

Poor Jurgis Rudkus: A Multi-theoretical Analysis of
Socio-political Development in Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*

By

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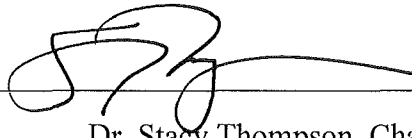
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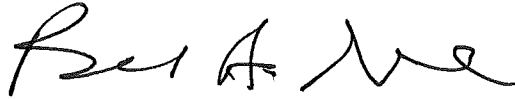
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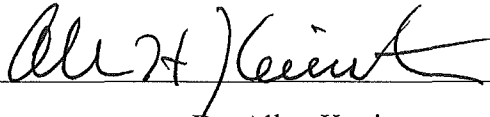
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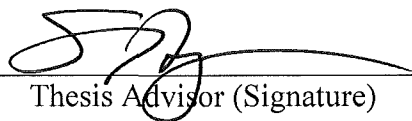
Poor Jurgis Rudkus: A Multi-theoretical Analysis of
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Alex Long

The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Year 2015
Under the Supervision of Dr. Stacy Thompson

I argue that the legacy of Upton Sinclair's most famous novel, *The Jungle*, has wrongfully been obscured over time to resemble a literary canon version of *Super-size Me* and that there is contemporary significance to be gained if we revisit the text from a theoretically grounded, retrospective analysis. I organize my analysis by breaking the text into five distinct stages through which we can trace and observe the development of the protagonist, Jurgis Rudkus. With each stage, there is an accompanying concept or two from various social/critical theorists that is employed to enhance and complicate our reading and understanding of Sinclair's message. As the analysis of the novel progresses, I illustrate the methodical nature by which Sinclair explore various modes of being in a capitalist society, ultimately leading us to the conclusion that only through collective and resistive social action can the ills of capitalism begin to be alleviated.


Thesis Advisor (Signature)

5/8/15
Date

I aimed at the public's heart, but I missed and hit its stomach. –Upton Sinclair

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to the English faculty at UWEC who have been so helpful and encouraging during my time here at UW-Eau Claire. In particular, to Bob Nowlan, for always being a great friend and advocate, for introducing me to critical theory, and for always lending a helping hand. Also to Jenny Shaddock, for pushing me to think big and strive for greatness. And to Stacy Thompson, for questioning everything and encouraging me to do the same.

Additionally, I'd like to thank my friends and family for being so supportive and encouraging during the entire process of writing this thesis. It's always nice to have people in your corner. Specifically, I'd like to thank my brother Andy, who has assured me that I won't be homeless when my lease ends a month before I graduate. You are a good man and the most loyal person I know.

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INTRODUCTION

There are few works of American literature, if any, that have had as substantial and immediate of an effect on American society as Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*. Published in 1906, Sinclair's novel was an excellent example of Progressive era literature. It was grounded in his real-world journalist research and aimed at achieving a social upheaval that upset the status quo. As a truly socially engaged text, it was very effective in making the general public aware of the social, political, and economic ills that plagued Americans. The novel was so successful it received positive acclaim even from the likes of Winston Churchill and President Roosevelt. It was also a major instigator of the Meat Inspection Act and the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906. One review even suggested that, "Not since Byron awoke one morning to find himself famous has there been such an example of worldwide celebrity won in a day by a book as has come to Upton Sinclair" (Bachelder, 72). And yet, in spite of this overwhelming success, Sinclair considered it a failure to his true cause. He was famously quoted as stating that he was aiming at the public's heart, but missed and hit its stomach. Indeed, this becomes apparent when we consider the legacy it has left behind. Ask a random person what they know about *The Jungle*, and if they are familiar with it at all, they will likely say something about a novel that depicts how bad the meat packing industry was. Although technically accurate in a major plot detail, this caricature of the novel equates it to something like the literary equivalent of the movie *Super-Size Me*. The reading public's tendency to focus on the gruesome details of description and miss the larger moral about economic exploitation of the working classes was something that would haunt Sinclair for the rest of his career as a novelist.

I believe that Sinclair offered us a socially conscious text that privileged social commentary and awareness of systemic exploitation over the artistry of literature, and therefore, that we should analyze the text with an eye toward the social insights and means of communicating them rather than be concerned with the artistic elements of the text. This is not an entirely new perspective, as others who have lauded the novel in the past have commented on its social significance while acknowledging some of its artistic shortcomings. However, the combination of theoretical concepts I intend to employ in analyzing the text will be an original series of ideas and approaches that should lend a new perspective to acknowledging the significance and insight of the novel. In many ways, Sinclair's novel predates and illustrates the social concerns or concepts brought to light by a number of theorists well before their time, but this often goes unrecognized.

By analyzing the novel in five successive stages, I think we can methodically work through the novel to see how Sinclair brings us in a Socratic-like manner to his conclusion that only through collective and resistive political action can we alleviate the social ills and exploitation that come with operating in a capitalist system. These successive stages can be read as thought-experiments that follow the logical progression of various modes of operation within a capitalist system, and each in turn is proven ineffectual as sustainable means of maintaining a reasonable living standard. Briefly summarized, the stages begin with a good-faith effort on the part of Jurgis, the protagonist, to pull himself up by his bootstraps. This first stage is called "The Good Worker," and describes the disillusionment with the American dream and the myth of meritocracy. After this plot-of-decline narrative kills off most of Jurgis's family and

strips him of his cultural identity, he progresses through the following stages which include being a tramp, returning to the city and becoming a criminal, getting involved in corrupt politics and providing “scab” labor, and eventually turning to Socialism.

For each stage, there are one or two concepts that will be used to enhance our understanding of the mode of operation contained within. For example, in “The Good Worker,” Foucault’s work on panopticism will be used to analyze the social structure, while Michael Maniates’s notion of Individualization will expand on the prevailing ideology of the Chicago meat-packing community. The second stage, “Vagabonds,” will reference Lafargue’s virtues of laziness from *The Right to Be Lazy* as well as Michael Harrington’s description of the invisible poor to problematize Jurgis’s first attempt to fight the system by going off the grid. The “Being Criminal” stage will be expanded on with Franz Fanon’s “Concerning Violence” chapter in *The Wretched of the Earth*, which offers significant insight on the psychology of revolt and resistance on the part of the exploited masses. The fourth section encompasses Jurgis’s attempt to join the packers by first involving himself in dirty politics and then becoming scab labor. This section is complicated with Zizek’s conception of objective versus subjective violence, and furthered with Audre Lorde’s essay, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House.” The fifth and final section leads the reader to the conclusion that Socialism is the answer, and is accompanied by Hardt and Negri’s commentary on rebelling against crisis in *Declaration*. By employing various concepts from social/cultural theory, we can methodically analyze the insights Sinclair provides by exploring and then rejecting various approaches to life within capitalism. This ultimately lends support to his conclusion that capitalism is designed to hold down the common

worker and therefore, collective political action is necessary to save the masses from exploitation and disenfranchisement of their humanity.

Generally, if the novel is broken down into subsections at all, it is divided into two major sections: the first is characterized as being focused primarily on Jurgis and his family and follows a plot-of-decline narrative form; the second is often described as Sinclair's attempt to promote his political agenda, and therefore receives much less praise for being engaging. In my approach, I reject this perspective, instead looking at the various modes of operation as definitive stages within the novel and largely ignoring concerns with the artistry of the writing. Stage one ("The Good Worker") largely composes what most critics view as the first of the two sections usually referenced. This is understandable because this first section takes up nearly half the book. However, the fact that this stage takes up so many pages relative to the others is largely insignificant in my estimation. Much of this portion of the novel is dedicated to creating an ontic foundation that is required before Sinclair can commence with the systematic working through of various modes of operation. In fact, when the novel was first being published in periodical form, Sinclair warned his publishers that he felt his novel was slow starting, and that the readers may lose interest before he got to the meat (pun intended) of the novel.

