

Deconstructing *The Jungle*: Meat-Packing, Socialism, and Women

Short Abstract:

Since its first publication in 1905, Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* has long been recognized as one of the most famous pieces of muckraking literature for its response to unsanitary conditions in the Chicago meat-packing industry and its influence on President Theodore Roosevelt's implementation of Food and Drug regulations. Contrary to critiques of *The Jungle* as failed literature, Bakhtin's theory of heteroglossia helps to demonstrate how the *The Jungle* meets the distinguishing qualities of a novel. Yet this was the only work of Sinclair's numerous publications with an enduring reputation, and its literary fame branded Sinclair as a socialist extremist. A deconstruction of the novel's language demonstrates how it fell short in representing women's labor reform and labor conditions in Chicago.

Long Abstract:

Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* gained international fame within months of its first publication in 1906. The novel has long been recognized as one of the most famous pieces of muckraking literature for its response to unsanitary conditions in the Chicago meat-packing industry and its influence on President Theodore Roosevelt's implementation of Food and Drug regulations. However, critics frequently attribute the novel's canonization to its historical moment, while deeming its literary quality a failure. In this paper, Bakhtin's theory of heteroglossia and his descriptions of a novel's distinguishing qualities, as seen in his four essays of *The Dialogic Imagination*, help to demonstrate how *The Jungle*'s fame, in the immediate and long-lasting, is indeed partially credited to the novel's literary value. Yet this was the only work of Sinclair's numerous publications with an enduring reputation, because its historical fame and the idiosyncratic perception of muckraking at the time branded Sinclair as a socialist extremist. This paper further examines how his socialist ideology, as perceived in *The Jungle*, actually fell short in representing women's labor reform and the specifics of labor conditions in Chicago. By using Derrida's theory of deconstruction, throughout this paper, a trend of marginalization is exposed. The world was fixated on the prospect of tainted meat, Sinclair was absorbed in his political crusade for socialism, and women were left lost in *The Jungle*.

By the turn of the twentieth century hundreds of periodicals had been published in the United States and abroad detailing the unsanitary labor conditions and meagre wages of the industrialized working class. However, the text that transcended all of these in international recognition and lasting reputation was not a non-fiction investigative report, and instead was a novel. Upton Sinclair began writing *The Jungle* in 1905, publishing it as a novel in 1906¹. The

¹ *The Jungle* was first published as a serial in *The Appeal to Reason* between February 25 and December 16, 1905, and then republished twice in 1906 by Sinclair (with support of his readers) and Doubleday, Page, and Company. See: Upton Sinclair, "The Jungle: A Story of Chicago," *NYU's Undercover Reporting Deception for Journalism's*

plot's focus is a Lithuanian man and his family as they arrive in the Chicago Stockyards with high expectations of opportunity and wealth; yet, they are met with the unsanitary and inhumane lifestyle of the American Progressive Era's working-class, which destroys and degrades them until the main male-character finds his place among the rising socialist movement. We know from his other socialist writings that *The Jungle* fit with Sinclair's political agenda as a socialist protest against the degradation of humanity, a degradation that he saw was caused by capitalist industrialization. The instant fame of *The Jungle* did not impart itself to Sinclair's socialist propaganda, but was instead a product of its historical moment. The political unrest surrounding the exposé and its multidimensional audience allowed *The Jungle* to enter the literary canon, and maintain its presence there for decades to come. As *The Jungle* soared in popularity Sinclair's socialist message was pushed further and further to the margins of the text's publically perceived purpose: the exposure of the meatpacking industry. Yet, drilling down into Sinclair's socialist rhetoric there is a glaring misrepresentation and absence there as well. Where are the women? Certainly Sinclair allowed for a few plot-driven female characters, but the range of their societal roles is slanted in a blatant regard for the male characters instead. The world was fixated on the prospect of tainted meat, Sinclair was absorbed in his political crusade for socialism, and women were left lost in *The Jungle*.

The Canonization of *The Jungle*

To say that *The Jungle* was published at just the right moment in history is an understatement. Much of its national and international acclaim can be attributed to its political and literary moment at the turn of the twentieth century. *The Jungle* encompassed such a variety of literary genres and mixing of mediums that it became a unique indicator of a historical

Sake: A Database, Accessed March 8, 2016, <http://dlib.nyu.edu/undercover/jungle-story-chicago-upton-sinclair-appeal-reason>. See also: William A. Bloodworth Jr. *Upton Sinclair* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1977), 57.

moment within the literary canon. Additionally, the stockyard setting and the increased public awareness of political corruption helped to thrust *The Jungle* into its lasting place in history.

