A Biographical and Critical Study on Upton Beall Sinclair: The Pioneer of New Journalism in America

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摘要

一九五○年代的美國，一種新文體──新新聞──大行其道。本論文係研究新文體之先驅者辛克萊的寫作生涯。辛克萊係美國小說家兼新聞工作者，積極參與美國歷史上進步時期的進步運動。身為暴露小說之大師，他暴露了當代美國社會諸多醜陋面。分析研究他集新聞工作者、小說家、劇作家及散文家於一身的寫作生涯，我們確信辛克萊是當代美國文學界的哥倫布，他發現一片文學領域的新大陸，而這塊新大陸直至一九六○年代始被命名為「新新聞」，又叫做「非小說小說」──一種新的文體、新的文體。

關鍵詞：新新聞，非小說小說，進步時期，暴露小說，揭發醜陋運動，清潔食品及藥物法，辛克萊，叢林。
ABSTRACT

This is a biographical and critical study on Upton Beall Sinclair as a pioneer of new journalism—a new form of narrative flourishing in the United States in the 1960s.

Sinclair, an American journalist and novelist, was involved in the progressive movement in the Progressive Age in the history of the United States. As master of novels of exposure, he exposed the most defective aspects of contemporary American society. From the analytical research of his life-span career as a journalist, novelist, dramatist, essayist, and pamphleteer, we are sure that Sinclair is a Columbus in the history of American literature. And the new continent of literature discovered by him is not known until the 1960s as new journalism or non-fiction fiction—a new genre of literature, a new form of narrative.

Key words: new journalism, non-fiction fiction, the Progressive Age, novels of exposure, the muckraking movement, the Pure Food and Drug Act, Upton Beall Sinclair, The Jungle.
I. Upton Beall Sinclair’s Life

Upton beall Sinclair (1878–1968) has been an indefatigable novelist, dramatist, essayist, journalist, pamphleteer, and citizen-of-the-world. He is the author of some eighty full-length books which, in addition to their notoriety among English-speaking peoples, have been translated into approximately sixty languages and published in more than a thousand separate editions in some fifty-five countries. (1) According to recent statistics, he has published 772 novels which has been translated into 47 different languages and published in 37 countries. (2) There are nine tons’ collection of the papers of Upton Sinclair at Indiana University library. (3)

1. A “Poor Relation”

Upton Sinclair was born in Baltimore, Maryland, on September 20, 1878, of a Southern family. His ancestors had been British and American naval officers, and his grandfather, two granduncles, three uncles, and his father had all served in the Confederate navy. His mother belonged to a well-to-do family of Maryland. At that times, the better people in Baltimore had always looked down on tradesmen, especially if they were Yankees.

He was reared in a home impoverished by the Civil War and by his father’s heavy drinking. After the War, Sinclair’s father became a liquor salesman, and was one of his own best, or worst, customers, was unable to support his family, and slowly and terribly drank himself to death. Sinclair’s early memories were of his father’s periodic drunkenness and remorse, of hunting for bedbugs in miserable hotel rooms, of dining with an aristocratic grandmother, in great style, on bread and dried herring; then of visiting rich relatives like Uncle Bland, founder of the United States Fidelity and Guaranty Company, or Grandfather Harden, treasurer of the Western Maryland Railway, who was recalled as a silent old man constantly carving
unending quantities of chickens, turkeys, ducks and hams.

In his book of reminiscences, American Outpost, Sinclair said, "From the first days I can remember, my life was a series of Cinderella transformations; one night sleeping on a vermin–ridden sofa in a lodging–house, and the next night under silken coverlet in a fashionable home. It was always a question of one thing—whether my father had the money for that week's board, if he didn't, my mother paid a visit to her father, the railroad official."(4) He explained that the psychology as a "poor relation" was one of his reasons for becoming a social rebel.

2. School Days

In 1888 the family moved to New York, and the ten–year–old boy first attended school on the East Side. A lover of books, he was an apt student and finished grammar school, after two years, at twelve. In 1892, at the age of fourteen, after repeating the final year of school because he was too young to enter upon the combined high–school and college course, he enrolled at the College of the City of New York and, refusing an offer of an appointment to the United States Naval Academy, studied to be a lawyer.

During his college years, he earned his own living by selling jokes for newspapers and romances for pulp magazine. A story he wrote while he was in college, however, was accepted for publication by Argosy at twenty–five dollars; and from the age of fifteen he supported himself with his pen. He received his bachelor's degree in 1898. Upon graduation, he secured work writing for popular magazines. He wrote about fifty stories of West Point life for Street and Smith's "Starry Flag Library" and a considerable number of tales of life at Annapolis for the same publisher's "True Blue Library."

While he was a student at Columbia, before he was twenty, he was a full–fledged hack writer, with an income of $70 a week, two secretaries, and a weekly output of fifty–six thousand words of patriotic drivel about the
Spanish–American War. This was an almost incredible task. He studied at Columbia University until 1900. And the hack-writing supported him while he read, practiced the violin, and sampled courses at Columbia, including two given by Edward MacDowell.

He was intense, nervous, chaste, easily influenced, perplexed about religious problems and worried about sex, an amateur violinist who lectured his sweethearts about venereal diseases, went on fantastic bicycle rides of a hundred miles a day and suffered from blinding surges of unfocused emotion that he interpreted as symptoms of genius.

In those first years Sinclair was a foreshadowing of the kind of titanic Weltschmerz which Thomas Wolfe was to personify all his life, and like Wolfe he became such a flood of words that he began to write romantic epics around himself. His subject was the young Upton Sinclair and his world young Upton Sinclair’s enthusiasms. He had many enthusiasms—he was intermittently enthusiastic about chastity, for example—and in that early period before he turned to Socialism, he gave full vent to his insurgence in lyrical early books like Springtime and Harvest (later republished as King Midas) and The Journal of Arthur Stirling. These books were Sinclair’s Sorrows of Werther.

3. His Marriage

At twenty-two, in 1900, he married the adoring Meta Fuller, and endured with her several years of drudging poverty, desperately trying to publish his first novels and performing more hack work in order to keep his wife and newly-born son alive.

His wife was separated from him by her parents after the birth of their son. In 1903, borrowing money from a Socialist friend, he had his wife rejoined him together with their child to live in poverty in a house in the woods outside Princeton—they were sick, humiliated, borrowing money and begging for subsidies, so harassed that once Sinclair, “grim and implacable,”
forced his wife to return a thirty-cent tablecloth she had purchased, and once he awakened at night to find her with a revolver in her hand, preparing to kill herself. He spent three years and a half there, much of the time living in a cabin he had helped build, while writing *Manassas* and *The Jungle*.

The Sinclairs had no point of contact with their immediate environment. Sinclair had no faith in the poor farmers who were their neighbors; he felt sorry for them and he understood why they were poor and demoralized, but his essential attitude is expressed in his description of families containing "drunkards, degenerates, mental or physical defectives, semi-idiots, victims of tuberculosis or venereal diseases." Nor was there any companionship or strength or assistance to be drawn from middle-class friends. The smooth intellectuals from Princeton, paying attention to his wife, evidently aroused in the novelist such animosity that when he came to create the most despicable character in his works he identified him only as a Princeton man.

