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# 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 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 1905. 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 1906[1]. 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 propelled *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

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*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 and capitalist 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

[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. Harold Howland, *Theodore Roosevelt and His Times: A Chronicle of the Progressive Movement* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1921), 76.

[3] This range of years is based on some historians' claims that the start of American industrialization came with 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] Howland, 93.

extensive accumulation of wealth being monopolized by the few at the expense of the many.[5] "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 regarding what others had read in *The Jungle*, Roosevelt reached out to Sinclair and scheduled a meeting with him, at the White House, 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, did not trust that first investigation.[9] He invited Sinclair to lead a small, discrete group of investigators through the Chicago stockyards to

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[5] Howland makes a clear distinction between Roosevelt and the next two presidents (Taft and Wilson) by noting that Roosevelt was more on the side of regulation and separating the good trusts from the bad; whereas, the following two presidents more aggressively fought for complete dissolution of all trusts. Howland, 85-90.
[6] Howland, 106.
[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] Arthur, 74-75.

give evidence of the novel's claims. Sinclair became immediately aware that the supposed secret that the investigative team was commissioned by the President was known to the meat-packers. Sinclair sent for 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 disturbing evidence of the Chicago meat industry to the investigators, and Roosevelt was served a report of vile and disgusting conditions 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 regularly 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.

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[10] Arthur, 75-77.
[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 and would plummet the economic reliance on international meat sales. Arthur, 79-81.
[12] Howland, 105-106.

**Genre and Medium**

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

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[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] Bakhtin, 7.

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 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 Lithuanian[17] or the narrator makes reference to a famous poem.[18]

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

[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. Arthur, 45-47.

[17] During a wedding ceremony there is a moment when 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. Sinclair, 94.

[19] Bakhtin, 409-411.

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; 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 linked to the 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 an additional five if including works of art, made mention in *The Jungle*.[22] The works referred to

[20] Jurgis is begging on the streets when he meets the drunk Master Freddie. They spend the night drinking and eating at Master Freddie's lush mansion on Lake Shore Drive (where the wealthy live). Sinclair, Enriched Classics, 284-297.
[21] Sinclair, Enriched Classics, 285-289.
[22] Sinclair, Enriched Classics, 423-437.

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.

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 on 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

[23] Bakhtin, 30.
[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.

removed *The Jungle* from United States libraries oversees after deeming it as text that provided 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 its socialist assertions 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 moment in history even whilst the associated meaning of the text shifted. Therefore, upon 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.

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[25] Karolides, 285.

[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 cited made mention to the novel's known 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 historical moment. In the book *The Labor of Words Literary Professionalism in the Progressive Era*, by Christopher Wilson, discusses the novel's success as a naturalist novel and piece of muckraking literature; yet, the author makes it clear that the socialist language of the novel drained the novel of any literary quality according to 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 is, a novel.

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 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 with his 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.

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[27] William A., Jr. Bloodworth. *Upton Sinclair*. (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1977), 48.
[28] Arthur, 44.
[29] Floyd Dell. *Upton Sinclair: A Study in Social Protest*. The Murray Hill Biographies, (New York: Albert and Charles Boni, 1927), 106.

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 1906 speech in the wake of *The Jungle*'s republication 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 bore an obvious resemblance to the public perception of Sinclair and the socialist characters of his stories. For example, in *The Jungle*, Sinclair includes a four-page speech from a socialist speaker (among many other instances of socialist raving intermixed in the plot). Here is an example of the kind of agitating socialist language seen in the novel that helped readers to make that connection between Sinclair and the fanatical muckrakers Roosevelt addressed in his speech:

> Because I feel sure that in the crowd that has come to me tonight, no matter how many may be dull and heedless, no matter how many may have come out of idle curiosity, or in order to ridicule--there will be some one man whom pain and suffering have made desperate, whom some chance vision of wrong and horror has startled and shocked into attention. And to him my words will come like a sudden flash of lightning to one who travels in darkness--revealing the way before

[30] In a "Letter from Frank Nelson Doubleday to Theodore Roosevelt" on March 23, 1906 the publisher of *The Jungle* tells 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;" this quote is a clear indication of Roosevelt's opinion of Sinclair's socialism in *The Jungle*.

[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.