The first stage requires a breaking down and consumption—sometimes literally—of Jurgis, his family, and their cultural identity. As such, this first stage takes the most time and space to complete. Once Jurgis has reached the identity equivalent of ground zero, he is free to pursue other modes of operation at will, so to speak, until he discovers an effective way to exist within capitalism. Interestingly, the culminating point is neither

when he accepts nor rejects capitalism, but when he decides to participate in collectively rejecting it by joining the Socialist party. The goal for me is not to sway readers to Socialism, but to illustrate first that the true significance of the novel often goes misrepresented, and furthermore, that this significance applies now more than ever for the American population. Collective resistive action has been the most effective means of combating systematic exploitation for at least a century, and forgetting this only extends the shelf-life of a system that encourages individualism for the sake of maintaining the status quo. By approaching the novel from a perspective informed by social and cultural theory, and doing so in five successive stages, this analysis aims to make a two-fold contribution to seeing the novel in a new light.

The critical discourse on *The Jungle* is quite varied in topic, approach, and focus. Sinclair was known for being a muckraking journalist prior to being a world-famous author, and after writing many of his most famous works, he became a major political figure, even running for governor of California at one point. The variety of social roles Sinclair has played in combination with the extensive scope of his work has contributed largely to the variety of critical interpretations and analyses of his work and *The Jungle* in specific. Because of the immense variability of the critical discourse, large amounts of work will necessarily need to be sectioned off and go unaddressed for the purposes of this thesis. For example, much of the early commentary on *The Jungle* was concerned with the factual accuracy of the depictions of Chicago and the meat packing industry. Even in contemporary criticism, there is still some work being done aimed at the relevance of realistic and accurate depictions (ex. Kowalski's "Exposing Real Life in the Jungle" and

McChesney's "Upton Sinclair and the Contradictions of Capitalist Journalism"). These accounts and criticisms have been given what I see as more than ample attention over the last century, and therefore will go unaddressed in this work. After all the work that has been done on this topic, it is safe to say that Sinclair was close enough to providing reliable representations of factory life in the meat packing district of Chicago at the turn of the century that we do not need to concern ourselves with the accuracy of his representations.

Another major theme that runs throughout the critical discourse is the artistry (or lack thereof) of Sinclair's novel. Although this too is an interesting topic, it is not related to the work I am about to conduct. Sinclair stated explicitly on a number of occasions that he felt the artistry of his writing was of secondary concern to the moral and social implications contained within it. As such, I will be focusing on the methods of political and social commentary and leave the analysis of Sinclair's style and artistry to other critics. For readers interested in the analysis of artistry and style of Sinclair, there is a plethora of research done related to that topic (ex. Folsom's "Upton Sinclair's Escape from *The Jungle*," Wilson's "The Labor of Words," Howard's "Form and History in American Literary Naturalism," etc.). With that said, it is necessary to acknowledge that the foundations of my analysis are somewhat grounded in the form of narrative. Contrary to some of the critiques of the socially-charged, realist literature of the Progressives, I believe that the form of Sinclair's novel was consciously constructed and served the greater purpose of ideological communication. In his article "The Two Lives of Jurgis Rudkus," critic Matthew J. Morris described how influential thinkers such as William Dean Howells and Georg Lukacs "dismiss[ed] formless fiction" and explained how their

influence on the critical discourse promoted the tendency to view *The Jungle* as containing “vivid descriptions,” but maintaining a short-coming in its “ultimate formlessness of its plot” (51). Rather than debate the degree to which the plot is “formless” or not, I prefer to operate on the assumption that it is not. Although I do not argue this point directly in my analysis, the defense of my position exists inherently in the systematic working through of the five stages I have outlined, which will allow the reader to decide for themselves if they believe Sinclair’s novel is truly “formless.” But, as I have already stated, my concern is not to debate if it is formless or not, but rather to discuss what it contains in what I view as a highly structured narrative form. I disagree with the critique of Howell’s that realist literature such as *The Jungle* merely “heaps up facts” (Morris, 51), and intend to illustrate in the coming pages many of the strategic and dialectical maneuvers made by Sinclair in his novel.

Closely related to the analyses of form and style are those that focus on thematic trends and extended metaphors. For example, critic J. Michael Duvall wrote an analysis entitled “Processes of Elimination: Progressive-Era Hygienic Ideology, Waste and Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle*.” Although this kind of analysis is getting closer to the emphasis on ideology and social commentary, Duvall chooses to look at the novel as an extended metaphor of the body, with a particular emphasis toward issues of hygiene, consumption, and waste. Works of this sort hint at the social commentary made by Sinclair, and therefore maintain some usefulness for the analysis to follow in this thesis; however, they take away from analyzing the stages of socio-political development of Jurgis when they shift the focus to larger metaphors of bodies and machines. Other examples of thematic analyses include Michael Lundblad’s “Epistemology of *The Jungle*: Progressive-Era

Sexuality and the Nature of the Beast” and Louise Carroll Wade’s “The Problem with Classroom Use of Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle*.” Both examples have their own distinct concerns for the novel, but neither are especially concerned with the socio-political message of the novel.

The closest critical work done thus far to what I am about to engage in, and the only attempts to analyze the novel as a progression of stages, see the novel as a two-part allegory. The first section is described as a plot-of-decline narrative that focuses on Jurgis and his family. The second section is characterized as an attempt by Sinclair to describe and promote a pro-Socialism political agenda. Although these analyses begin to direct our focus in the right direction, that is to say, toward the progression of Jurgis to communicate a political message, they fall short in assuming that the first stage is not intimately and dependently linked to the latter stages. Lawrence Sanford Dembo gives a brief description of the progression of Jurgis in *The Jungle*, but offers little new insight and situates the meaning of this text within the greater context of Sinclair’s collective works. Orm Overland gives a similarly descriptive and broad-stroke analysis with a focus on the political development of Jurgis but produces little commentary on stages contained within. Matthew J. Morris comes closest to the work I intend to do in his “Two Lives of Jurgis Rudkus” when he claims the second section builds on the foundation of the first, but still adheres to the two-part conception of the novel. Rather than see the novel as being separated into the personal in the first half and the political in the second, I argue that the novel takes a much more organic progression of successive stages that gradually work their way from the most extreme form of individualism, to the furthest reaches of political engagement. As such, I will be offering a new perspective that

perceives the novel as a process of socio-political development that culminates in the ultimate solution to resisting exploitative capitalism, which in Sinclair's estimation ends up being the organized and resistive political action of the Socialist party.

There seems to be a resurgence of interest in the Progressive era in critical discourse as of late (ex. Jones's *American Hungers*, Gould's *America in the Progressive Era*, Fleissner's *Women, Compulsion, Modernity*, etc.). The parallels between that time period and this make it particularly useful and interesting to analyze. The social concerns of political corruption, the myth of social mobility, and the necessity of organized, revolutionary, political action are, at their core, still very much the same and present in U.S. culture. By taking a retrospective look at Sinclair's novel and directing our focus at the social commentary, there is much to be gained by reasserting conversations and perspectives that may have been glossed over or forgotten. If those who forget history are doomed to repeat it, then it seems self-evident why we should not forget the struggle that Sinclair went through to write and publish this book, as well as to promote the message contained within it.

As mentioned earlier, there has been a lot written about Sinclair and his most famous novel from a wide array of perspectives, but I have found relatively few attempts to explain and elaborate on the content of the novel employing social, cultural, and economic theory of some of the greatest thinkers on issues of social justice and political engagement. By engaging with theoretical concepts from theorists such as Foucault, Fanon, Zizek, Harrington, and others, I think we can locate a number of important insights and arguments being made throughout the successive stages that take place in

The Jungle. Each stage clearly represents an important step in attempting to survive in a world designed to exploit and consume the worker, and by analyzing the content of the novel in the context of social and political theory, we can see the immense degree of insight Sinclair had regarding the struggles of the working class. The fact that this novel has been degraded to something comparable to a literary canon version of *Super-Size Me* illustrates quite clearly that the significance has been lost and the legacy of this important novel has been reduced to a mere caricature of its true magnitude. In writing this thesis, I hope to reestablish the social awareness and significance of the message as well as to combine theoretical concepts in an original way to add paratextual value to the original text and its usefulness. It is important to realize that although I believe the stages occur in a logical progression, there is a guess-and-check quality to them as Jurgis attempts to locate a mode of existence that works for him. Because of this, there is a general direction that Jurgis's development progresses (from individualistic to collectivist), but the exact order of the stages are not absolute or universal. With that said, let us follow the adventures of Jurgis and see where his experiments in existence take us.