In 1912 he made a trip to Europe. In the Netherlands he secured a divorce from his wife, and he visited Socialists in England and Germany. After his return in 1913 he married Mary Craig Kimbrough.

Sinclair's *Love's Pilgrimage* (1911) was said to be an autobiographical novel. Thyris, the hero, was really Sinclair himself. And the whole story was the story of his sorrowful life with Meta Fuller. However, Walter Lippman criticized that *Love's Pilgrimage* was just the result of Sinclair's rebelling against marriage.②

4. The "Helicon Home Colony"

At twenty-eight Sinclair was a national figure with *The Jungle*. He had a fortune of $30,000 from it, and spent most of the money in building the "Helicon Home Colony."

Helicon Home Colony was a communal experiment founded at Englewood, New Jersey, in 1906, by Upton Sinclair and some 40 associates,
mostly young married writers. The mothers co-operated in the care of their children, and the household workers, one of whom was Sinclair Lewis, were treated as equals by residents. Distinguished visitors included John Dewey, William James, and Emma Goldman. The project suffered much vilification in the press, and was abandoned in 1907 when the main building was destroyed by fire. And Sinclair himself discharged all the debts. Subsequently he was a member of single-tax communities in Alabama and Delaware. 

Sinclair’s own words on the "Helicon Home Colony" will be quoted as follows:

I had always been very poor and now I had some money; also I had a cherished faith that in cooperation lay the remedy for most of our social ills. An ardent utopian. I published, on June 14, 1906, in a weekly magazine, the Independent, my program to establish a co-operative home, a small community of writers who with their families would share the burdens of housekeeping and child care.

So came into existence the "Helicon Home Colony." I bought, mostly on mortgage, what seemed to me a dream place, a large and beautiful building which had been a fashionable boys' school, close to the Palisades of the Hudson River and not far from New York City.

Soon this luxurious co-operative home was filled with "intellectuals," all pleased with its informality and congenial atmosphere. Among those who came at the outset, in November, 1906, were two students who had left Yale in their senior year, preferring my brand of education—or so they said. So it was that I came to know a novelist-to-be who was destined to be the first American awarded the Nobel Prize for literature—and who in the presence of the
King of Sweden would tell the world that Upton Sinclair was "internationally better known than any other American artist whatsoever."

His name was Harry Sinclair Lewis. Very soon he and his friend, Allen Updegraff, had discovered another writer-to-be, my young secretary at the colony, Edith Summers. These three asked the privilege of a table to themselves in our dining room; we called it amiably "the literary table."

5. The Candidate for the Award of the Nobel Prize for Literature

In the autumn of 1931 there was formed a committee of nineteen "holders or former holders of academic positions" to recommend to the Swedish Academy of letters the name of Upton Sinclair as candidate for the award of the Nobel prize for literature. The document signed by these scholars was as follows.(8)

"The terms of the Nobel bequest provide that the award shall be made to one who has produced in the field of literature the most distinguished work of an idealistic tendency. For thirty years Upton Sinclair has been making contributions to American literature which seem to us to come under this classification. He is the author of some forty volumes of fiction, drama, economics, and social and literary criticism, and is unquestionably the most widely read of writers living today; his books have been translated into more than thirty languages, and have profoundly affected the thinking of both the masses and the more alert portion of the cultured world. We consider his greatest novels, as The Jungle, Love's Pilgrimage, Oil, Boston, an outstanding achievement in the contemporary
fiction of all lands, for their mastery of fact, for their social vision, for consistent, honest and courageous thinking, for humanitarian passion, and for vitality and sweep of creative art."

Upton Sinclair, however, was not awarded the Nobel Prize for literature. It was Harry Sinclair Lewis who was the first American awarded the Nobel Prize for literature, and it was in 1930, one year before Sinclair's being recommended as a candidate. The second American winner of the prize was Eugene O'Neill, and it was in 1936, five years later.

6. Political Activity

In 1905 Upton Sinclair and Jack London, along with Clarence Darrow and Thomas Wentworth Higginson of Boston, formed the Intercollegiate Socialist Society which, banned by the Yale authorities, caused William Lyon Phelps to inquire if his college was a monastery. The Society later became the League for Industrial Democracy. Sinclair also founded the California branch of the American Civil Liberties Union in 1923.

As an active member of the Socialist party, Sinclair was the Socialist candidate for Congress for New Jersey in 1906. In California where he founded the American Civil Liberties Union, he was the Socialist candidate for Congress in 1920, for the Senate in 1922, and for governor in 1926 and 1930. In 1934, on the platform of a public-works program of "production for use," designed to "end poverty in California" (E.P.I.C.), he secured the Democratic nomination for governor of the state. In the election, however, he was defeated. His EPIC plan was explained in his pamphlet, I, Governor of California—And How I Ended Poverty (1933).

During the war, he resigned from the Socialist party to protest against the antiwar position taken by its leaders in 1917. Assuming the good faith of the Allied governments, he consistently supported the Wilson administration.
In 1918–19 he published Upton Sinclair's, a magazine supporting "a clean peace and the internation." This magazine let him protest against the repression against him of the press in those days. In 1919, when Sinclair's The Profits of Religion appeared, his one-time friend, Michael Williams, had become editor of Commonweal, a weekly magazine in New York, and also a member of the board of directors of the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music, wrote and published in his magazine a bitter attack upon Sinclair's The Profits of Religion, entitled A Prophet for Profits. Sinclair told in his magazine, Upton Sinclair's, the story of his dealing with his faithless friend, Michael Williams.\(^9\) Sinclair said:

Early in 1919 I published a book, The Profits of Religion: A Study of Supernaturalism as a Source of Income and a Shield to Privilege. The book was an attack, not upon religion, but upon the abuse of religin throughout the ages. It gave offense to many of the partisans of privilege, among them a one-time friend, Michael Williams. Mike and I had met at the Battle Creek Sanitarium, and had collaborated on a book called Good Health: And How We Won It. To write the book I had taken Mike, his wife, two children, a nurse and a secretary, to Bermuda, paying all the expenses for the winter. When the book was finished, Mike took the manuscript and his family to New York, the agreement being that he would find a publisher and send me half the proceeds. He had received an advance of $2,500 and put it all into his pocket, leaving me stranded in Bermuda. That was in 1908; and in 1919, when The Profits of Religion appeared, Mike had become editor of Commonweal, a weekly magazine in New York, and also a member of the board of directors of the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music; but he had never
refunded the money. He now wrote and published in his magazine a bitter attack upon my book, entitled *A Prophet for Profits*. At this time I had a small monthly called *Upton Sinclair's*, and I told there the story of my dealings with my faithless friend. The unhappy man later died an alcoholic.

*The Brass Check*, published in 1919, was Sinclair's autobiographical account of his life of struggling against the New York newspapers from the time when *The Jungle* marked him as a dangerous foe of capitalism and privilege.\(^{11}\)

Being the defender of the miners striking against the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company, and by picketing the offices of Mr. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Sinclair brought the Ludlow Massacre to the attention of the country. It was a campaign of publicity, and both in Colorado and New York Sinclair had adventures with newspapers and the Associated Press.\(^{11}\)

In 1923, when, in the course of a harbor strike, the right of free speech was denied by Los Angeles police to members of the Industrial Workers of the World, Sinclair was arrested for publicly reading aloud to his associates three sentences from the Constitution guaranteeing freedom of speech.