Time and Place

Much of *The Jungle*'s increased popularity can be accredited to President Theodore Roosevelt. Roosevelt was a staunch opponent to the monopolistic nature of businesses that took form in the nineteenth century moving into the twentieth century. When Theodore Roosevelt took office in 1901,² American industrialization was in full swing having been ongoing for over the last fifty to a hundred years.³ With the growth of industrialization came the greedy and politically corrupt, power-mongers that owned it all: the trusts. By the end of his presidency, in 1909, Roosevelt made a name for himself as a trust-buster. Unwilling to let the greed and corner-cutting ethics of big business ruin America; in 1902, filing his first antitrust suits, Roosevelt became a pioneer in politically dissolving trusts. By the end of his presidency he would break up forty-four trusts.⁴ However, Roosevelt was not as staunch of an opponent to capitalism as some may think. Roosevelt was against "overcapitalization", whereas he saw the great benefits of technology and economy that capitalistic industries contributed to American growth; yet, he felt that the regulation and supervision of the interstate commerce conducted by said industries was necessary to remove the growing political corruption, overwhelming increase of power, and extensive accumulation of wealth being monopolized by the few at the expense of the many.⁵

² Harold Howland discusses in his 1921 biography *Theodore Roosevelt and His Times: A Chronicle of the Progressive Movement*, on page 76, that Roosevelt became president after the assassination of President McKinley (coming just six months after starting his second term). Roosevelt became the 26th president of the United States on September, 14, 1901. See footnote four for full citation.

³ This range of years is because some historians attribute the start of American industrialization to the first cotton mill constructed at the close of the 18th century by Samuel Slater of Massachusetts, while others point to the completion of the first transcontinental railroad in 1869 as the booming factor of American industry.

⁴ Harold Howland, *Theodore Roosevelt and His Times: A Chronicle of the Progressive Movement* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1921), 93.

⁵ Howland makes a clear distinction between Roosevelt and the next two presidents (Taft and Wilson). Noting that Roosevelt was more on the side of regulation, and separating the good trusts from the bad; whereas, the other two

“Roosevelt performed an even greater service in arousing the public mind to a realization of facts of national significance and stimulating the public conscience to a desire to deal with them vigorously and justly.”⁶ This agitation and excitement of a public response is exactly how Roosevelt contributed to the sustained popularity of *The Jungle*.

After hearing of Sinclair’s claims and following the almost-instant international concerns surrounding the novel, Roosevelt called for an investigation of *The Jungle*’s statements. Roosevelt was personally invested in the statements regarding the prospect of the unsanitary handling of meat, because he and his troops during the Spanish-American War experienced the plights of meat poisoning less than a decade prior to the publication of Sinclair’s claims.⁷ Also, Roosevelt saw the Beef Trust as another instance of corruption that needed progressive government regulation. Following his own thorough reading of the novel and hundreds of daily letters received at the White House regarding what others had read in *The Jungle*, Roosevelt reached out to Sinclair and scheduled a meeting with him for April 1st, 1906.⁸ In March, Roosevelt had sent a preliminary team of investigators from the Department of Agriculture to begin an investigation of Sinclair’s claims. Those reports had come back declaring *The Jungle* as a pure work of fiction full of exaggerations and misrepresentations; however, Roosevelt, with pressure from Sinclair and the thousands of received letters, was not trusting of that first investigation.⁹ He invited Sinclair to lead a small, discrete group of investigators through the Chicago stockyards to give evidence of the novel’s claims. Sinclair became immediately aware that the secret of the President’s commissioners was known to the meat-packers. Sinclair sent for

more aggressively fought for complete dissolution of all trusts. Harold Howland, 85-90. See footnote four for full citation.

⁶ Harold Howland, 106. See footnote four for full citation.

⁷ Gary Wiener, ed. *Workers’ Rights in Upton Sinclair’s The Jungle*. Social Issues in Literature Series (New York: Greenhaven Press, 2008), 31 & 141.

⁸ Anthony Arthur. *Radical Innocent: Upton Sinclair*. First Edition, (New York: Random House, 2006), 72-73.