STAGE ONE: THE GOOD WORKER

*Others might have failed at it, but he was not the failing kind—he would
show them how to do it (61).*

*They felt that all was lost; they sat like prisoners summoned to hear the reading of their
death warrant. There was nothing more that they could do—they were trapped! (63).*

There is perhaps no more persistent or well-supported myth in American culture than that of the American Dream. The notion that a person is free to pursue their destiny and will be rewarded in proportion to their effort and ability is one that has driven the American workforce for centuries and continues to be promoted by significant public figures still, in spite of over-whelming evidence to the contrary. Sinclair and other critics of capitalism worked to debunk this myth relentlessly, but often to little avail in public perception. Seventy years before the publication of Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, Sinclair was inadvertently illustrating the nature and mechanisms of the social panopticon that exists within a capitalist profit machine, as embodied by the extensive description of the meat packing industry of turn-of-the-century Chicago. By analyzing the mechanisms contained within the first stage of Jurkis Rudkus's development, we can see quite clearly how Sinclair illustrates the individualization and mechanisms of power distribution that exist and operate within the profit machine that is Packingtown.

This first stage in Jurgis's development offers his first mode of operation within the capitalist system, but the pages that contain it also dedicate significant space to laying the social and geographical foundation that will serve as a backdrop for the stages to follow. As such, this first stage takes up what seems like a disproportionate number of

pages, but in fact is appropriate given the numerous and complex developments that must take place before Jurgis can proceed to evolve socially and politically throughout the remainder of the text.

In establishing the ground floor for his social commentary, Sinclair does not begin with a blank slate, but rather must create the identity of Jurgis as it exists upon his arrival to the US. Notably, the majority of the novel's events take place in chronological order, but the first chapter begins outside of this general structure, instead introducing the reader to the characters at the wedding of Jurgis and Ona. The benefit of beginning with this major social event is that it allows Sinclair to foreground the significance of the struggle to maintain a cultural identity that was forged outside the influence of American capitalism. Sinclair makes this clear when in the first few pages he initiates the conflict by stating that, "It was one of the laws of the *veselija* (the Lithuanian word for wedding reception) that no one goes hungry; and, while a rule made in the forests of Lithuania is hard to apply in the stockyards district of Chicago, with its quarter of a million inhabitants, still they did their best" (7). Later on in this first chapter, Sinclair exemplifies this struggle further by stating that, "It is very imprudent, it is tragic—but, ah! It is so beautiful. Bit by bit these poor people have given up everything else; but to this they cling with all the power of their souls—they cannot give up the *veselija*! To do that would mean, not merely to be defeated, but to acknowledge defeat—and the difference between these two things is what keeps the world going" (18). Thus begins the story of Jurgis Rudkus and the tragedies about to befall him.

By beginning in this way, Sinclair makes it clear that especially in the first part of this novel, he wishes to emphasize the complete disintegration of cultural heritage and

identity that takes place as a result of profit-driven operations in the stockyard district of Chicago at the beginning of the twentieth century. With this very important point being illustrated and recognized, Sinclair then dedicates the next two-hundred pages or so to illustrating how and why this occurs on a regular basis. The plot-of-decline that characterizes this first mode of operation can be viewed as the decline of the good worker. By looking retrospectively at Jurgis's experiences, we may employ concepts such as Michael F. Maniates's notion of Individualization and Michel Foucault's description of panopticism to inform our reading and enhance our understanding of Jurgis's decline in this first stage.

In an article describing the problematic perspective most Americans have on addressing environmental concerns, Maniates formulates his notion of Individualization; this concept describes the tendency to shift responsibility for major social issues and their resolution to the individual, thereby discouraging and sometimes eliminating critical discourse aimed at addressing those issues. He outlines how the dominant perspective, "half-consciously understands environmental degradation as the product of individual shortcomings...best countered by action that is staunchly individual and typically consumer-based" (32-33). Although Maniates is addressing issues of consumerism and individualization specifically related to environmental concerns, the concept that the issue lies largely in the complicity of the population with the idea that it is the responsibility of the individual to address large social concerns. As Maniates states, "When responsibility for environmental problems is individualized, there is little room to ponder institutions, the nature and exercise of political power, or ways of collectively

changing the distribution of power and influence in society—to, in other words, ‘think institutionally’” (33). This is the very point that Sinclair is illustrating throughout the first stage of Jurgis’s development. By embodying the image of the good worker, Jurgis holds quite strongly to the perspective that an individual is responsible both for the tragedies that befall him and the success he strives for. In this circumstance, systemic exploitation of the working class is the major social issue, and the individualization that takes place in capitalism convinces the working class it is their fault if they can’t survive.

Beginning as early as the first chapter, Sinclair creates an image of Jurgis as the ideal, hard-working immigrant willing to do whatever is necessary to pull himself up by his proverbial bootstraps and succeed as a working American. When his wife Ona shows concern for the massive debt they are accumulating during the reception of their wedding, Jurgis gives the appropriate response, telling her “do not worry—it will not matter to us. We will pay them all somehow. *I will work harder*” (22-23, italics mine). Decades before Orwell would publish *Animal Farm* and create the character of the workhorse touting the same philosophy and can-do attitude, we already see the simultaneously admirable and concerning perspective of Jurgis. Sinclair follows up this inspirational, albeit brief, speech by Jurgis with “That was always what Jurgis said. One had grown used to it as the solution of all difficulties—‘I will work harder!’...it was so wonderful to have a husband, just like a grown woman—and a husband who could solve all problems, and who was so big and strong” (23). Therein lies the start to the first inquiry into modes of operation within a capitalist profit machine. Jurgis is the ideal worker: not especially bright, but honest, hard-working, seemingly moral, physically equipped for the work at

hand, and perhaps most importantly, individualized. He, like many before and after him, believes wholeheartedly that his destiny lies in his capable hands.

As Sinclair states at the beginning of Chapter two, “[Jurgis] could not even imagine how it would feel to be beaten...He was the sort of man the bosses like to get hold of, the sort they make it a grievance they cannot get hold of” (27). By creating such an image of Jurgis, Sinclair creates a protagonist that seems both admirable and worth rooting for. It seems if anyone is capable of making it in the stockyards, it is Jurgis. He acknowledges the difficulties that may lie ahead, but refuses to be daunted, instead embracing the American idea that hard work and persistence will be rewarded with future success. In the context of Maniates’s discussion of individualization, we can see very quickly that Sinclair is encapsulating much of what individualization entails and giving it a fair shake as a mode of operation. It is as if Sinclair is challenging the reader to follow the assumptions of meritocracy to their logical conclusion, offering the experiences of Jurgis as a case study. Indeed, in the pages that follow, we will do exactly that and see what the likely outcome is.

In an eerie passage of foreshadowing, Sinclair describes Jurgis’s first impressions of the slaughterhouse:

There were groups of cattle being driven to the chutes, which were roadways about fifteen feet wide, raised high above the pens. In these chutes the stream of animals was continuous; it was quite uncanny to watch them, pressing on to their fate, all unsuspecting—a very river of death. Our friends were not poetical, and the sight suggested to them no metaphors of human destiny; they thought only of the wonderful efficiency of it all. The chutes into which the hogs went climbed high up—to the very top of the distant buildings; and Jokubas explained that the hogs went up by the power of their own legs and then their weight carried them back through all the processes necessary to make them into pork (42).

“Our friends” may not be “poetical” enough to perceive the “metaphors of human destiny,” but by saying so, Sinclair bluntly illustrates that the metaphors are there, and

that we as readers should take note of them. Just as Maniates states that the tendency toward individualization suggests that social ills are “the product of individual shortcomings,” so does it initially appear that Sinclair is creating an image of society that suggests the working poor are willingly walking to their own demise. And perhaps this is so, however, it is also important to note that Sinclair holds the workers no more responsible for their demise than the pigs who were “so innocent, they came so very trustingly; and they were so very human in their protests—and so perfectly within their rights! They had done nothing to deserve it” (44). The suggestion that the proletariat willingly participates in their own exploitation is not mutually exclusive with the notion that they are still victims and are not personally responsible for alleviating that exploitation. Much of this resides in the illusion of choice.