### 7. His Philosophy

As a socialist, Sinclair preached a gospel of Christian brotherhood as the basis for the solution of mankind's social and economic difficulties. His concept of brotherhood has been dramatized again and again. He believed in state ownership of natural resources and utilities. Seldom did he miss an opportunity in his books to point out the contrast between conditions as they were at their worst under capitalism and as they could be at their best under socialism.\(^{12}\)

The creed he embraced was a blend of Marx and the Christian ethic; and in it he found *The Answer* to all the grievous wrongs of society. It provided a magnificently simple explanation for his own sufferings and for
the misery all about him, plus an equally simple and splendid remedy.  

Sinclair’s conversion to Socialism seemed to have been more of a religious than a political experience. Neither his career nor his writing indicated that he ever understood the essential nature of American politics, and he never seemed to be greatly interested in the day-to-day processes of government. His politics were apocalyptic, rather than practical. He was much too intent on building the New Jerusalem to worry about repairing the streets in the Fourteenth Precinct.

Socialist as he is, he ardently desires the abolition of private property, and his loyalties are not divided as Jack London’s. But the conception of the class struggle, so fundamental in Marx’s philosophy, the idea that the proletariat and only the proletariat will create the socialist state, has remained alien to him. His socialism has always been of the emotional sort, a direct response to his own environment, and, as a result of his failure to undergo an intense intellectual discipline, he has never eradicated the effects of bourgeois upbringing. Though his aim has been socialistic, his psychology has remained that of the liberal. Therefore, whether he realizes it or not, he is always writing for the middle class, trying to persuade his fellows to take their share of the burden of humanity’s future, to pity the poor worker and strive for his betterment. Even his pamphlets are aimed at the middle class: The Brass Check proposes a weekly newspaper under liberal auspices; The Profits of Religion calls on the devout to put the churches on a rational basis; The Goose-Step demands the reform of the colleges by means of a teachers’ strike.

Sinclair’s importance to the prewar literature is that he took his revolt seriously, he took himself seriously—how seriously we may guess from his statement that the three greatest influences on his thought were Jesus, Hamlet, and Shelley. A more ambitious writer as such would never have been able to indulge in so many heroics; but Sinclair seems to have felt from the first the kind of personal indignation against society which could
be quickly channeled into a general criticism of society, and that capacity for indignation gave him his sense of mission.

Sinclair has attributed the vitality of his idealism, which has led him to sacrifice money, health, and position to his cause, to his early realization, as a poor member of a wealthy family, of the evils of inequality and to the influence of the Christian religion nominally professed by his relatives. His interests, reach out to matters of health and inquiries concerning mental and spiritualistic phenomena. His stanch advocacy of prohibition he ascribes to his early memories of his father’s being a slave to the drinking habit. He has published many of his own books and sold them at low cost or given them away. He was influential in the establishment of the Vanguard Press, dedicated to the publishing of significant books at low prices. He has never deviated from his purpose of exposing the social evils of modern life, and he remains one of the American authors most widely read in Europe.

8. He Lived to See His Achievement

On December 16, 1967, when the act on the wholesale of meat was to be signed by the President, Sinclair was invited to the ceremonial by President Johnson, and found the achievement of the crusade started by him and The Jungle more than sixty years ago. Sinclair died in 1968, at the age of ninety.

9. A List of His Works

Novels:
Springtime and Harvest: A Romance (also published as King Midas: A Romance,) 1901.
The Journal of Arthur Stirling (“The valley of the Shadow”) revised and condensed with an introductory sketch, 1903 (anonymous).
Prince Hagen: A Phantasy, 1903.
Manassas: A Novel of the War, 1904.
A Captain of Industry, being the stories of a civilized man, 1906.
The Jungle, 1906.
The Overman (short stories), 1907.
The Metropolis, 1908.
The Moneychangers, 1908.
Samuel the Seeker, 1910.
Love's Pilgrimage, 1911.
Damaged Goods, the great play "Les Avaries" of Brieux novelized with the approval of the author, 1913.
Sylvia, 1913.
Sylvia's Marriage, 1914.
King Coal, with an introduction by Dr. George Brandes, 1917.
Jimmie Higgins: A Story, 1919.
100%: The Story of a Patriot, 1920 (English ed., The Spy, 1921).
They Call Me Carpenter: A Tale of the Second Coming, 1922.
Oil!, 1927.
Boston, 1928 (2 vols.).
Mountain City, 1930.
Roman Holiday, 1931.
The Wet Parade, 1931.
The Flivver King; A Story of Ford-America, 1937, (pamphlet).
No Pasaran! (They Shall Not Pass) A story of the battle of Madrid, 1937 (pamphlet; cover-title).
Little Steel. 1938.
Our Lady. 1938.

Lanny Budd series:
World’s End. 1940.
Between Two Worlds. 1941.
Dragon’s Teeth. 1942.
Wide Is the Gate. 1943.
Presidential Agent. 1944.
Dragon Harvest. 1945.
A World To Win. 1946.
One Clear Call. 1948.
Return of Lanny Budd. 1953.
It Happened to Didymus. 1958.

Plays:
Prince Hagen, a drama in four acts, 1909.

Man, Prince Hagen, 1912.

Hell, a verse drama and photo-play. 1923.

Little Blue Book No. 589, edited by E. Haldeman-Julius. The Pot Boiler,
a comedy in four acts. 1924 (pamphlet).

Little Blue Book No. 631, edited by E. Haldeman-Julius. The
Naturewoman. 1924 (pamphlet).

Singing Jailbirds, a drama in four acts, 1924.

Bill Porter. a drama of O. Henry in prison, 1925.

Oil! A play in four acts (from the novel by the author). 1929.

Depression Island, 1935.

Wally for Queen! The Private Life of Royalty, 1936 (Cover-title; pamphlet)
Marie Antoinette, 1939.

Editor:
The Cry for Justice, an anthology of the literature of social protest, the writings of philosophers, poets, novelists, social reformers, and others who have voiced the struggle against social injustice, selected from twenty-five languages covering a period of five thousand years, 1915.

Autobiography:
What Life Means to Me, 1906 (cover-title; pamphlet).

Political and Social Studies:
The Industrial Republic, 1907.
The Profits of Religion, 1918.
The Book of Life, Mind and Body, 1921.
Love and Society (Vol.II of The Book of Life), 1922.
The Goslings: A Study of the American Schools, 1924.
Mammonart, 1925.
Money Writes: 1927.
I, Governor of California: A True Story of the Future, 1933.
The Way Out, 1933.
The EPIC Plan for California, 1934.
The Book of Love, 1934.
II. Sinclair’s Chief Works

1. King Coal

This novel is inspired by the Colorado coal strike of 1914–1915, and based on 'sworn testimony, taken under government supervision,' during an investigation of the Colorado coal-mining industry following the strike of 1914–1915. A wealthy college youth, Hal Warner, disguises himself as a worker, 'Joe Smith,' in order to learn the essential nature of the coal-mining industry. As a mule-tender, and later as a 'buddy,' or miner's helper, he wins popularity and self-respect by struggling for improved working conditions, safety measure, and the miners' right to join a union. His rewards are the love of 'Red Mary' Burke, a strong-willed girl of the mining camp; friendships with men of many nationalities; and an insight into the intricate system by which the coal companies dominate the social and political life of Colorado.