⁹ Anthony Arthur, 74-75. See footnote 8 for full citation.

a confidant from his investigations, Ms. Ella Reeve, to direct the President's investigators to the similar contacts he had encountered during his original investigation.¹⁰ Reeve was successful in presenting the truths of the Chicago meat industry to the investigators, and Roosevelt was served a report of vile and disgust that ended the questioning of Sinclair's assertions.

The report sat on the President's desk till the end of May.¹¹ Finally on June 30th 1906 Roosevelt took action and passed the Pure Food and Drug Act along with its Meat Inspection Amendment. Both pieces of legislature were measures for the protection of the public health as well as means of regulation on private business. The Pure Food and Drug act prohibited the sale of impure foods and drugs, drugs that failed to state on the package the amounts of opium, cocaine, alcohol, and other narcotics contained within, and food and drugs sold under false advertisements; meanwhile, the Meat Inspection Amendment made it federal regulation for government officials to recurrently inspect all slaughterhouses and meat-packing productions providing food for the interstate market.¹² *The Jungle* became the known force behind Roosevelt's investigations, and the building-blocks of the regulatory legislation. The importance the novel played at that exact moment in history sparking public concern around the increasingly alarming Beef Trust rooted its presence as part of that political moment in history.

Genre and Medium

The Jungle not only entered its place in history because of its association with Roosevelt and his meat-packing regulations, but also as a lasting sensation in the literary canon. As a muckraking exposé, naturalistic fiction, and protest literature, *The Jungle* is recognized as a

¹⁰ Anthony Arthur, 75-77. See footnote 8 for full citation.

¹¹ Arthur discusses Roosevelt's reservations to publish the complete report that not only supported Sinclair's claims, but offered a further point of reality as an official government report. Roosevelt worried that allowing the report to appear as it stood would cause a worsening international opinion of American meat that would plummet the economic reliance on international meat sales. Anthony Arthur, 79-81. See footnote 8 for full citation.

¹² Harold Howland, 105-106. See footnote 4 for full citation.

representative text for a range of genres particular to the progressive era. “Although *The Jungle* is by now a fixture in the historiography of American Progressivism, its position has always been somewhat paradoxical. Literary critics commonly discredit the novel’s formal characteristics – usually attributing its failings to Sinclair’s political ideology – while historians usually credit external events, especially the political context, for the novel’s popularity.”¹³ As seen in the previous sub-section I acknowledge the more obvious influence of the political moment on the novel’s fame; however, by applying Mikhail Bakhtin’s literary theory regarding heteroglossia I disagree with the majority of literary critics, and accredit part of *The Jungle*’s lasting presence to its distinguishing qualities as a novel.

In his four essays that make up *The Dialogic Imagination*, Bakhtin proclaims the novel (as in the literary genre as a whole) to have specific characteristics that make it a superior category of literature.¹⁴ One aspect of the novel that he focuses on is the novel’s flexibility as a literary category. He describes the novel as a hybrid of other genres; by consuming other genres and by taking in their forms, the novel places other genres in comparison with itself.¹⁵ There are several ways that *The Jungle* incorporates other genres to create the exact hybrid of a text that Bakhtin praises as a characteristic of the novel. For example it has qualities of yellow journalism, which was associated with the periodicals of that time. This is emphasized by the novel’s original medium as a serial publication in a socialist newspaper as well as the extensive investigative research Sinclair used for the basis of his plot. Clearly *The Jungle* was successful in consuming that genre since it is still to this day one of the most frequently referenced pieces of

¹³ Christopher P. Wilson, *The Labor of Words: Literary Professionalism in the Progressive Era* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1985), 128-129.

¹⁴ In particular Bakhtin is comparing the novel to the epic; however, his detailed reasoning for the novel’s lasting influence in literature makes for a valid argument against any genre. Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/pitt/idm.oclc.org/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=acls;idno=heb09354.0001.001>.

¹⁵ Mikhail Bakhtin, 7. See footnote 14 for full citation.

muckraking literature and deemed as the exposé of the meat-packing industry, even though it is a work of fiction and came after numerous other Chicago newspaper serials on the matter.¹⁶

Another example of *The Jungle*'s hybrid consumption is the several instances in the text that the prose is broken and there is poetry, song, and other literary forms integrated in; such as when a character sings in Lithuanian¹⁷ or the narrator makes reference to a famous poem¹⁸.