In his article, Maniates describes how “the marketplace, for instance, presents us with red cars and blue ones, and calls this consumer choice, when what sustainability truly demands is a choice between automobiles and the mass transit systems that enjoy a level of government support and subsidy that is presently showered upon the automotive industry” (48). Similarly, Sinclair recognizes that although it is by “the power of their own legs” that the proletariat class contributes to their own exploitation, the “choice” between places of occupation is really not a choice at all. In describing Jurgis’s amazement at the meat-packing industry’s magnitude, Sinclair illustrates that, “If you counted with it the other big plants—*and they were really all one*—it was, so Jokubas informed them, the greatest aggregation of labour and capital ever gathered in one place” (51, italics mine). The reality being expressed here, and numerous other places throughout the book, is that although the companies go by different names, they are

essentially all the same force, dedicated to the same purpose, and working by similar means for similar ends. In effect, the only game in town was run by the packers, and because of that, the workers really had no choice at all.

Later on Jurgis becomes aware “that Packingtown was really not a number of firms at all, but one great firm, the Beef Trust. And every week the managers of it got together and compared notes, and there was one scale for all the workers in the yards and one standard of efficiency...they also fixed the price of all dressed meat in the country” (133). Sinclair’s recognition of this illusion of choice and control is highly significant to the greater purpose of the novel, but gets relatively little attention in the critical discourse. Matthew J. Morris hints at this briefly when he describes how “[Sinclair’s] task was to expose ‘repression’ in its subtle forms as well as its overt ones,” of which this illusion of choice could fall under the former category. However, little more is said specifically about Sinclair’s representation of this cultural illusion by either Morris or other critics. Orm Overland references “the determinism of the naturalist novel” that Jurgis manages to break out of briefly, but limits his analysis to merely two paragraphs. Here he suggests that only when Jurgis converts to Socialism does he escape the deterministic tribulations that have plagued him thus far. Overland’s analysis barely scratches the surface of this determinism (not even specified to economic or social determinism) before moving on to discuss the connection of the first two chapters to the last two. The lack of work done on social determinism in *The Jungle* is surprising, to say the least, but I digress.

In his discussion of the desire for answers, Maniates gives an interesting insight into the psychology of the environmentally conscious contemporary consumer. He states that, “The more powerless one feels at work, the more one is inclined to assert power as a

consumer” (48). This insight operates on the premise that people are uncertain of “citizen capacities to effect change” and therefore attempt to do so “in that one arena of their lives where they command the most power and feel the most competent—the sphere of consumption” (43). Although the dependence on and commitment to consumption exists in *The Jungle* as well, it is more effective to consider the role of work as the “arena” where the characters feel “they command the most power and feel the most competent,” in spite of the overwhelming evidence to the contrary. This is certainly the case for Jurgis, who, although often powerless in a number of other ways, is convinced that his one strong-suit is his ability to work. On the surface, this appears to be a divergence between the insights of Maniates and Sinclair, however, at the core, they are expressing the same problematic social tendency which is the desire of the individual to take action on an individualistic level with the hopes that because it is an area of their lives they feel comfortable with, it will be sufficient to address their problems. In both cases, it is entirely ineffectual. Because capitalism operates on the exploitation of labor and the continuous consumption of commodities, attempting to solve issues created by capitalism by doing more of either simply adds fuel to the fire.

Consider the downfall of Jurgis’s family as a tangible example. As the financial concerns of the family increase, more family members begin to take on jobs and those that are already working work harder and longer. For a limited time, this increases the family’s income, but it doesn’t take long for the negative effects to begin catching up to them. Dede Antanas (Jurgis’s father) is the first major casualty in this fight to survive. Once a strong man and a scholar, Antanas is too proud to see his family struggle while he sits at home in retirement. A man of his advanced age is of little use to the Packers, but

he manages to find employment in the pickling factory. Unfortunately for him, it was not long before winter arrived, and the “dark, unheated cellar, where you could see your breath all day, and where your fingers sometimes tried to freeze” (94) began to take its toll on his health. Shortly thereafter, illness eventually killed Antanas, but the family was “forced to dispense with nearly all the decencies of a funeral” instead directing their “attention to the task of having a funeral without being bankrupted, and so [having] no time to indulge in memories and grief” (96). The loss of Antanas was only the beginning however.

After this, Ona became ill from child birth requiring Jurgis to resort to his “work harder” solution to all problems. As expected, Jurgis falls into the same trap that many in his position have when he rolls his ankle at work but decides to work through the pain to avoid losing his position at work and plummeting his family into poverty. By the noon the next day, “the pain was so great that it made him faint” (138) and when forced to see the doctor, he received the report that “he had probably laid himself up for months by his folly” (138). Adding insult to injury, the doctor also decided that “Durham and Company could not be held responsible” for Jurgis’s injury, and so he would receive no compensation for his injury or even have the guarantee of a job waiting for him when he recovered. These are just a few of the frequent examples of how working harder in effect propagates the very source of the social issues that are trying to be combated and offer ineffectual means of addressing these issues. It is perhaps most explicitly stated near the end of the first stage when Jurgis reflects on the struggle of the men working in factories building harvesting machinery: “Of what help was kindness and decency on the part of employers—when they could not keep a job for him, when there were more harvesting

machines made than the world was able to buy! What hellish mockery it was, anyway, that a man should slave to make harvesting machines for the country, only to be turned out to starve for doing his duty too well!” (242).

As the novel progresses through this first stage, Sinclair not only continues to illustrate many of the problematic elements of individualization, but also gives a very detailed analysis of the systemic mechanisms that encourage, support, and reinforce this social phenomenon. Foucault’s description of panopticism is useful in analyzing the ways in which the industrial profit machine operates in a highly structured and systematic way.

First, it is necessary to establish Foucault’s descriptive insight before applying the social model to *The Jungle*. The idea of the panopticon was originally developed by Jeremy Bentham in the late 18th century. Bentham’s panopticon describes a prison-like industrial structure, whereby a watchman resides in a tower at the center surrounded on all sides by individual cells where the inmates are kept. The inmates’ cells have two windows, one facing outward to allow light to pass through and one facing inward to allow the watchman to have continuous ability to observe them. Foucault then goes on to use this structure as a metaphorical design for arrangement of “the utopia of the perfectly governed city” (198). That is to say, he asserts that the ability to have complete control over visibility of movement allows for complete control over the actions of the inmates, which in turn maximizes efficiency and effectiveness of governance. The language he uses and the explanations of operations become particularly interesting when we make note of the parallel language and descriptions employed by both Foucault and Sinclair.

When addressing the mechanisms of panopticism, Foucault notes the “strict divisions” and “penetration of regulation into even the smallest details of everyday life through the mediation of the complete hierarchy that assured the capillary functioning of power” (198). Sinclair’s depictions of life in Packingtown are full of examples that mirror these “strict divisions” and “complete hierarchy” that act as mechanisms to keep everyone in their place and efficiently working. Indeed, this design is the exact logic around which the assembly line is built. Durham’s, for instance, is the company that Jurgis gains his first employment with, and it is described as “ranged in ranks and grades like an army, were managers and superintendents and foremen, each one driving the man next below him and trying to squeeze out of him as much work as possible. And all the men of the same rank were pitted against each other; the accounts of each were kept separately, and every man lived in terror of losing his job” (74). Even in this brief passage, there is a rich supply of structural mechanisms designed to maximize efficiency and control. The hierarchy is clearly defined from the start, thereby putting every person in their place based on the influence and importance they carry socially. Even immigrants new to American culture are aware of this very basic fact: there are those who can tell people what to do, and there are those who are told what to do. Indeed, when seeking to buy a house, Jurgis and his family are skeptical of the realtor, but “never in their lives had any one of them ever spoken to a person of the class called ‘gentleman’ except with deference and humility” (59). This complicity with the social hierarchy exists in every aspect of their lives, but is never more prevalent or formally enforced than the workplace. Additionally, the strategic hierarchy is accompanied by “men of the same rank [being] pitted against each other.” By maintaining this strict sense of tension and

insecurity in their position in the workplace, the system efficiently keeps competition high allowing each person to be a slave driver to those below him, and also ensuring that he does so to the maximum degree possible for fear of being knocked down the social ladder himself. This politics of fear will be a theme that runs continuously throughout the novel, always working to hold down the working poor.