2. The Brass Check

This is Sinclair's study of contemporary American journalism.

The first half of the book describes Sinclair's experiences with the press and contains a scathing denunciation of metropolitan newspapers and news-gathering agencies, which the author contends are sabotaging democracy in industry and government. He suggests as a remedy a national 'truth-telling' weekly to disseminate uncolored news.

The second half of the book contains corroborative statements by eminent persons.

The Brass Check is the best of Sinclair's surveys, perhaps the best of
all his many books. His subject is the press, to which he has come nearer in
his personal experience than to the college, the school, or the church. The
Brass Check has no fiction in it—only facts, which he has repeatedly
defied the Associated Press to deny by suing him for libel—facts and
Sinclair. The book is a picaresque romance, only here the picaro is seeking
the public good instead of private gain. It is as amusing as Pickwick Papers,
and as terrible as The City of Dreadful Night. Like Greek tragedy, it shows
us the gods, the supreme powers of American civilization, in their dealings
with men, and it purges by pity and terror.

3. 011!

This novel involves the Teapot Dome scandal, films, and popular
evangelism in southern California. It is based on the oil scandals of the
Harding administration, especially the Teapot Dome affair, the narrative tells
of the struggles of 'Bunny' Rose and his father, a good-natured
independent oil operator, against the encroachments of monopoly. Involved
in the detailed account of business transactions are the thinly disguised
characters of senators, oil magnates, and other public figures.

Bunny's experiences lead him to realize that the bribery of public
officials, the oppression of workers, and international conflicts are inherent in
the private ownership of the industry, and he turns for a solution to
socialism.

4. Boston

This novel concerns Sacco–Vanzetti case. The story of Sacco and
Vanzetti is told through the experiences of Cornelis Thornwall, who, at the
age of 60 and after the death of her husband, an ex–governor and
industrial magnate, runs away from wealth and respectability to obtain a six
–dollar–a–week job in the Plymouth Cordage Factory. Her fellow–boarder is
Bartolomeo Vanzetti, and through him Cornelia becomes acquainted with
Sacco and other anarchists, witnesses a factory strike, and sees pickets clubbed by police.

Piercing the veil of hypocrisy that obscures the inner workings of society, during the next decade she sees the war hysteria, its aftermath of persecution of labor leaders and radicals, the arrest of Sacco and Vanzetti, their two trials, and the appeal to the jury based on patriotic prejudice. With her granddaughter Betty, Cornelia tries to help the doomed men, but a patriotizing judge, the Supreme Court, the governor of Massachusetts, the president of Harvard, and, above all, Boston society, which symbolizes the rule of class sanctified by tradition and privilege, demand and receive the execution of the two anarchists.

As propaganda this novel is superb. Sinclair has a theme and a character that ride triumphant over technical disabilities. As he works toward a climax, the pretense of fiction gradually falls away and in the last magnificent chapters the book becomes a piece of glorified reporting. Concurrently, the heat of the author's indignation rises steadily higher until, at the end, the reader is left with the sense of having himself been cleansed and purified by fire and humbled by great tragedy.86

5. The Lanny Budd Series

In 1940, just when it was beginning to appear that Sinclair might be played out as a novelist, he began publishing a series of novels which dramatized contemporary history up to the end of the Second World War. This series contains eleven novels; the last one, The Return of Lanny Budd (1953), is a sequel to the series of ten novels, and warns against the dangers of Soviet Russia's policies.86

The hero of this series is Lanny Budd. He is an illegitimate son of a munitions manufacturer and a famous beauty. He travels throughout the world, meets famous people, and is a figure in international intrigues and political maneuvers. World's End, the first of this series, covers the years
1913–1919; Between Two Worlds proceeds from the Versailles Treaty to the stock market crash of 1929; Dragon's Teeth (Pulitzer Prize) covers 1930–1934; Wide Is the Gate is concerned with anti-Nazi activities from the French Popular Front through part of the Spanish Civil War; Presidential Agent has Lanny become confidential agent of President Roosevelt, and carries the narrative to Munich in 1938; Dragon Harvest continues to the fall of Paris; A World to Win and Presidential Mission deal with events on the Continent, in North Africa, and the Orient, from 1940 to 1943; One Clear Call deals with the war to the time of Roosevelt's fourth term; O Shepherd, Speak! describes the war's end and Lanny's peace plans.

III. The Birth of The Jungle

The Jungle is the by-product of the muckraking period. It is also the summation of Sinclair's own life and experience. And it is commissioned by The Appeal to Reason. The birth of The Jungle assures us that Sinclair is the pioneer of new journalism.

1. The By-product of the Muckraking Period

The radical literature had four tendencies: the first tendency was toward socialism, and existed in the years after 1900; the second tendency toward carnal mysticism, in the years after 1915; the third tendency toward the description of the sophisticated school, in the years after 1925; and the fourth tendency which was the exact opposite of the third, was to describe the American middle class exactly as it was and lived.

As for the first tendency toward socialism, we had better say that it was a tendency toward American populism or farmer–labor democracy, since few of the writers concerned in it had any great knowledge of scientific socialism as defined by Karl Marx. This school had a longer history than
the others; some of its members, Sinclair, for instance, were already famous during the muckraking and trust-busting days of Theodore Roosevelt's second administration. Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* (1906) and Jack London's *Martin Eden* (1909) helped to inspire the labor literature of the following decade.

The strength of this group ultimately depended on the strength of the progressive movement in politics and in labor unionism. And in the progressive period of 1904–1917, it is chiefly by way of the muckrakers that we trace the connection between the progressive movement and the literature of the period. It is not merely that certain of the novelists—Sinclair, Phillips, White, Lewis—also wrote muckraking articles; the connection is more fundamental. In the first place, the muckrakers, by arousing a widespread interest in the operations of politicians and businessmen, created an audience for the novel of politics and business. In the second place, they revealed to the novelist the dramatic value in the lives of the great financiers and big bosses and in the struggles for supremacy. And finally, they helped to define the various attitudes the novelist might take towards this material.

The muckraking movement was so named by Theodore Roosevelt in 1906 in his attack on corruption in politics and business. It began as a movement in 1902, reached its climax some ten years later, and ended in 1916. The leading vehicle for the muckrakers was *McClure's Magazine* (1901–1912) with its staff of brilliant writers and investigators headed by Lincoln Steffens (its managing editor, 1902–1906), Ida M. Tarbell, and Ray Stannard Baker. Other journals associated with the movement were the *Arena*, *Independent*, *Collier's*, *Cosmopolitan*, *American Magazine*, and *Everybody's*—on the last two of which Steffens was for a time an associate editor. A few influential newspapers sponsored the movement, notably the New York *World* and the Kansas City *Star*.

Upton Sinclair associated himself with the movement and published *The
Jungle (1906), on the Chicago meat-packing industry, and The Money
Changers (1908), dealing with Wall Street.