In addition to the mixing of literary genres, the allusions to the work of other authors and the range across a variety of social classes and ethnicities seen in the character dialogue helps to capture the heteroglossia of the Progressive Era with an accuracy that Bakhtin describes as an acute facility of the novel's hybrid consumption of other genres. Bakhtin defines heteroglossia as the blending of multiple languages/utterances that forms a united and complex signification of the moment a text is written and read.¹⁹ For example, at one point in the novel Jurgis, a stockyard laborer and the main character of the novel, has a lengthy interaction with a drunk millionaire, Master Freddie.²⁰

Jurgis got a glimpse of the other. He was a young fellow – not much over eighteen, with a handsome boyish face. He wore a silk hat and a rich soft overcoat with a fur collar; and he smiled at Jurgis with benignant sympathy... They had started down the street, arm in arm, the young man pushing Jurgis along, half dazed. Jurgis was trying to think what to do – he knew he could not pass any crowded place with his new acquaintance without attracting attention and being stopped... “Here, ole man,” he said, “you take it.” He held it out fluttering. They were in front of a saloon;

¹⁶ My own research on a woman muckraker of the late nineteenth century, Nell Nelson, places her investigation and newspaper serial exposing parts of the meatpacking industry over fifteen years before Sinclair's *The Jungle*. See more here: nelson.newtfire.org. Also, in his biography, Anthony Arthur makes mention of the 1899 *Hearst* newspaper articles on “embalmed beef,” and Ernest Poole's 1904 article for Chicago's *The Independent* detailing stockyard strikes and conditions. Anthony Arthur, 45-47. See footnote 8 for full citation.

¹⁷ During a wedding ceremony there is a moment where Marija sings a Lithuanian love song. Sinclair provides the full lyrics of the song incorporating not only another genre of art into *The Jungle*, but also introducing a foreign language that would be commonly heard among the diverse ethnic communities of the stockyards. Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle*, Edited by Cynthia Brantley Johnson and Anna Maria Hong, Enriched Classics (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2004), 13.

¹⁸ At this point the narrator uses a misquotation of Matthew Arnold's 1849 poem “A Modern Sappho” to accentuate the desperation and anguish of a stockyard worker being swindled by a corrupt system of capitalization. Upton Sinclair, 94. See footnote 17 for full citation.

¹⁹ Mikhail Bakhtin, 409-411. See footnote 14 for full citation.

²⁰ Jurgis is begging on the streets when he meets a drunk Master Freddie. They spend the night drinking and eating at Mater Freddie's lush mansion on Lake Shore Drive (where the wealthy live). Upton Sinclair, Enriched Classics, 284-297. See footnote 17 for full citation.

and by the light of the window Jurgis saw that it was a hundred-dollar bill. "You take it," the other repeated. "Pay the cabbie an' keep the change – I've got – hic – no head for business! Guv'ner says so hisself, an' the guv'ner knows – the guv'ner's got a head for business, you bet! ... Hello, there! Hey! Call him!" A cab was driving by; and Jurgis sprang and called and it swung round the curb. Master Freddie clambered in with some difficulty, and Jurgis had started to follow, when the driver shouted: "Hi, there! Get out – you!" Jurgis hesitated, and was half obeying; but his companion broke out: "Whuzzat? Whuzzamatter wiz you, hey?" And the cabbie subsided, and Jurgis climbed in ... The youngster leaned back and snuggled up to Jurgis, murmuring contentedly; in half a minute he was sound asleep. Jurgis sat shivering, speculating as to whether he might not still be able to get hold of the roll of bills. He was afraid to try and go through his companion's pockets, however; and besides, the cabbie might be on the watch... At the end of half an hour or so the cab stopped. They were out on the water-front... He thought the young fellow must have made a mistake – it was inconceivable to him that any person could have a home like a hotel or the city hall. But he followed in silence, and they went up the long flight of steps, arm in arm... They stood for a moment blinking in the light. Then Jurgis felt his companion pulling, and he stepped in, and the blue automaton closed the door. Jurgis's heart was beating wildly; it was a bold thing for him to do – into what strange unearthly place he was venturing he had no idea.²¹