Importantly, one of the most famous insights of Foucault in his writings on panopticism is his suggestion that “visibility is a trap” (200). What he means is that by being visible to the watchman in the panopticon, not only are the movements and activities of the inmates under constant surveillance, but even if they are not, the fear that they might be being watched exercises control over their actions. As Foucault explains, “he is seen, but he does not see; he is the object of information, never a subject in communication” (200). Similarly, Jurgis and the other workers are always sectioned off into their individual roles in the meat-packing machine, each serving a particular purpose, each working largely alone, and all being constantly under surveillance by their supervisor. As such, the meat packers represent the near-perfect execution of a social panopticon. As Sinclair writes, “It was a war of each against all, and the devil take the hindmost” (91). By making life seem like a struggle of every person and family for themselves, the packers have created a self-perpetuating system where the competitive efforts of each individual to serve their own purpose effectively drive others to do the same, all the while producing profit for the packers and creating the conditions necessary to ensure their own exploitation. As discussed earlier, they were indeed being led to slaughter and making the trek “by the power of their own legs” (42).

The control over visibility and the power of surveillance is a theme that runs throughout the novel, but begins to make its debut early on in the narrative. When Jurgis is first shown around Packingtown before his search for work, he is given a tour of a number of factories. "Entering on the Durham buildings, they found a number of other visitors waiting; and before long there came a guide to escort them through the place" (43). The role of tour guide here plays a similar role to that of the warden as the guide controls who is visible, to whom, and to what degree. As described in this scene, "They make a great feature of showing strangers through the packing plants, for it is a good advertisement. But ponas Jokubas whispered maliciously that the visitors did not see any more than the packers wanted them to" (43). It wouldn't be long before Jurgis got the behind-the-scenes view to illuminate just how much goes unseen to the visitors. Much like prisoners, the workers are made aware that they are being put on display for the viewing public as "good advertisement," which we can reasonably conclude means they must act in a way that positively represents the company. If a worker were to show the visitors the physical mutilation that has occurred as a result of their work or the inhumane treatment of the animals and workers, they would certainly be punished. This is just one of the many instances in which surveillance and control over visibility results in control over human actions. Later on in the novel, Jurgis's experiences with being blacklisted as well as taking on a management position will both further elaborate on the extent to which visibility and surveillance contribute to the exercise of control over the workers.

Ultimately, the individualist attempts of the good worker to succeed as a mode of operation in a capitalist society fails for one very simple reason: it doesn't work because it's not supposed to. The system operates on a politics of fear and competition that keep

the working class individualized and under control. If the proletariat achieves financial stability or autonomy from the forces of economic exploitation, then they fail to be susceptible to the efforts that push them to extremes for the maximization of profit. The only character who seems to have achieved this is the Rudkus's neighbor, Grandmother Majauszkiene. She describes how the houses they live in are part of "a whole row that was built by a company which existed to make money by swindling poor people," but she and her son "had fooled the company; however, for her son was a skilled man, who made as high as a hundred dollars a month, and, as he had had sense enough not to marry, they had been able to pay for the house" (81). Even this character, who is seemingly one of two proletariats who has succeeded in the capitalist system, "was a Socialist, or some such strange thing" and her son was a skilled laborer, "who had sense enough not to marry," thereby relegating the act of marriage as a luxury available to only the privileged. In this way, Sinclair simultaneously describes why the system is created to hold the proletariat down, how the success of the proletariat is in fact "fooling the company" (81), and that even the character who is capable of doing so recognizes the inherent antagonism of capitalism toward the working class, resulting in her identifying as a Socialist. Upon recognition of this unfortunate state of affairs, Jurgis and his family experience the disillusionment that befalls all the families that have come before them. The fears they had when they signed the deed to the house are justified when they speak to Grandmother Majauszkiene: "They felt that all was lost; they sat like prisoners summoned to hear the reading of their death warrant. There was nothing that they could do—they were trapped!" (63).

The remainder of this first section follows quite consistently a plot-of-decline narrative. Jurgis works as hard as he can to provide for his family and keep their overpriced roof over their heads, but ultimately, even the efforts of this strong and capable man come up short. As in the case of many, perhaps every, family before them, Jurgis experiences illness and injury as a result of his poor working conditions. This, in combination with the hidden expenses that come with living in the city, puts them in dire straits financially which lead to the family gradually making more and more sacrifices until they run out of things to sacrifice. The women and children are put to work and even the grandfather works until the conditions at work eventually kill him.

As Foucault explains,

Power has its principle not so much in a person as in a certain concerted distribution of bodies, surfaces, lights, gazes; in an arrangement whose internal mechanisms produce the relation in which individuals are caught up... There is a machinery that assures dissymmetry, disequilibrium, difference. Consequently, it does not matter who exercises power. Any individual, taken almost at random, can operate the machine (202).

Unfortunately, this disposable and entirely replaceable aspect of the power machine is not limited to positions of power, but quite the contrary, applies throughout. All persons involved are simply “cogs in a machine,” a phrase employed by both Foucault and Sinclair, and like any machine, the parts can always be replaced with new ones if they fail to operate effectively for the purpose of production.

As Jurgis is worn down, physically and psychologically, he expends more and more energy resisting the vices that trap his comrades. “They say that the best dog will turn cross if he be kept chained all the time, and it was the same with the man; he had not a thing to do all day but lie and curse his fate, and the time came when he would curse everything” (144). Indeed, all that was keeping Jurgis from the saloons and continuing to

go to work was his love for his wife and son, Ona and Antanas. Unfortunately, both would become casualties of the struggle to survive: “they had cast their all into the fight; and they had lost, they had lost!” (213). When Ona dies giving birth to what would have been their second child, Jurgis plummets into a pit of despair that presumably would have consumed him were it not for his son Antanas. “The little fellow was now really the one delight that Jurgis had in the world—his one hope, his one victory” (250).

The last straw for Jurgis comes when this last hope, this last victory, drowns in the street. For the bourgeois class, heavy rains are merely an inconvenience that requires rain boots and walking on the sidewalk. But in the proletariat neighborhood where Jurgis resides, the gutters are deep, the drainage system is poor, and the children are often unsupervised. This is exactly the case when Jurgis returns home to find his final hope and progeny consumed by this impoverished environment. It is at this moment that Jurgis finally admits defeat, and lets go forever of the American dream and the myth of meritocracy. He realizes then that there is no way to make an honest living because the world is designed to keep him from getting it. His disavowal comes with an internal speech where Jurgis determines that

He was fighting for his life; he gnashed his teeth together in his desperation. He had been a fool, a fool! He had wasted his life, he had wrecked himself, with his accursed weakness; and now he was done with it—he would tear it out of him, root and branch! There should be no more tears and no more tenderness; he had had enough of them—they had sold him into slavery! Now he was going to be free, to tear off his shackles, to rise up and fight...he was going to think of himself, he was going to fight for himself, against the world that had baffled him and tortured him! (254).

And so Jurgis evolved into the next phase of development in his journey toward self-actualization. He had given an honest and good faith effort to work within the system and make it work for him and his family, but the system had not reciprocated. Sinclair

offers an organic progression of decline and allows the reader to see what a good faith effort looks like, following it all the way to the logical conclusion of near-absolute demise. Now that the identity of Jurgis has been stripped of all connection to family, heritage, and foreign culture, he is “free” to pursue his own livelihood and fight the system that has disenfranchised him. Like many that had gone before him, Jurgis settles on the tramping lifestyle. If the system is a social panopticon that traps the proletariat and exploits them for their labor until they can produce no more, then he comes to the very logical conclusion to leave the city. If he can only escape the panopticon, if he refuses to participate in their exploitative business, then perhaps he can fight back and free himself from the shackles of the capitalist profit machine.

STAGE TWO: TRAMPING AND VAGABONDS

It was past and over, and he was done with it; he would fling it off his shoulders, be free of it, the whole business, that night. It should go like a black, hateful nightmare, and in the morning he would be a new man (254).

"Do you want to work?" said the farmer. "No," said Jurgis, "I don't" (255).

Stage two of Jurgis's development marks his first act of rebellion. He has given up all hope for success and lost all faith in the American Dream. Consequently, he has decided to fight by removing himself from the capitalist profit machine. He refuses to be another cog in the profit machine. And like so many before him, he concludes that the only logical way to fight the system is simply to refuse to participate in it and to leave. So begins the life of Jurgis the tramp.

