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Jack London. *The Game.* Introduction to Bison Books Edition by Michael Oriard. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2001. 132 pp. $12.00 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8032-7999-5.

Reviewed by Richard Arlin Stull (Humboldt State University)
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The Game is a must for any Jack London aficionado or anyone not familiar with the quintessential California adventurer and turn-of-the-century American literary superstar. Penned when London was at the peak of his publishing powers, *The Game* is about a subject London knew well–boxing. London, who had many a scrape in his time, was a boxing sportswriter for the San Francisco Examiner, sparred with the "Bohemian set" in Northern California, and saw allegorical alchemy in the "manly art."

Protagonist Jack Fleming is drawn between his love of the game and his fiancée, Genevieve. Though uncomprehending of Jack's love of boxing, Genevieve attends his fight with the savage John Ponta. The lead-up and resolution is representative of London's themes of the civilized vs. the brute, class struggle, melodramatic love, and man's violent nature. Oregon State Professor of Literature Michael Oriard's fine historical and biographical commentary in the introduction details how London's *The Game* was a forerunner to later works by Ernest Hemingway, Don DeLillo, Bernard Malamud and Robert Coover. Oriard reveals how London was a man of his time who romanticized both the working class and the Nietzschean super-hero. His citations of London's newspaper articles and personal correspondence give cultural context to this story/allegory, which London himself called one of his personal favorites. American Ashcan painter George Bellow's famous painting "Club Night" from the National Gallery graces the cover of this edition. Bellow's fighters in primal struggle along with the distorted faces and the blood lust of the crowd is a perfect pick for London's *The Game*. This book is a classic piece in boxing fiction, representative of many recurring themes in London's works, and some would argue, a timeless take on human nature.

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