The distinct language used in the dialogue of the wealthy versus the poor and their differing perceptions on life detailed in the narration are blended together in this passage to create a unique scene that has become an identifiable society dynamic of Progressive Era. Instances in the novel like this where the voices vary in ethnic and socioeconomic insights highlight the heteroglossia of *The Jungle*. Another aspect of heteroglossia seen in this novel is the frequent allusions to other literary works. In their endnote remarks Anna Maria Hong and Cynthia Brantley Johnson declare over fifteen references to other literary works with approximately an additional five if including other works of art made mention in *The Jungle*.²² The works referred to range from Greek mythology and the Bible to Dante's *The Divine Comedy* and the works of more contemporary authors of Sinclair's time including Emile Zola and Jack London. This hybrid construction of referenced works, with such a large span of time represented, presents even more voices and instances of different languages, which offers further evidence of *The Jungle* meeting Bakhtin's theory of heteroglossia.

²¹ Upton Sinclair, *Enriched Classics*, 285-289. See footnote 17 for full citation.

²² Upton Sinclair, *Enriched Classics*, 423-437. See footnote 17 for full citation.

Bakhtin also discusses how the novel's existence in any particular moment in time is active; so that the novel creates a historical space in every moment it is read.²³ By this Bakhtin clarifies that although a novel may present a specific grouping of languages and meanings from the particular moment in history from which it comes the novel also has longevity so as the plot develops the reader creates a new relation of meaning based off of his/her current moment in time. In short, there is never a single understanding of a novel, and with every reading there is a new sense of relation to the text to be had for different periods of time and different types of readers. This is especially true in looking at *The Jungle* in that much of the novel's initial fame can be associated with a few time specific concerns: people's fear of meat poisoning, socialism, progressive regulations; however, as the novel was read at different times the meaning and moments of importance in the text shifted. For example Nicholas Karolides, in his book *Literature Suppressed on Political Grounds*, discusses several moments in history that the reading and selling of *The Jungle* was banned.²⁴ Each of these instances points to moments of time and place where a determining factor of how the message of the novel was perceived shifts; certainly the contents of the novel did not change, but the perception of the text did. At one point in his book Karolides discusses Senator McCarthy's 1953 "anticommunism campaign" that removed *The Jungle* from United States libraries overseas after deeming it as text that set a controversial image of America's policies against communism. In the very next paragraph, Karolides then discusses the known burning of the novel during World War II by the Germans who considered it as opposition to their communist viewpoints.²⁵ Nevertheless, *The Jungle* again succeeds as a novel, set forth by Bakhtin's description at least, because of its ability to maintain a

²³ Mikhail Bakhtin, 30. See footnote 14 for full citation.

²⁴ Nicholas J. Karolides, *Literature Suppressed on Political Grounds*, Revised Edition, Banned Books (New York: Facts on File, Inc. An Imprint of InfoBase Publishing, 2006), 284-86.

²⁵ Nicholas J. Karolides, 285. See footnote 19 for full citation.

moment in history even whilst the associated meaning of the text shifted. Therefore, when applying Bakhtin's literary theory on the distinguishing characteristics of a novel *The Jungle* is not the failure that many literary criticisms suggest.²⁶

Upton Sinclair Stuck in the Muck

Despite the fame of *The Jungle*, Sinclair's over ninety other publications are rarely associated with any notable popularity. Socialism was the ultimate downfall for Upton Sinclair's fame as an author. As discussed in the previous section, literary critics thought his socialist ideology overwhelmed the plots of his novels; meanwhile, other prominent figures, especially President Roosevelt, openly criticized Sinclair as a melodramatic agitator. Thus, Sinclair's one-hit wonder reputation as an author can be linked to the growing public perception, during *The Jungle*'s climb to fame, of him as nothing more than a socialist muckraker.

In writing *The Jungle*, Sinclair set out to bring public and political attention to the dire conditions experienced by the laborers of the capitalist industry. Prior to *The Jungle*'s publication Sinclair wrote a statement published in *The Appeal to Reason*, on Feb. 11th 1902, revealing his intentions to do for the wage laborers what Harriet Beecher Stowe did in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* for slave labor.²⁷ He had intended for *The Jungle* to agitate the public into taking