In consideration of this next stage in Jurgis's development, it is interesting and useful to consider it in the context of Paul Lafargue's *The Right to Be Lazy*, as this text is most famous for its critique of the bourgeoisie value of the work ethic. As stated in the introduction of this text by Bernard Marszalek, "Lafargue wanted novelists to philosophize and plunge the depths of real life" (7). Throughout *The Jungle*, this seems to be the major aim of Sinclair, but this particular section seems especially interesting to analyze through the lens of Lafargue's perspective as his rejection of the value of work ethic seems to be the exact position that Jurgis has arrived at when he states quite explicitly in his first encounter as a tramp with a farmer that he has no interest in working for his keep.

After giving a lengthy account of the social ills that come as a result of the capitalist obsession with production and work, Lafargue explains,

These individual and social miseries, however great and innumerable they may be, however eternal they appear, will vanish like hyenas and jackals at the approach of the lion, when the proletariat shall say “I will” (Or in the case of Jurgis, perhaps “I will not”). But to arrive at the realization of its strength the proletariat must trample under foot the prejudices of Christian ethics, economic ethics and free-thought ethics. It must return to its natural instincts, it must proclaim the Right of Laziness (34).

Although Sinclair did not make any specific claims to promoting the philosophy of Lafargue in *The Jungle*, it is apparent that the spirit of rejecting the capitalist virtues of labor was a shared perspective for both men. Being published a couple decades prior to *The Jungle*, there is no direct link between Lafargue’s rejection of the work ethic in *The Right to Be Lazy* and Sinclair’s *The Jungle*, but it is likely that the influence Lafargue had on the Socialist movement played some kind of role in shaping Sinclair’s perspective on the nature of work and exploitation of the proletariat class by the capitalists. It is important to recognize that the traditional Socialist perspective did, in fact, maintain a work ethic of its own, but with an emphasis on only pursuing meaningful and socially useful work. The point being, neither Lafargue nor Sinclair is promoting a complete rejection of work, but rather a questioning of why we work in the first place and to what degree the work we do is necessary or beneficial. Jurgis’s experiment in the tramping phase may be a bit overzealous in the complete rejection of work as a widely applicable mode of operation, but it still serves a very important function in his socio-political progression, not as an end but rather a step in the right direction. The fact that he questions the virtue of work is much more important and useful than his actual rejection of all work, which eventually proves unsustainable. Nevertheless, it is interesting to analyze why this is the case.

Jurgis seems an ideal version of a proletariat who has committed to the rejection of work. He has no connection to others, no obligations save the immediate needs of hunger and shelter. Outside of the bare necessities of surviving, Jurgis is poised to fulfill the experiment of the virtuous lazy person, rejecting all work that is not absolutely necessary for survival. He immediately begins to feel the positive effects of his new path “for every mile that he got from Packingtown meant another load from his mind...he felt like a bird lifted up and borne away upon a gale” (255). Coming up to the first home on his new adventure as a free man, Jurgis approaches the farmer out front saying, “I would like to get some breakfast please.” The farmer asks if Jurgis would like to work, to which Jurgis explicitly replies, “No...I don’t” (255). The farmer’s refusal to give Jurgis anything to eat if he will not work for it sets the tone for the remainder of this section. Although Jurgis has embarked on a new life path renouncing work, he learns very quickly that not everyone shares his enthusiasm for upsetting the established order.

Nevertheless, with a little spending cash in his pocket, the resistant lifestyle of the tramp started out nicely for Jurgis. When he made it clear that he would pay for food but refused to work for it, people would sometimes agree to sell him food before he went on his way. In the case of one reluctant farmer who exclaimed, “we don’t feed tramps here,” Jurgis responded in kind by leaving quietly but also uprooting an entire row up newly planted peach trees: “That was his answer, and it showed his mood; from now on he was fighting, and the man who hit him would get all that he gave every time” (257). In such a fashion did Jurgis proceed in his first attempt at defying the capitalist status quo. Although it has required a hardening of his heart toward his fellow man, “Jurgis was

beginning to think for himself nowadays” (258). Even in the early days of Jurgis’s tramping, Sinclair seems to be giving a very even-handed treatment of our protagonist. On the one hand, it seems a little harsh the way he lashes out at the unsuspecting farmers who don’t know what to make of this wandering man who bluntly asks for favors but refuses to work, usually followed by the offer to pay for his requests. However, with everything the reader has seen Jurgis experience, there is a strong argument to be made for Jurgis’s cynical and self-centered mentality. After all, if the world has to be an every-man-for-himself coliseum, then it seems only logical that Jurgis would eventually come to the conclusion that he needs to fight to survive. Interestingly, if the fight is against the system, he seems to be employing both the fight and flight methods of survival, simultaneously attempting to avoid the system that holds him down and pushing against it by his refusal to participate. The confusion portrayed on the part of the farmers only further illustrates the degree to which the American population has internalized the value of a work ethic, rarely stopping to consider why working is automatically considered a positive and necessary activity. The notion that a living must be earned rather than deserved is integral to the American capitalist ideology and is a major foundational block on which the capitalist machine operates; to question it is to openly challenge the entire system of capitalism and the ethic it claims to operate on.

Just as Lafargue suggests, once Jurgis has renounced the virtue of hard work and embraced the life of leisure, he becomes free “to taste the joys of earth...to banquet joyously in honor of the jovial god of idleness” (38). Even after being offered room, board, and a decent wage for his labor by a farmer, Jurgis refuses in light of his newfound respect for the freedom he has obtained. “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” (259). It is evident from the lengthy descriptions alternating between the joys of freedom and the hatred of work and wage labor that Sinclair wishes to depict the many joys that exist outside of the capitalist system, and furthermore, to exemplify what is being sacrificed when laborers are forced to spend the large majority of their time and energy “doing one certain thing all day, until he was so exhausted that he could only lie down and sleep until the next day” (260). Shortly into this new lifestyle, Jurgis encounters other tramps who, “laughed at his ideas of paying for anything with money or with work—for they got all they wanted without either” (260).

In a brief moment of apparent betrayal, Sinclair continues on that “Of these professional tramps a great many had, of course, been shiftless and vicious all their lives” (261). This negative description, emphasized with the interjection of “of course,” hints at the capitalist belief that the poor are inherently immoral and unclean, literally and figuratively. The unwashed masses that refuse to participate in the system are apparently doing so only by being “shiftless and vicious all their lives.” However, Sinclair immediately refutes this anti-tramp perspective when he follows up that “the vast majority of them had been working men, had fought the long fight as Jurgis had, and found that it was a losing fight, and given up” (261). This sentence alone serves a very important purpose in this section, as it clarifies that all, or at least most, of these men have life stories much like Jurgis and that they too have arrived at their current situation through a very reasonable progression of events, and through no fault of their own. Indeed, most of them are a direct result of the mechanism of capitalism this novel attempts to illuminate and critique.

If we as readers can lend a degree of sympathy to the struggle of Jurgis as the victim of an exploitative system that used him for every ounce of labor it could squeeze out and then discarded him, we should be able to extend this sympathy to the other tramps he encounters who have been processed by the capitalist machine in much the same way. For the less forgiving of readers, Sinclair even has Jurgis mention “yet another sort of men, those from whose ranks the tramps were recruited, men who were homeless and wandering, but still seeking to work” (261). Although these men serve as failed revolutionaries who cannot commit fully to the renouncing of the exploitative virtue of the capitalist work ethic, they still maintain the potential to soften the hearts of readers who still cannot escape the commitment to the notion of “earning a living,” which by necessity requires an action in return for sustenance.

Unfortunately, those “virtues of laziness” that Lafargue advocated so enthusiastically, the “leisure to taste the joys of earth, to make love and to frolic,” (38) are displayed in a somewhat negative light in the course of Jurgis’s exploits. After ingratiating himself with some fellow tramps, the men all go to town to partake in some of these “joys of earth.” When Jurgis finds a woman who appears sexually interested in him, Sinclair gives the following, less than flattering, description of the events to follow:

They had more to drink, and then he went upstairs into a room with her, and the wild beast rose up within him and screamed, as it has screamed in the jungle from the dawn of time. And then, because of his memories and his shame, he was glad when others joined them—men and women; and they had more drink and spent the night in wild rioting and debauchery (262).

This first significant social experience for Jurgis in the community of tramps is both important and problematic. Given that only a chapter or two of the entire novel is dedicated to the tramping phase of Jurgis’s life, there is relatively little time and space that can be dedicated to the depiction of this class of citizens.