Chicago has been the scene of "exposure literature," notably in Frank
Norris's The Pit (1903)—dealing with the grain market; Upton Sinclair's The
Jungle (1906)—the meat packing industry; and Robert Herrick's Chimes (1926
)—the University of Chicago.

The muckraking movement, as Lincoln Steffens has insisted, was
journalistic in spirit. The muckrakers were not indifferent to reform, but,
regarding their exposures as a sufficient contribution to the cause, they left
the formulation of a remedy to their readers. Very few of them tried to
evolve a theory of government or sought to discover the way in which the
various forms of corruption were related. In addition to exposure, however,
The Jungle asked its readers to receive socialism as the way of solution;
and this makes Sinclair quite different from the other muckrakers.

2. The Summation of Sinclair's Own Life

There is an autobiographical element in The Jungle, the most authentic
and most powerful of the muckraking novels, the element is present even
though the novel seems far from Sinclair's own life, as we learn from
reading his memoirs. Thus Upton Sinclair said of his best book, The Jungle:

I wrote with tears and anguish, pouring into the pages
all that pain which life had meant to me. Externally, the
story had to do with a family of stockyard workers, but
internally it was the story of my own family. Did I wish
to know how the poor suffered in Chicago? I had only to
recall the previous winter in a cabin, when we had only
cotton blankets, and had put rags on top of us, shivering
in our separate beds...... Our little boy was down with
pneumonia that winter, and nearly died, and the grief of
that went into the book.

In his introduction to the Viking Press Edition of *The Jungle* (1946), Sinclair also said:

The physical and mental sufferings about which you read in the story were those not merely of the Stockyards workers, but of a youth who had supported himself through nine years of college and university study, and was determined to survive as a writer or not at all.

The author had come from “the South,” a part of the country impoverished by the Civil War. He had learned to hate poverty, and the limitations it put on his desire for learning, as well as its crushing effect on the dignity of men and women. He had discovered the Socialist party and ardently championed its program as the way to end poverty everywhere on earth. Now here it was in its ugliest aspects, the worst of which was the ignorance of its victims themselves. With the exception of a very small minority, they had no idea that they had the right to a better way of life. It was moral, spiritual, and physical degradation, a “jungle” in which humans lived barely above the level of animals.

Like his character Thrysis in the semi-autobiographical *Love’s Pilgrimage*, Sinclair read *Don Quixote* and *Les Miserables*; he loved George Eliot and was thrilled by the social protest of Dickens; he admired Thackeray most of all, for Thackeray saw the human corruption which lay at the heart of the world that he described. And significantly, his favorite poets were the blind Milton and the revolutionary Shelley.

The elements in the education of Sinclair still remained to take effect. The first was a prolonged acquaintance with what he later called “the economic screw.” In the autumn of 1902 he was rescued from his marginal
existence by the kindness of George D. Herron, a gently-minded Socialist writer and lecturer, who gave him financial support and, equally important in Sinclair's development, helped him to discover Socialism. Reading Wilshire's completed the conversion. Sinclair had more years of the economic screw to endure, but now he could gird himself for the fight with the whole armor of an economic and political philosophy. And this is proved by Sinclair's own words as follows:

It was like the falling down of prison walls about my mind; the most amazing discovery after all these years—that I did not have to carry the whole burden of humanity's future upon my two frail shoulders! There were actually others who understood; who saw what had gradually become clear to me, that the heart and center of the evil lay in leaving the social treasure, which nature had created, and which every man has to have in order to live, to become the object of a scrambles in the marketplace, a delirium of speculation. The principal fact which the Socialists had to teach me, was the fact that they themselves existed.

The Jungle is dedicated "To the Workingmen of America." Into it had gone Sinclair's heartsick discovery of the filth, disease, degradation, and helplessness of the packing workers' lives. But any muckraker could have put this much into a book; the fire of the novel came from Sinclair's whole passionate, rebellious past, from the insight into the pattern of capitalist oppression shown him by Socialist theory, and form the immediate extension into the characters' lives of his own and his wife's struggle against hunger, illness, and fear. It was the summation of his life and experience into a manifesto. The title of the book itself represented a feat of imaginative compression, for the world in which the Lithuanian immigrant Jurgis and his family find themselves is an Africa of unintelligibility, of suffering and terror.
where the strong beasts devour the weak, who are dignified, if at all, only by their agony.

3. From Manassas to The Jungle

Moving his family to a tent, later a shack on the outskirts of Princeton, New Jersey, Sinclair started work on Manassas, the first volume of a projected trilogy based on the Civil War, while the family’s poverty continued and his unhappy wife passed through long periods of black melancholy. Manassas, though superior to his previous novels, sold scarcely better; but it was read by the editor of The Appeal to Reason who enthusiastically wrote Sinclair that, since he had described the struggle against chattel slavery in America, he should now do the same for wage slavery. So the new novel was commissioned by The Appeal to Reason, which advanced $500 for this novel of wage-slavery.

With this advance payment, Sinclair set out for Chicago in the autumn of 1904, just when the strike of the Stockyards workers had been crushed, to study their surroundings. On the twentieth of September, 1904, which happened to be Sinclair’s twenty-sixth birthday, he arrived in Chicago and put up in a small room of the Stockyards Hotel. He presented a letter of introduction to the University Settlement in the Stockyards district, then presided over by a wise and kindly lady named Mary MacDowell. He arranged to have his meals there for modest sum, and spent the next seven weeks living among the wage slaves of the Beef Trust, as they called it in those days, and observing the life of the people in "Back of the Yards."所示

People used to ask Sinclair afterward if he had not spent his life in Chicago, and he answered that if he had done so, he could never have written The Jungle; he would have taken for granted things that then hit him a sudden violent blow. He went about, white-faced and thin, partly from under-nourishment, partly from horror. It seemed to him he was confronting a veritable fortress of oppression. How to breach those walls, or
to scale them, was a military problem.

He sat at night in the homes of the workers, foreign-born and native, and they told him their stories, one after one, and he made notes of everything. In the daytime he would wander about the yards, and his friends would risk their jobs to show him what he wanted to see. He was not much better dressed than the workers, and found that by the simple device of carrying dinner pail he could go anywhere. So long as he kept moving, no one would heed him. When he wanted to make careful observations, he would pass again and again through the same room.

He went about the district, talking with lawyers, doctors, dentists, nurses, policemen, politicians, real-estate agents—every sort of person. He got his meals at the University Settlement, where he could check his data with men and women who were giving their lives to this neighborhood. When the book appeared, they were a little shocked to find how bad it seemed to the outside world; but Mary MacDowell and her group stood by Sinclair pretty bravely—considering that the packers had given them the cots on which the strike breakers had slept during their sojourn inside the packing plants in violation of city laws!