²⁶ The following are some of the sources researched that determined there is a generally negative perspective of *The Jungle*'s literary quality (in addition to these sources all of the biographies used for this paper made mention to the novel's literary criticisms): In his article, "Fiction/Nonfiction and Sinclair's *The Jungle*," Thomas Connery describes the unclear perception and classification of *The Jungle* as both fiction and nonfiction. He concludes that the only value of the novel as literature comes from its presence as a "cultural document" that preserves the kind of muckraking literature significant during the Progressive Era. Christopher Taylor, in his article "Inescapably Propaganda": Re-Classifying Upton Sinclair outside the Naturalist Tradition", discusses the criticism of *The Jungle* as a work of naturalism. Taylor debunks the failed naturalist argument by instead associating the novel with works of political propaganda again linking the novel purely to its moment in historical history. In the book *The Labor of Words Literary Professionalism in the Progressive Era*, by Christopher Wilson, discussion of the novels success as a naturalist novel and piece of muckraking literature are discussed; yet, the author makes it clear that the socialist language of the novel dried the literary quality out in the eyes of critics. Although all three of these sources attempt in some way or another to justify *The Jungle* as literature of a certain kind; they all fail to celebrate the novel as it was, a novel.

²⁷ William A., Jr. Bloodworth. *Upton Sinclair*. (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1977), 48.

action, through the acceptance of socialism, against the inhumane conditions of capitalist wage labor. In his biography on Sinclair, titled *Radical Innocent: Upton Sinclair*, Anthony Arthur discusses Sinclair's intentions:

Sinclair made a calculated decision to use Chicago's slaughterhouses as the setting for his book because doing so would broaden his base of readers and appeal to their self-interest. His true subject, however, was to be the working conditions that he thought approximated slavery. His argument would be that the capitalistic system behind such conditions should give way to socialism. He had virtually no interest in persuading readers that their meat was rotten except as a means of dramatizing the sad conditions of the workers who prepared it for them. People could always choose not to eat meat. Workers couldn't choose not to work if they wanted to live.²⁸

As it turns out the choice to write on the wide-spread public interest of the meat-packing industry resulted in the opposite reaction than Sinclair's intended agenda to make the public realize the necessity for a rise in socialism. Sinclair's objective "had already become secondary to the shock of its readers in learning of the conditions under which their meats were prepared in Packingtown, not as affecting the workers but as affecting their own health."²⁹ So much of the public concern became about the prospect of poisoned meat that Sinclair's push for a rise in socialism fell to the hype.

As discussed in the first section, much of *The Jungle*'s fame is associated with Roosevelt taking up the concerns of the novel in respect to the exposure of the meat-packing industry. Whereas President Roosevelt can be accredited for the increased recognition of the novel in that sense, his public opinion of Sinclair's 'socialist ranting'³⁰ did the opposite for Sinclair's socialist outline of the novel and the public's overall opinion of Sinclair as an author. As described in his

²⁸ Anthony Arthur, 44. See footnote 8 for full citation.

²⁹ Floyd Dell. *Upton Sinclair: A Study in Social Protest*. The Murray Hill Biographies, (New York: Albert and Charles Boni, 1927), 106.

³⁰ In a "Letter from Frank Nelson Doubleday to Theodore Roosevelt" on March 23, 1906 the publisher of *The Jungle* tell Roosevelt, "We are printing another large edition of the book, and I am trying again to get Mr. Sinclair to cut out what you so truly call 'ridiculous socialistic rant' at the end of his book." From this we get a clear idea of Roosevelt's opinion of Sinclair's socialism in *The Jungle*.

1906 speech in the wake of *The Jungle*'s publication Roosevelt termed investigative reporters as muckrakers:

In Bunyan's 'Pilgrim's Progress' you may recall the description of the Man with the Muck Rake, the man who could look no way but downward, with the muck rake in his hand; who was offered a celestial crown for his muck rake, but who would neither look up nor regard the crown he was offered, but continued to rake to himself the filth of the floor... Now, it is very necessary that we should not flinch from seeing what is vile and debasing. There is filth on the floor, and it must be scraped up with the muck rake; and there are times and places where this service is the most needed of all the services that can be performed. But the man who never does anything else, who never thinks or speaks or writes, save of his feats with the muck rake, speedily becomes, not a help but one of the most potent forces for evil.³¹

He clearly praises the work of investigative reporters, yet also warns against the public agitation that can be caused by an overzealous and overtly pessimistic muckraker.

Although Roosevelt does not outright mention Sinclair in this speech the president's public condemnation of obsessive muckrakers bared an obvious resemblance to the public perception of Sinclair.