Unfortunately, Sinclair seems to either consciously or unconsciously fall prey to the social misperception that these people who refuse to participate in the capitalist system around them are by nature morally reprehensible. By giving descriptions of the “beast” that rises up in *Jurgis*, Sinclair in effect supports the association of the poor and destitute to being nothing more than beasts. The metaphorical comparisons early in the novel of the meat-packing workers to the animals they help slaughter sets the stage for a problematic representation of the working classes. However, it takes a drastic step in a negative direction when the poor are no longer symbolically victimized through the slaughter of animals being processed by the capitalist profit machine, but are rather imagined as “beasts” who are “creature[s] of impulse” who “roamed until the hunger for drink and for women mastered them” (263). This complicity in the debasement of the poor to mere beasts and the dispossession of their humanity is perhaps one of the major shortcomings of Sinclair’s novel, which comes through most evidently in this section.

Throughout the novel there is continuous parallel language comparing the poorest classes to animals, but the extrapolation of this comparison to implications of moral uncleanness shifts inadvertently, undermining any attempts at humanizing the poor. This is perhaps where Sinclair and Lafargue differ most evidently in perspective regarding leisure. Lafargue seemingly takes a more forgiving view of drunken debauchery and sexual exploits as merely enjoying the pleasures made available to us in life. Sinclair seems to adhere to a more traditional morality that views these activities as vices. Nevertheless, there is a consistency that both maintain across classes. Lafargue does not criticize the rich classes for the activities that ensue when embracing leisure, but rather reprimands them for doing so at the exclusion and expense of the working class.

Sinclair, alternatively, views these activities as vices regardless of whether the person engaging in them is rich or not. The most important lesson to be learned here then is that the ability to pursue activities of leisure should be consistent across social classes. Which activities should be pursued, however, may still be up for debate, depending on one's moral stance regarding certain activities.

Beyond the revolutionary commitment to laziness, there is something else very significant going on in this brief but important section of the novel. In the first section, we noted the panopticon-like social structure that was illuminated, which in turn created a politics of visibility that controlled the power distribution. In essence, those who controlled who was visible and who was not, by whom, and how often, were the ones who monopolized power over the social and industrial operations of Packingtown. If we believe this supports Foucault's hypothesis that "visibility is a trap," then it seems only logical that the way to work against this exploitative power distribution is to make one's self invisible. And that is just what Jurgis and his tramping comrades are doing, making themselves invisible; however, this turns out to be more problematic than it originally seems.

In a major sociological study on poverty in America, sociologist and social activist Michael Harrington described how "American society is creating a new kind of blindness about poverty" (4). He goes on to describe an ontology of poverty whereby the poor are systematically and increasingly pushed out of view for the majority of the American consciousness. This in turn creates a sort of reciprocal problematic to the "visibility is a trap" concerns of Foucault. In Foucault's estimation, the act of being

made visible allows a supervising entity to monitor and, when necessary, disrupt the movements of bodies and individuals. However, Harrington draws our attention to the reverse issue where ignorance of the existence of the poor and their struggles puts them in a position to be ignored by the American public. As a literal representation of Harrington's point, he discusses how, "Clothes make the poor invisible too: America has the best dressed poverty the world has ever known" (5). Although this was written half a century after *The Jungle* and the nature of American poverty altered in the interim, there are still significant insights brought to light by Harrington that complicate the representation of American poverty and relationship to visibility that *The Jungle* presents in Jurgis's tramping phase.

As Harrington theorizes, "the poor are politically invisible... They have no face; they have no voice" (6). In addition to this dispossession of political voice and social recognition, Sinclair takes it a step further when he dispossesses the poor of their humanity as well. Describing the tramping community as "creature[s] of impulse" (263) within each resides a "wild beast" (262) effectively creates a separate form of existence, an ontology of poverty that depicts life as a hybrid of civilized human relations and the primitive nature resigned to the poor. In spite of the fact that Jurgis initially experiences a liberation of freedom when he leaves the confines of the city, he eventually finds himself still trapped, "writhing and suffocating the mire of his own vileness" (265). Harrington discusses how in the modern existence of American poverty, "they are not simply neglected and forgotten as in the old rhetoric of reform; what is much worse, they are not seen" (7).

This invisibility was structurally promoted in a more obvious fashion when Jurgis was in the city. We may recall when being given a tour of the meat-packing factory, Jurgis's friend Jokubas "whispered maliciously that the visitors did not see any more than the packers wanted them to" (43). Seeing the working class laboring at their station to provide the nation with the sausage necessary for a healthy American breakfast was well and good, but the "slaughtering-machine" continued on "like some horrible crime committed in a dungeon, all unseen and unheeded, buried out of sight and of memory" (45). In this way, Sinclair explicitly states the problematic elements of visibility and invisibility within the "slaughtering-machine."

As stated previously, the ability to monitor and regulate who is visible, when, and to whom defines who maintains the power. However, the consequences of visibility and invisibility outside the city limits are much more muddled, and yet still highly significant. When the ranks of tramping men leave the city and renounce the factory life, they think and feel like they are fighting back. If the control over their actions and visibility defines the means by which the packers exploit them, the obvious answer appears to be take away their ability to do so. Unfortunately, leaving the city to wander the country aimlessly, with all action being determined by the quantity of cash in one's pocket and the extent of one's hunger in effect leaves them in exactly the same social position they maintained in the city. Leaving the city makes the working class invisible, but they also cease to be the working class, and therefore are no longer useful to the packers that were exploiting them. As such, regard for the well-being continues to be a non-concern for the packers, but they also fail to have any effect on the national consciousness of their existence. They seem to consider themselves as something like escaped prisoners, but

they are doing nothing to change the operations of the prison, and in actuality, are still having their actions governed by the warden.

As we realize at the end of Jurgis's tramping phase, even this freedom of tramping is temporary, as hunger and want eventually lead him back to the city. Only after the tramping phase is complete do we realize that Jurgis never really escaped the system at all. Rather, the trampers effectively fulfilled the function the packers had hoped for, which was to be exploited for profit as long as possible and then to be made invisible when they were no longer useful. The reason the working class was resigned to living in the ghetto, the reason they work in isolated working environments, the reason visitors only see what "the packers wanted them to," is because their continued exploitation operates on the premise that the general public allows this to happen, and the only way that happens is a sort of "well-meaning ignorance" (Harrington, 4) on the part of the American public. As Harrington notes, "A good many concerned and sympathetic Americans are aware that there is much discussion of urban renewal" (4) and the struggle of those working-class individuals that compose that part of the population. However, by willfully being shown token examples of altruism toward the poor, these people find their consciences soothed and pursue social justice no further. The only conclusion we can come to is that by leaving the city and taking up the self-oriented lifestyle of tramping until the food and money runs out, the wandering proletariats are functioning rather effectively as continued "cog[s] in this marvelous machine" (41).

"Early in the fall Juris set out for Chicago again. All the joy went out of tramping as soon as a man could not keep warm in the hay" (266). So ends the second mode of

operation that Jurgis employs in his search for a means of existence within the capitalist profit machine. He, like many before him, realizes that the individuated response to opt out of capitalism simply doesn't work. Even when he attempts to fall off the grid, there is no escaping the work-for-sustenance social structure that exploited him so completely in the city. The system turns out to be too pervasive to escape. The end result: this individual action of resistance, though seemingly logical, is in fact not only insufficient, even on a personal level, but actually upholds and supports the very system it is battling. With this disillusionment comes the inevitable return to the city, where Jurgis must again try his luck at finding a means to sustenance and a mode of operation that offers a consistent and reasonable existence. Although it seems that this marks the return to the panopticon, the truth is much more depressing: Jurgis never really left. It won't be long into this return to the city before Jurgis enters the third mode of operation and his second attempt at rebellion, being criminal.

STAGE THREE: BEING CRIMINAL

“They themselves were part of the problem—they were part of the order established that was crushing men down and beating them!...They were trying to save their souls—and who but a fool could fail to see that all that was the matter with their souls was that they had not been able to get a decent existence for their bodies?” (274)

He saw the world of civilization then more plainly than ever he had seen it before; a world in which nothing counted but brutal might, and order devised by those who possessed it for the subjugation of those who did not” (278).