At the end of a month or more, Sinclair had his data and knew the story he meant to tell, but he had no characters. Wandering about "back of the yards" one Sunday afternoon he saw a wedding party going into the rear room of a saloon. There were several carriages full of people. He stopped to watch, and as they seemed hospitable, he slipped into the room, sat on a bench by the wall and watched a Lithuanian wedding supper and dance. Several who spoke English explained to him what was going on, and gradually he realized that this was the family he needed for his story. From four o'clock until nearly midnight he sat, making note of every detail and composing in his mind the opening chapter of a novel. There were his characters—the bride, the groom, the old mother and father, the boisterous cousin, the children, the three musicians, everybody. By ten years of
practice he had learned to go over a scene and fix it verbatim in his mind. It was two months before he got settled at home and first put pen to paper, but the story stayed, and he wrote down whole paragraphs, whole pages, exactly as he had memorized them.

The speech which concludes this novel reproduces one which Sinclair himself delivered at a mass meeting in Chicago just before leaving for his home. It was the day on which Theodore Roosevelt was re-elected to the presidency; the speech was delivered in support of an unsuccessful candidate named Eugene V. Debs.

Returning to a farm near Princeton, New Jersey, he began writing on Christmas Day. The Jungle was written in a board cabin, eight feet by ten, set on a hillside north of Princeton, New Jersey. The cabin had been built in part by Sinclair’s own hands, as were the table and bookshelf it contained; it was painted black, because that happened to be the cheapest kind of paint obtainable.

Through a winter, spring, and summer he worked on the story, sometimes blinded by his own tears. It was completed in the summer of 1905, and by that time it began appearing serially in The Appeal to Reason, a Socialist weekly which had a circulation of close to half a million, and the reaction was immediate. Five publishers refused to print the novel in book form, although one of them had advanced another $500 after reading the first chapters. Sinclair became impatient and invited the readers of The Appeal to Reason to make possible the publication by ordering copies and paying in advance.

The orders poured in—twelve thousand in all—and the book was put into type. At this point Doubleday, Page and Co. offered to publish the book, provided they could be satisfied as to its truth. They consulted a ‘friend’ in Chicago, James Keeley, editor of the Tribune, who sent them what he said was “an impartial report” by his “best reporter,” declaring that about everything in the book was false; it later turned out that the report
had been composed by the publicity man of the *Amours*. That was the beginning of a long series of attacks upon the book and its author, all of which had been narrated in *The Brass Check*, a book protesting against contemporary American journalism.

### IV. The Immediate Reaction

Soon *The Jungle* had become a best seller, and remained that for about six months. It was published in England, where it had the same success; the Hon. Winston Spencer Churchill wrote a two-part review of it. A German translation appeared quickly; it was probably the only book ever promoted by both Socialists and Junkers—the latter being the great landowners of Prussia, who were doing their best to obtain a tariff on imported meat.

Jack London wrote on November 18, 1905 a letter to *The Appeal to Reason* when *The Jungle* had been declined by five publishers as "too shocking." When the letter appeared in this socialist weekly paper a publisher was soon found and the success of *The Jungle* began. And not long after the letter was printed, Winston Churchill, later Prime Minister of Great Britain, published a two-part account of *The Jungle* in a London weekly magazine.

The letter from Jack London ran as follows:

> Here it is at last! The book we have been waiting for these many years! *The Uncle Tom's Cabin* of wage slavery! Comrade Sinclair's book *The Jungle!* And what *Uncle Tom's Cabin* did for black slaves, *The Jungle* has a large chance to do for the white slaves of today. It is essentially a book of today. The beautiful theoretics of Bellamy's *Looking Backward* are all very good, they
served a purpose and served it well.
Looking Backward was a great book. But I dare say that 
The Jungle which has no beautiful theoretics, is even a 
greater book.
It is alive and warm. It is brutal with life. It is written 
with sweat and blood and groans and tears. It depicts not 
what man ought to be, but what man is compelled to be 
in this our world, in the Twentieth Century. It depicts not 
what our country ought to be, or what it seems to be in 
the fancies of Fourth of July spell-binders, the home of 
liberty and equality of opportunity; but it depicts what our 
country really is, the home of oppression and injustice, a 
nightmare of misery, and inferno of suffering, a human 
hell, a jungle of wild beasts.

After quoting the above letter in his My lifetime in Letters, Sinclair 
pointed out seriously that in calling him "Comrade," London meant Socialist. 
There were no Communists in those days.68

The general outcry over The Jungle hastened the passage of another 
pioneer act calling for government intervention in behalf of the consumer. 
This was the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906, prepared by Dr. Harvey W. 
Wiley, chief chemist of the Department of Agriculture. Roosevelt had 
recommended legislation of this type in his message in December, 1905, but 
it required Upton Sinclair's book and the Neill-Reynolds report to obtain 
congressional action. The act emphasized proper branding, insisted that 
certain harmful ingredients be listed on the label, and provided additional 
penalties for adulteration of contents, especially the use of decomposed 
ingredients. However, before the passage of the act, there was bitter 
struggle.69

Despite departmental skepticism regarding Sinclair's revelations, Roosevelt 
chose to begin an inquiry at once. He sent for Sinclair, heard his story, and
turned him over to two commissioners whom Roosevelt ordered to make an investigation of stockyards conditions. This was supposed to be secret, and Sinclair said not a word, but the packers knew all about it in a few hours and started their cleanup. Even so, the commission, after several weeks on the ground, turned in a report, the Neill-Reynolds report, which sustained the book’s charges. The commissioners told Sinclair that the only point on which they could get no proof was his statement that men had fallen into the lard vats and gone out to the world as pure leaf lard. Naturally this was a hard matter to prove, since in each case the families had been paid off and shipped to other parts of the world.

The packers fought back stubbornly through their Washington lobby, denying official charges that their food products were prepared in a filthy and disease-ridden environment. House indifference almost defeated the inspection bill, which was introduced by the progressive Senator, Albert J. Beveridge; but news that unfavorable foreign reaction to the Neill-Reynolds might curtail American meat exports, (As we know, Germans had cited the book as an argument for higher import duties on American meat.) together with administration pressure, compelled passage on July 1, 1906, of this act requiring federal inspection of domestic meats. Roosevelt signed the act on June 30.

The Jungle’s description of the经济 jungle and the helpless human creatures who suffer in it is the most vivid and convincing in American fiction, and the power of its vividness, in fact, defeated its purpose. For, as Sinclair was to complain, it was an appeal to its reader’s heads and hearts which, instead hit them in their stomachs.¹⁶

One stroke of good fortune for Sinclair was the presence in Chicago of Adolphe Smith, correspondent of the Lancet, the leading medical paper of Great Britain. Smith was one of the founders of the Social-Democratic Federation in England, and at the same time an authority on abattoirs, having studied the packing plants of the world for the Lancet. Whenever
Sinclair was in doubt about the significance of his facts—when he wondered if possibly his horror might be the oversensitiveness of a young idealist—he would fortify himself by Smith's expert, professional horror.

"These are not packing plants at all," he declared, "these are paking boxes crammed with wage slaves."  

In addition to Winston Churchill and Adolphe Smith, George Brandes, on his visit to the United States eight years later, remarked that the three modern American novelists he found worth reading were Frank Norris, Jack London, and Upton Sinclair. All this suggested the extent of young Sinclair's popularity.

The influence of The Jungle on a number of the contemporary non-communist labor leaders of America has been considerable. Walter Reuther includes it in a list of books "which most influenced me in my youth." as does Jacob S. Potofsky, president of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, and "many of his colleagues."  