> him, the perils and the obstacles--solving all problems, making all difficulties clear! The scales will fall from his eyes, the shackles will be torn from his limbs--he will leap up with a cry of thankfulness, he will stride forth a free man at last! A man delivered from his self-created slavery! A man who will never more be trapped--whom no blandishments will cajole, whom no threats will frighten; who from tonight on will move forward, and not backward, who will study and understand, who will gird on his sword and take his place in the army of his comrades and brothers. Who will carry the good tidings to others, as I have carried them to him--priceless gift of liberty and light that is neither mine nor his, but is the heritage of the soul of man! Working-men, working-men--comrades! Open your eyes and look about you! You have lived so long in the toil and heat that your senses are dulled, your souls are numbed; but realize once in your lives this world in which you dwell--tear off the rags of its customs and conventions--behold it as it is, in all its hideous nakedness! Realize it, realize it![32]

In fact, Jurgis once turned on to socialism becomes so obsessive that he chooses to live in a hotel instead of with what remains of his family so as to remain heavily involved in the socialist movement presented in the novel. Jurgis's escape to a better life essentially becomes his involvement in the socialist movement. Sinclair's treatment of socialism as the sole solution to Jurgis's fight against the plights placed on him by capitalism emphasizes Sinclair's extensive commitment to socialism.

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.[33] In his book, Greg Mitchell highlights some of Sinclair's public socialist involvement including: his 1906 running for Congress in New Jersey 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 nominee and a

[32] Sinclair, Enriched Classics, 369-370.
[33] Bloodworth, 45.

socialist candidate.[34] Clearly Sinclair intended for his name to be associated with socialism, but socialism's periods of contention in history have resulted in the public's perception of Sinclair's other works as works of a socialist author has not aided his fame or the popularity of his other publications. At one point in *The Jungle* it is said about socialism that "when a man was first converted to Socialism he was like a crazy person -- he could not understand how others could fail to see it, and he expected to convert all the world the first week."[35] This quote embodies the very perspective the public began to have of Sinclair as his continual push for socialism took over his reputation.

**Deconstructing *The Jungle***

Sinclair's one-track ideology to defeat capitalism through his preferment of socialism not only derailed his fame as an author, but 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. Jacques Derrida, in "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," describes his theory of deconstruction as a process of identifying structural center(s) of a work or discourse and then observing what is left marginalized and unsaid due to that centralized focus.[36] On a macro level the emphasis on *The Jungle* as <u>the</u> exposé or as one of the best pieces of muckraking literature marginalizes the writings of other muckrakers that exposed reality of the conditions of the Progressive Era through non-fiction. Sinclair, in the light of other muckrakers, becomes less of a true investigative reporter and more of a protest author that wrote a fictional novel that flirted with

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[34] 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).
[35] Sinclair, Enriched Classics, 383.
[36] Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" in *Global Literary Theory: An Anthology*, edited by Richard J. Lane, 94–106. New York: Routledge, 2013.

real situations, but ultimately didn't provide a real face to the horrors of the country's working class. By canonizing Sinclair's novel as the muckraking literature for students to read over the real accounts of other exposés 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 every write on the topic, but as this paper presents he clearly was not. By centralizing the image of a muckraker on Sinclair we have lost sight in history of those exposés that provided a more realistic experience of being a laborer during this time. Featuring fictional characters and fictional depictions of places instead of real people, places, and stories creates a disassociation that these very real circumstances discussed in the novel were affecting actual 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).

By applying deconstruction to the novel itself two centers emerge: the faults of the meat-packing industry and Sinclair's socialism. As these centers are further examined the margins, what Sinclair left out, become increasingly more evident. Sinclair's choice to set the novel in the stockyard of Chicago ultimately disregarded the conditions of laborers in other industries. The novel pays no mind to the people toiling their lives away in the numerous textile factories and other commodity-based industries. Once Jurgis gets out of the stockyards he experiences a blissful freedom in the countryside, "He was a free man now, a buccaneer. The old wanderlust had got into his blood, the joy of the unbound life, the joy of seeking, of hoping without limit. There were mishaps and discomforts – but at least there was always something new; and only think what it meant to a man who for years had been penned up in one place seeing nothing but one dreary prospect of shanties and factories, to be suddenly set loose beneath the open sky, to

