken from you. Even plutocracy takes your strength away. Eventually, it will uproot you. Then there will be no middle class left. You will cease to be yourselves and become part of our class. You will become proletarians. The good thing then is, you will add strength to our strength. We will unite as brothers and fight shoulder to shoulder for humanity” (London, 2016a: 138).

In *The Iron Heel*, the traces of class conflict are visible in chapters describing monopolies. Ernest harshly criticizes the petty bourgeoisie and tells of market damage caused by monopolies. He gives the example of the tin monopoly which collapsed 400 tin companies' factories. Owners who lost money joined the proletariat, with no option but to join manual labor.

If these newly proletarianized join union struggles, they increase the working-class ranks. Ernest outlines this situation.

The capitalist class also resorts to dirty methods to suppress the working class in this class conflict. Ernest says:

“I said craftsmen and tradesmen are slaves. What else could they be? Professors, priests, journalists, and plutocracy-serving people can only stay in their positions because they serve plutocracy. All these people spread ideas that don't harm plutocracy or that directly benefit it” (London, 2016a: 140).

An economic or political power wants to keep society under control in every sense. As shown in *The Iron Heel*, the government enlists clergy, educators, journalists, wealthy families to propagate ideology. Those who don't cooperate in propaganda are expelled, their rise prevented, and they are left to suffer in factories and poverty like workers.

Workers in key propaganda jobs can reach large audiences easily (London, 2016a: 140).

Ilich (2018:14) states official institutions play a determining role in human ideology, nature, and behavior.

Class struggle manifests in different fields. In *The Iron Heel*, Avis Everhard's father, a professor on strike, was forced to resign and defamed by the media.



Education, turned into a sector controlled by the ruling class, excludes dissenting scholars to cover up the issue. Avis explains: “My father was actually happy. Especially since he was dismissed because of his book ‘Economy and Education’ and the ideas he defended” (London, 2016a: 145).

However, the book was banned and publishers refused to reprint it. Efforts to publicize failed as mainstream media blocked and disparaged him through smear campaigns. The professor’s expressions were twisted before the press, labeling him as a subversive. Lacking mainstream media access, proletarians published their own media, which circulated mostly among workers to increase awareness. But eventually these too faced suppression and bans (London, 2016a: 146-147).

Jack London depicts class distinctions in *Martin Eden* through characters Martin and Ruth. Martin, from the working class, loves Ruth, coming from a bourgeois family, and strives to improve himself to win her heart. This narrative highlights bourgeois and proletarian class divisions.

London harshly criticizes capitalism in *The Iron Heel* through dialogues between union leader Ernest and bourgeois capitalists like Calvin and Kowalt. Similarly, he deepens class and systemic critique through *Martin Eden*, narrating personal struggles.

6. Conclusion

Jack London, through his works, clearly exposes the contradictions and oppressions of the capitalist system, emphasizing the unavoidable class struggle that arises from capitalist exploitation. His deep understanding of labor conditions, drawn from personal experience and sharp social observation, gives his literature a powerful realism that engages socio-economic realities critically. His dystopian narrative in *The Iron Heel* critically portrays the establishment’s oppressive mechanisms and the violent subjugation of the working class. By highlighting union struggles, strikes, and the alienation of workers, London uncovers the systemic nature of exploitation and the urgent need for political awareness and action.

Moreover, London’s novels like *Martin Eden* delve into the conflicts within individual lives caused by social inequality and capitalist values, illustrating the tension between personal ambition and structural barriers.

His body of work stands as both a social history of working-class struggle and a passionate call for class solidarity and revolution. London’s legacy bridges literary artistry and committed political advocacy, marking him as a seminal figure in critiques of capitalism and modern social theory.

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