While his name is kept from American newspaper readers through suppression by editors, Sinclair's books are best sellers in many other countries.

V. The Rarest Type of Novelist

In Aaron's classification of the left wing writers, Sinclair belongs to the group of the unclassifiables. Upton Sinclair, according to Aaron, is completely sui generis: a faddist, a Puritan, and a socialist. Also, in Morgan's opinion, Sinclair does not belong to any of the five groups of American writers in rebellion: Mark Twain, the optimist as pessimist; Willian Dean Howells, the realist as reformer; Hamlin Garland, the rebel as escapist; Frank Norris, the romantic as naturalist; Theodore Dreiser, the naturalist as humanist.
Although almost any novel will yield meaningful information about the place and time in which it was written, three kinds provide particularly happy hunting for the historian. The first is the highly autobiographical novel—with characters modeled upon real people and incidents closely resembling real events. The second is the reminiscent novel—Sinclair Lewis’s *Main Street*—where the characters and incidents are largely imaginary, but the setting is one intimately known to the author through his own experience. The third is the documentary novel—Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle*, John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*—in which the setting, although somewhat removed from his normal experience, gains authenticity from the novelist’s search for facts.

Upton Sinclair is an unpretentious social historian. With the same impulsive directness that he has converted Jurgis into a Socialist in the last awkward chapter of *The Jungle*, he jumps ahead to make himself a “social detective,” a pamphleteer–novelist whose books are a call to action. *The Jungle* is memorable because it is one of the earliest examples of a peculiarly American form of fiction: the reportorial novel. It is only in small part a work of the imagination; the great bulk of it consists of facts—detailed, specific, and noted down with meticulous care. In the succeeding years this tradition of the reporter–novelist has produced some of the most characteristic fiction of American—Lewis’s *Arrowsmith*, Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*, and Hersey’s *The Wall*, to mention only three. Each of them, and hundreds of their lesser relatives, owe an unconscious debt to *The Jungle*. If Sinclair has never been a great creative novelist (*What is Lanny Budd* beyond a mirror of history?), he has been something else of value—one of the great information centers in American literature. Few American novelists have done more to make their fellow citizens conscious of the society, all of it, in which they live. The consciousness of writing primarily for a foreign audience—since *The Jungle* his books have circulated abroad more than at home, until he is probably the most widely read
American writer—has given him a sensitivity to aspects of American life that his contemporaries have overlooked or scorned as too ephemeral to be dignified in prose. As a result he has recorded and explained a wide variety of native phenomena, ranging from the ramifications of prohibition to the development of religious revivals in southern California, and capturing those commonplace expressions of American culture that usually go unrecorded solely because they are commonplace. He is doubtless one of the chief interpreters of the United States to other nations.

Many American novelists who are highly "realistic" in their treatment of surface detail find their themes upon some entirely abstract political or economic "idea." These generalizations apply most obviously to such "angry" and directly "intentional" novels as Upton Sinclair's The Jungle and The Metropolis, and Jack London's The Iron Heel—though that novel is set in the future. In these novels a steady accretion of shocking events, a rhetoric of action, often takes the place of thought or, except at a journalistic level, even of observation.

Such novels are particularly obvious examples of an extreme self-consciousness about society which has led American writers, again and again, to undertake some sort of large cultural statement about American society as a whole. Indeed, American social novelists have commonly failed not because of their timidity in the face of society but because of their temerity. Refusing to work within the social area they know, they attempt to encompass American society as a whole.

As one of the group of the novelists who determine to write of "life as it is," stripped of sentimentality and void of reticence, Sinclair has been translated freely into foreign tongues, and to many Europeans he represents the most significant development in American fiction. Mr. Sinclair has never pretended to be a professional literary critic. He has been a creative artist and a pamphleteer. To those readers who dislike his work he is the latter exclusively. But to the world at large he takes his place as one of the
great literary men of the day. His works are almost immediately translated into French, German, Spanish, Swedish, Chinese, Japanese, and Russian, which is a testimony to his popularity, if not to his art. His books contribute to the forming of opinions about America in almost every country on the globe.\textsuperscript{40}

Upton Sinclair and the other writers such as Henery James, William Dean Howells, Charles and Frank Norris, Jack London, David Graham Phillips, Robert Herrick, Edith Wharton, Theodore Dreiser, Ernest Pool, Booth Tarkington, have been concerned with the businessman. Business is synonymous with ethical corruption; the world of business is savagely competitive, brutally aggressive, murderous. The motivation of the businessman is power, money, social prestige, in that order.\textsuperscript{40} Sinclair is the first important American novelist to see in the struggle between capital and labor the driving force of modern industry; he has hammered away for a lifetime at the cruelties and injustices of exploitation as well as at the grossness and insensitivity of life among the exploiters, and his books, with all their unevenness and vacillations, have a simple literal honesty about them that makes the works of most of his contemporaries seem evasive and affected. He has done more than any other American novelist toward breaking the path for a full and realistic treatment of working-class life in fiction---the battles he has been engaged in, the enemies he has attracted and the silence and persecution with which his books have been met being his personal cost for that pioneering work.

Sinclair is one of the writers who can not be classed as word men. He is so headlong in his rush after ideas that he is inclined to let the words fall, like chips, where they may.\textsuperscript{40} However, he has an abundant supply of the one great talent which is indispensable to the novelist: he can tell a good story. The Jungle keeps moving, from the very first page, and even the most cynical capitalist is likely to go on turning the pages to find out what happens to Jurgis and his star-crossed family. Moreover, Sinclair has
the precious ability to persuade his readers that what he tells them is true. For all its melodrama, the novel carries a conviction that everyone of its injustices actually happened—if not to Jurgis, then to some other maltreated Lithuanian working in The Yards. The slums described here are clearly places where flesh—and blood people had to live; the gruesome details of the slaughter-house sound indisputably real.

Sinclair's major achievement lies in the preservation of such miscellaneous data rather than in his stylized and inflexible political studies. When he tells us how strikes are put down or sold out, or how public officials are corrupted, or how labor spies are planted, he is describing a formula, and with that his interest ceases and his imagination fails to give him anything new or fresh. The memorable parts of his books lie in such detail—the exact descriptions of how pigs were killed in the Chicago stockyards in 1906, the vivid account of the drilling of the wells in Oil! the picture of a Colorado mining town in King Coal—remaining when the hackneyed characterizations and the mechanical concept of how society is controlled have been forgotten.

Sinclair's great talent is a talent for facts, a really prodigious capacity for social research. As he continued to give America after the war the facts about labor in Jimmie Higgins, the petroleum industry in Oil! the Sacco-Vanzetti case in Boston, prohibition in The Wet Parade, it mattered less and less that he repeated himself endlessly, or that he could write on one page with great power, on another with astonishing self-indulgence and sentimental melodrama. Van Wyck Brooks might complain that "the only writers who can possibly aid in the liberation of humanity are those whose sole responsibility is to themselves as artists," but in a sense it was pointless to damn Sinclair as a "mere" propagandist. What would he have been without the motor power of his propaganda, his driving passion to convert the world to an understanding of the problems of labor, the virtues of the single tax, the promise of Socialism, the need of Prohibition, a credence in "

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mental radio," an appreciation of the sufferings of William Fox, the necessity "EPIC" movement, and so much else? In a day when the insurgent spirit had become obsessed with facts of contemporary society, and newspapermen could write their social novels in the city room. Sinclair proved himself one of the great contemporary reporters, a profound educative force. He was a hero in Europe, and one of the forces leading to the modern spirit in America.