behold new landscapes, new places, and new people every hour!"[37] To only offer this binary portrayal of Chicago, either stockyard or country, leaves out all of the previous mentioned possibilities to discuss the inhumane conditions of other industries that put Chicago on the map as an industrialized city. Sinclair's socialism fueled plot also marginalized aspects of labor reform left undiscussed in *The Jungle*. The ultimate solution to Jurgis's plights becomes socialism, which associated the plight of the working class with a specific resolution that left little room for the real situations people faced. In reality, outlets of socialism may have been present, but often were not as accessible or ideal as they were perceived in *The* Jungle. Walter Rideout writes, "Jurgis's militant acceptance of Socialism is far less creatively realized than his previous victimization is indicative of how Sinclair's outraged moral idealism is attracted more to the pathos than the power of the poor."[38] Basically, Sinclair was offering an ideal solution to a problem where there was no ideal circumstances. In only offering this one solution, with the dismissal of unions, the other groups (typically made up of laborers) that organized to fight for labor reform get no recognition in the novel. The importance of unions is offered little page time, and every character's interaction with the union results in failure. Sinclair was pointedly faulting the unions for straying from pure Socialist idealism and gave organized labor movements no chance to agitate meaningfully and effectively in this novel. This constant failure of the union system and complete absence of aid programs, like the Hull House, in *The Jungle* allowed Sinclair to offer socialism as <u>the</u> solution to be free of the corruption associated with industrialization. However, unions and social settlements are historically known to have been the driving forces of Chicago's labor reform movement.

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[37] Sinclair, Enriched Classics, 265.
[38] Walter Rideout, "*The Jungle*'s Conclusion Weakens Sinclair's Message About Workers' Rights," in *Workers' Rights in Upton Sinclair's The Jungle,* edited by Gary Weiner (New York: Greenhaven Press, 2008), 123-124.

**Women Lost in *The Jungle***

The most striking marginalization in *The Jungle* is the limited perspective of women and their societal roles. Through the application of a digital, distant-reading method using regular expression matching to locate every instance of male-related words ("gentleman," "man," "men", male pronouns) as well as every instance of female-related words ("woman," "women", "lady", female pronouns) it was discovered that the male references occurred 966 times in comparison to the 290 female references. This ratio of 1:3 female to male references helps to illustrate the marginalized presence of women in *The Jungle.*[39] Certainly Sinclair allowed for a few main characters in the novel to be women; however, they represent a very narrow perspective of women in comparison to the complexity of the male roles in society that Sinclair characterized. He represents male characters as politicians, husbands, members of the working-class, company owners, philanthropists, wealthy, poor, healthy, and sick and each of those roles in some way compliments his socialist agenda. In contrast, the women characters all fall under a single umbrella of a working class woman and all of those women fall to illness, death, and/or prostitution. Over and over again women all of a lower socioeconomic class fall to the means of men. None of the complex societal roles of women are represented. The class differences of women as well as the complex domestic roles women characteristically occupied during the Progressive Era are nonexistent in *The Jungle*. 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

[39] In his book, *Distant Reading,* Moretti introduces the phrase "distant reading" as the application of computational processing to a whole text at once to discover patterns from far away as an alternative to the traditional emphasis in literature and humanities on the "close reading" of texts. Franco Moretti, *Distant Reading*. London: Verso, 2013. The XML markup was completed on this version of the text: Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle*, 2006, https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/140.

time. In her response to Derrida's deconstruction theory and French Feminism, Mary Poovey asserts, "Real historical women have been (and are) oppressed, and the ways and means of that oppression need to be analyzed and fought. But at the same time, we need to be ready to abandon the binary thinking that has stabilized women as a group that could be collectively (although not uniformly) oppressed."[40] In past analyses of women's representation in *The Jungle*, including Scott Derrick's "What a beating feels like: authorship, dissolution, and masculinity in Sinclair's *The Jungle*," the novel's female characters are analyzed with a heavy emphasis on their biological opposition to men.[41] Poovey suggests, in her theory, that in order to use deconstruction to emphasize feminine oppression the focus from the biological difference with men needs to be shifted instead to the roles women uphold outside of what is purely due to their sex. Poovey's method of feminine deconstruction helps to illuminate the societal roles that have been marginalized in *The Jungle* by Sinclair's socialist agenda, and not dwelling on the uniquely female perspective that is lost.

Sinclair uses the female characters as vehicles for his socialist goal and pushes the reality of women's roles in society to the margins of the novel. This is especially seen in regards to the reality of women's involvement in the labor movement versus Sinclair's representation.

> And then suddenly came a voice in his ear, a woman's voice, gentle and sweet, "If you would try to listen, comrade, perhaps you would be interested." Jurgis was more startled by that than he would have been by the touch of a policeman. He still kept his eyes fixed ahead, and did not stir; but his heart gave a great leap. Comrade! Who was it that called him "comrade"? He waited long, long; and at last, when he was sure that he was no longer watched, he stole a glance out of the corner of his eyes at the woman who sat beside him. She was young and beautiful; she wore fine clothes, and was what is called a "lady." And she called him "comrade"! He turned a little, carefully, so that he could see her better; then he began to watch her, fascinated. She had apparently forgotten all about him, and was looking toward the platform. A man was speaking there--Jurgis heard his voice vaguely; but all his thoughts were for this woman's face. A feeling of alarm stole over him as he stared at her. It made his flesh creep. What was the matter with her,

[40] Mary Poovey, "Feminism and Deconstruction" in *Global Literary Theory: An Anthology*, edited by Richard J. Lane (New York: Routledge, 2013), 114-115.