Socialism ruled Sinclair's life once he discovered the Socialist newspaper, *The Appeal to Reason*, through his time investigating Chicago's stockyards and for the remainder of his life. Sinclair was an active member of the socialist movement "writing pieces for mass circulation journals" and developing a fellowship of other socialist writers and politicians.³² In his book, Greg Mitchell highlights some of Sinclair's public socialist involvement including: his running for Congress in New Jersey in 1906 as a socialist, his creation of the socialist Helicon Hall Colony, his arrest in 1914 following a socialist picketing of Rockefeller's office, his second run for Congress in 1920 again as a socialist, and his run for California governor in 1934 as the democratic nomination and a

³¹ "Theodore Roosevelt, "The Man with the Muck Rake." (April 15, 1906). Accessed April 1, 2016. http://www.presidentialrhetoric.com/historicspeeches/roosevelt_theodore/muckrake.html.

³² William A., Jr. Bloodworth. *Upton Sinclair*. U.S. Authors. Boston: Twayne Publishers, G. K. Hall & Co., 1977. Page 45.

socialist candidate.³³ Clearly Sinclair intended for his name to be associated with socialism, but since socialism has had periods of contention in history the public perception of Sinclair's other works as works of a socialist author has not aided his fame or the popularity of his other publications.

Deconstructing *The Jungle*

Sinclair's one-track ideology to defeat capitalism through exposure and his promotion of socialism not only derailed his fame as an author it also inadvertently marginalized women's roles in industrial labor and labor reform as well as displaced the reality of the specific conditions experienced by Chicago's laborers outside of the stockyards.

DERRIDA AND POOVEY!!!

Did Upton Sinclair's work displace / upstage / differentiate itself from the writings of women labor activists? Did *The Jungle* upstage a bigger range of publications by lots of people, including women muckrakers pre-dating Sinclair's work?

Want to include here a paragraph on the loss of the "real-ness" of the issues that needed exposed in Chicago. By having fictional characters, fictional depictions of places in place of real people, real places, and the real stories there is a disassociation that these very real circumstances discussed in the novel were affecting real people. Granted people understood there was reason for concern, but the focus became less on the actual injustice of people and instead towards what parts of the story could be true that directly affected themselves (their food supply).

Sinclair's willingness to engage in a plot with the ultimate goal of fueling socialism – as a work of political propaganda – associated some aspects of the plight of the working class with a specific ideal that left little room for the real situations people were in where outlets of socialism may have been present, but truly less accessible than how the ease Jurgis has in getting associated. Basically, Sinclair was offering an ideal solution to a problem where there were no ideal circumstances for the solution to be available exactly as they were in the novel for the fictional Jurgis.

Sinclair is less of a muckraker and more of a protest author that wrote a fictional novel that flirted with real situations, but ultimately didn't provide a real face to the horrors of the country's working class. By positioning Sinclair as a muckraker and considering reading his novel over the real accounts of other exposes we lose touch with the true reality of the social injustices of this time. It would be different if Sinclair was the only person to ever write on the topic, but he

³³ Greg Mitchell, *The Campaign of the Century: Upton Sinclair's Race for Governor of California and the Birth of Media Politics* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1992).

wasn't! In fact a female reporter for the Chicago Times, under the pseudonym Nell Nelson, wrote on the same injustices twenty years prior to *The Jungle*.³⁴ By centralizing the image of a muckraker on Sinclair we have lost site in history of those exposes that provided the true experience of being a laborer during this time.

Women Lost in *The Jungle*

The text provides a minimalistic perspective of women's labor and the efforts of women's labor reform. There is little offered overall in regards to women of that time as a whole besides their representation in relation to male characters. A centering of the novel on the excessive recognition of the male laborer's plight and how socialism offers men the opportunity to escape capitalistic slavery marginalizes women's labor and their comparably malignant fates during this time. WE ARE TALKING CHICAGO HOME OF HULL HOUSE AND GROUNDBREAKING WOMEN'S LABOR REFORM AND ALL WE GET FROM THE JUNGLE IS A SEXUALIZED IMAGE OF A WOMAN AT A RALLY IN A BRIEF PARAGRAPH OTHERWISE HELPLESS WOMEN THAT ONLY HAVE A PLACE IN THE HOME OR IN THE BED.

How about women in the novel in general? Bring in digital humanities distant reading regular expression searching for women versus other socialism, meat, and men. Always less. What does this say?

³⁴ Include link and brief explanation of Nell Nelson. www.nelson.newfire.org

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