VI. The Weaknesses in The Jungle

The great obstacle to Sinclair's development as a recorder and interpreter of the struggles between capital and labor is his lack of experience. Having lived in middle-class boarding houses, supported himself as a hack-writer, and frequently retreated to the Canadian wilds or the New Jersey countryside, he knew nothing at first hand of mines or factories or financiers' offices. But even before he began his career as a muckraker he showed his ability to accumulate the material he needed. To prepare for the writing of Manassas he read some five hundred books and examined at least five hundred more. As a result the novel was solidly convincing in its account of the growth of hostility between North and South, and the characters had a firm basis in the events of history. And, as The Jungle showed, books were not the only sources of information on which Sinclair could draw, in investigating the stockyards he visited workers' homes, wandered about the plants, and talked with doctors, lawyers, politicians, and policemen.

The importance of this gift, this ability to accumulate the necessary material, cannot be exaggerated. The novelist who wishes to write about the complex structure of modern society cannot possibly have had all the different kinds of experience he finds it necessary to describe. He can
scarcely have been both employer and employee, both union member and scab, both ward boss and reformer.

Sinclair knows what facts he needs and how to get them, but unfortunately he is not so successful in assimilating them. Perhaps no writer can subject the data of research to exactly the same processes as he does the half-conscious perceptions that are the basis of creation, and thus achieve a perfect integration. Sinclair is far from perfection. In The Jungle we are less conscious of the documentation because, by virtue of his own suffering at the time, Sinclair enters directly into Jurgis' experiences, but there are nevertheless too many passages in which the author, clumsily trying to cover his tracks with some phrase about the tales of "an old fellow whom Jonas had introduced." lays before us, in the manner of a magazine article, the facts his investigation had uncovered.

The weaknesses in The Jungle are the sentimentalizing about the hogs, and the utter lack of probability of all the ills happening to one person or one family. Jurgis might be thrown out of work. It is hardly likely that a woman like Ona would become the mistress of a brute like Connor, that she would die of utter neglect in childbirth in a big city like Chicago, that their child would drown in the street puddle, and her little brother would be eaten alive by rats. When a novelist piles on the misery too much, one ceases to believe in it; the book therefore loses in appeal, or one continues to read it through curiosity to see what form of misery Jurgis will escape. From the child who has scarlet fever, mumps and measles all in his first year, to his father who is laid up for three months with a pulled tendon, the characters succumb not to fate or circumstances but to the novelist himself, and one simply refuses to follow the stream of misery with sympathy.

The "conversion" pattern of The Jungle has been attacked as permitting too easy a dramatic solution; however, aside from the recognized fact that many conversions have occurred before and since Paul saw the light on the
road to Damascus, it should be noted that in The Jungle Sinclair carefully prepares such an outcome by conducting Jurgis through all the circles of the workers' inferno and by attempting to show that no other savior except Socialism exists. Perhaps a more valid objection to the book is Sinclair's failure to realize his characters as "living" persons, a charge which, incidentally, may be brought against many non-conversion novels. Jurgis is admittedly a composite figure who was given a heaping share of the troubles of some twenty or thirty packing workers with whom Sinclair had talked, and the author's psychology of character is indeed a simple one. Although in the introductory wedding scene Jurgis and the other major characters are sharply sketched as they had appeared to the writer at an actual wedding feast in Packing twon, during the remainder of the book they gradually lose their individuality, becoming instead any group of immigrants destroyed by the Beef Trust. Yet paradoxically, the force and passion of the book are such that this group of lay figures with Jurgis at their head, these mere capacities for infinite suffering, finally do come to stand for the masses themselves, for all the faceless ones to whom things are done. Hardly individuals, they nevertheless collectively achieve symbolic status.

The difficulty with Sinclair's characters and situations is not in recognizing them but in feeling them. His characters are rational—or cerebral if you will—rather than emotive creations. One can see them—but not experience them. This is partly due to the fact that, in the main, they are types instead of individuals, types that you know......Sinclair tends to portray his characters in terms of straight lines instead of in terms of all those zigzags of personality, those intricate and irrational contradictions of self, which creat individuality in life as well as in fiction.

As art, The Jungle fails entirely, because the material, not the characters is the important thing in Sinclair's eyes. Sinclair was probably right in feeling that a novel might help the cause of the pure food crusade.
more than a volume of documented facts, but after all, the facts, not the fiction, called the book to Theodore Roosevelt’s attention and resulted in its popularity. When critics complain that Sinclair is a propagandist, they suggest that he is given to direct argumentation. By and large the charge is not true, but he is guilty—and this may be an even greater sin against the art of the novel—of failure to assimilate the material he so wisely accumulates. In short, The Jungle begins and lives as fiction; it ends as a political miscellany.

**VII. Conclusion**

According to Abram’s four classes of theories of art, Sinclair is mimetic when we say that he is an expository novelist; he is expressive when we say that he is not objective enough in his description of events. And he is pragmatic when we say that he is a writer of documentary novels.

Sophisticated readers, professors and critics, may hold that Sinclair’s novels are not “literature”. However, if a passionate interest in the substance of all great literature—life, if a wide acquaintance with its special manifestations of the writer’s own day, if a deep conviction about the values underlying its varied phenomena and the ability to set them forth, count in the making of enduring literature, all these Sinclair has demonstrated again and again that he possesses.

Conservative critics have found him radical and unsound; extreme left-wing thinkers have condemned him for not adhering strictly enough to the Marxist line. Of his earnestness and honesty there is no longer much question. He is a thoroughly American personality. A fluent—a fatally fluent—writer with an unconquerable desire to preach and teach, he has a heart honorably moved by human suffering. His insight into society is sometimes shrewd, and his prophecies are occasionally correct. Above all, his
courage is the courage of American individualism, which has nothing to do with the socialism of Sinclair's dream.

If we are right to say that the fictional techniques of the new journalism derive from the combination of periodical journalism and storytelling that gives rise to the novel in the eighteenth century; we are also right to say that, because of the rise of the new journalism, the once clearly demarcated differences between mere journalism and literature, between elite art and the popular arts, have become increasingly difficult to distinguish.

The emergence of a new literary structure is not only a question of genius, but a new social and literary situation. The important question is what new directions the inventiveness and adaptability of writers will take as they respond to new pressures and changes in their mutual experience of political and social life.

"There is no more fiction or nonfiction … … only narrative." E.L. Doctorow said in an acceptance speech for the best novel of 1975, awarded by the National Book Critics Circle. Upton Beall Sinclair is, indeed, the pioneer of new journalism—a new form of narrative.

Notes


(8) Ibid. 58–60.

(9) Ibid. 4–5.


(11) Ibid. Lovett, R.M. Upton Sinclair. 713.


(19) Ibid. 445.
(7) : Ibid. 103.
(10) : Ibid. 93.
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