[41] Derrick deems *The Jungle* as a misogynist text based on his observations of the male fear of feminine authority and their distaste for the reproductive nature of women. Scott Derrick, "What a Beating Feels like: Authorship, Dissolution, and Masculinity in Sinclair's *The Jungle*)," *Studies in American Fiction* 23, no. 1 (1995).

> what could be going on, to affect any one like that? She sat as one turned to stone, her hands clenched tightly in her lap, so tightly that he could see the cords standing out in her wrists. There was a look of excitement upon her face, of tense effort, as of one struggling mightily, or witnessing a struggle. There was a faint quivering of her nostrils; and now and then she would moisten her lips with feverish haste. Her bosom rose and fell as she breathed, and her excitement seemed to mount higher and higher, and then to sink away again, like a boat tossing upon ocean surges. What was it? What was the matter? It must be something that the man was saying, up there on the platform. What sort of a man was he? And what sort of thing was this, anyhow? -- So all at once it occurred to Jurgis to look at the speaker. It was like coming suddenly upon some wild sight of nature--a mountain forest lashed by a tempest, a ship tossed about upon a stormy sea. Jurgis had an unpleasant sensation, a sense of confusion, of disorder, of wild and meaningless uproar.[42]

In this passage we see Sinclair use the sexual appeal of a woman to turn Jurgis on (literally) to socialism, but nothing else. There is no sense of women's role in socialism or their work to unionize for the sake of all working people (children and immigrants included: two sets of laborers *The Jungle* includes in its exposure). A number of other scenes with women involved are used prior to Jurgis's introduction to socialism to set him up as a victim of industrialization without any real emphasis or detail on the plights of the actual women in the scenes. At one point, Jurgis discovers his wife, Ona, has been forced by an employer to have sex and sell herself to other men. The scene lasts but a few pages until ending with Jurgis fighting her fight by chasing the employer down and beating him to a pulp. This event lands Jurgis in jail: a reoccurring memory in the novel that encourages Jurgis's involvement in socialist movement. In a scene soon after Jurgis is released from jail Ona (his wife) dies during child birth. Again the situation develops in a relatively short couple of pages and the reader gets practically nothing of the real experience had by Ona on her death bed. All we are shown are Jurgis's anguish and his horrified thoughts as he awaits the midwife's news as the scene again just emphasizes Jurgis's victim status. Then in another scene Jurgis discovers his cousin-in-law has been living in a brothel to support the family he abandoned. The scene comes and goes with her confession to a

[42] Sinclair, Enriched Classics, 366.

loss of morals and drug addiction in just a few short sentences before Jurgis resolves to bury his mind in socialism and be rid of the family shame.

Overall, the text provides a minimalistic perspective of women's labor and the efforts of women's labor reform. What makes this most evident is the plot's setting in Chicago: home of the Hull House. As Chicago's first and the nation's most influential settlement house, the Hull House was established by Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr in Chicago on September 18, 1889. Known to offer programs that provided for working-class women and children in particular, the reputation of the Hull House has been a long-standing association made with Chicago's labor reform movement. The society's women participated in social reform locally and nationally; in fact, Sinclair stayed there for several weeks while investigating the stock yards prior to writing *The Jungle*. Yet, there is no mention of the Hull House, no mention of the women's labor movement, and an overall absence of strong women labor reformists in *The Jungle*. Essentially the women of Chicago are lost in *The Jungle.*

In conclusion, *The Jungle* as a novel is more successful than it is often given credit. Whereas typically its popularity is largely accredited to Roosevelt and his meat-packing regulations, Bakhtin's theory of heteroglossia helps to highlight the multitude of languages represented in the text and how this blending of utterances is a sign of quality literature. Sinclair's establishment of a strong socialist perspective throughout the novel ultimately pushes him to the margins of authorial fame. A combination of Sinclair's socialist ideology and the focus on the meat-packing industry marginalized laborers outside of the stockyards and women (in particular Chicago's women involved in labor reform) to the margins of the labor movement, which contrasts the reality of the societal complexities and reform efforts of the Progressive Era.

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