The third stage of Jurgis’s development is an interesting one to say the least. Jurgis returns to the city, again disillusioned and recognizing that the idea that one can simply leave the fight to pursue life outside the capitalist panopticon is not an option. “He had now no home to go to; he had no affection left in his life—only the pitiful mockery of it in the *camaraderie* of vice” (269, italics Sinclair’s). This camaraderie becomes most evident and manifests itself in the goal when Jurgis makes his second visit to jail. However, the events leading up to this imprisonment are necessary to revisit before we can begin to analyze the means and logic of Jurgis’s decision to fight the system as a criminal.

Upon his return to the city, Jurgis takes the necessary actions to achieve employment and gets a job working for a company supposedly digging tunnels for telephones. It is not long into this job that Jurgis realizes the truth of this occupation: “The City council had passed a quiet and innocent little bill allowing a company to construct telephone conduits under the city streets; and upon the strength of this, a great

corporation had proceeded to tunnel all Chicago with a system of railway freight subways...and when these freight tunnels were completed, connecting all the big factories and stores with the railroad depots, they would have the teamsters' union by the throat" (268). This initial turn of events sets the stage for this next step in the process of Jurgis's development. He plays his part simply because he wishes to continue surviving, yet he cannot help but become reintroduced to the way the city operates. This seemingly insignificant section of the novel illustrates Jurgis's increased awareness at the depth of corruption and connectedness that operates within this capitalist profit machine. The politicians work to pass seemingly "innocent" legislation which allows telephone lines to be placed under the city, but in actuality, it is a front for the businesses to establish a freight line infrastructure that allows them to combat the efforts of the unions. In the end, it appears by both legal and illegal means, all efforts ultimately come back to the root issue of maximizing or minimizing exploitation of the workers, depending on which side a person or organization happens to be on. For his part, Jurgis intends to fly under the radar but still maintains his position as another cog in the machine, small though he may be.

His indifference to the role he plays in this larger war over the exploitation of labor becomes especially relevant when he has a very interesting but brief encounter with a member of the capitalist class. This event is perhaps the most vulnerable to criticism of fortuitous, even fantastical, chance; however, it also plays a major role in the political message being communicated, as it constitutes the only interaction throughout the entire novel that Jurgis has with a member of the class that has exploited him and everyone he knows from start to finish.

After being injured and consequently losing his ability to work, Jurgis resorts to begging, which brings him to his next adventure. Even during this period of desperation, Jurgis is making progress in his socio-political views as he determines that, "He saw the world of civilization then more plainly than ever he had seen it before; a world in which nothing counted but brutal might" (278). This development in perspective would direct him down the path that eventually leads him to a life of crime. Already, "all life, was to him one colossal prison" (278), which puts him in the criminal mindset that the only way to operate in a prison is like a criminal. Indeed, even the politicians and business owners are doing it; how could he be expected to hold himself to a moral standard that apparently no one else followed? "He was like a wounded animal in the forest; he was forced to compete with his enemies upon unequal terms" (271). As such, it should come as no surprise that Jurgis ceases to maintain more obstacles for himself than already exist by trying to abide by a law that seems entirely a sham to begin with; but we are getting ahead of ourselves.

During his beggary period of transition, Jurgis has the good fortune (or not), of encountering a drunk and generous young man who turns out to be the spoiled son of Mr. Jones, the owner of Durham's meat packing company, Jurgis's first place of employment. During his initial interaction with Freddie (the son), Jurgis notices him haphazardly take out "a big roll of bills. It was more money than Jurgis had ever seen in his life" (282). In his state of awe, Jurgis thinks how "He might grab that wad of bills and be out of sight in the darkness before the other could collect his wits" (282). However, in the time it takes him to get used to the idea that this would be the first real crime he has ever committed, the opportunity is lost. In this way, Sinclair provides a very abrupt but significant lesson

for Jurgis: Hesitate to do what is necessary to survive, and the chance will be missed.

This is a lesson Jurgis certainly remembers in the future and will not make again.

Without recounting too many unnecessary details, Jurgis manages to get a nice meal and some wine out of the deal before being kicked out of Master Freddie's mansion by the butler. Much to Jurgis's surprise, no one noticed that Freddie handed him a \$100 bill to pay for cab fare, which of course Jurgis pocketed and saved for another day.

Unfortunately, when Jurgis attempts to change the massive bill for a wad of smaller ones at a saloon, the bartender essentially steals the bill resulting in Jurgis attacking him and being sent to jail. In the early hours of his stay in the goal, Jurgis occasionally "cried aloud for a drink of water, but there was no one to hear him. There were others in that same station house with split heads and a fever...and there was no one to hear any of them" (296). This passage contains one of the more explicit examples of Sinclair describing the degree to which the working class are allowed no voice within this exploitative system. Both on a personal and a political level, their voices are systematically dispossessed or silenced in order to maintain the smooth operation of the profit machine that is the meat packing company. After his sentencing, "It seemed monstrous to [Jurgis] that policemen and judges should esteem his word as nothing in comparison with the bartender's; poor Jurgis could not know that the owner of the saloon paid five dollars each week to the policeman alone for Sunday privileges and general favours" (298).

It is at this point that the criminal stage of Jurgis's development truly begins. During his first day in jail, Jurgis runs into a fellow inmate who he had become acquainted with the last time he was sent to the gaol, Jack Duane. Upon hearing Jurgis's

tale of woe, Duane responds, “Hard luck, old man...but maybe it’s taught you a lesson” (299). Jurgis responds in the affirmative stating, “I’ve learned some things since I saw you last” (299). The lessons, however, were not about to stop there. While in jail, Jurgis experiences another epiphany of sorts that would move him along significantly in the development of his political and social stance. The first time Jurgis was sent to jail, “he had thought of little but his family; but now he was free to listen to these men (the other inmates), and to realize that *he was one of them*—that their point of view was his point of view, and that the way they kept themselves alive in the world was the way he meant to do it in the future” (299, italics mine). In such a manner does Jurgis make a decision to cease holding himself down with moral impediments and agrees to learn from these other men who are in the same position as he. This constitutes the third mode of operation for Jurgis’s existence and his second attempt at rebelling against the oppressive system and individuals who benefit from it. Additionally, this section is important as it stresses his progress toward belonging to a community. Initially, the family unit is his sole connection to other human beings, which in effect serves to simply drag him down economically. After the family unit is destroyed, Jurgis takes up an entirely individualistic perspective as a tramp. This acceptance into a new community, even if it is a bunch of self-interested criminals, is nevertheless progress in the direction of collective action. Although critic Orm Overland would suggest that a major theme connecting the first and last two chapters of the novel is “the building of a new community for the protagonist,” I would suggest rather that all of the stages represent a significant move along the scale from the individualistic to the collective ideology. As such, the family unit, though a community of sorts, is of the old-world and therefore must

be destroyed by capitalism, leaving a blank slate of identity which Jurgis will spend the rest of the novel trying to replace with a new identity grounded in community. This initiation into the criminal class will ultimately fail, but it is nevertheless evidence of progress and socio-political development.

In analyzing this stage of Jurgis's development, it is useful to consider the insights of Franz Fanon in his chapter "Concerning Violence" from his seminal text *The Wretched of the Earth*. In this chapter, Fanon elaborates on the nature of violent resistance to colonization, and offers insight as to why this violence is often necessary and a logical reaction to violent imposition from a colonizing force. Although Jurgis is the immigrant being exploited by the capitalists already present, the power dynamic that exists is consistent between Fanon's colonizer/colonized relations and the exploiter/exploited relationship that is illustrated throughout *The Jungle*.

For example, Fanon discusses how, "violence is not a simple act of will, but needs for its realization certain very concrete preliminary conditions, and in particular the implements of violence" (64). This is made apparent in Jurgis's first attempt at resistance, which constitutes a sort of violence against the exploitative capitalist pursuits of the packers. Although he and the other tramps have the will or desire to fight back, they lack the resources or "preliminary conditions" necessary to maintain the ability to strike a blow to the exploiters. They simply maintain no power to fight back. If we consider the disenfranchisement of the working poor as a kind of colonialization, that is to say, much like colonizers dispossess people of their land and freedom, so do the capitalist dispossess the working poor of freedom and liberty, then we can apply the

binary logic of Fanon who states that “decolonization is always a violent phenomenon” (35).

According to Fanon, violence, by definition, is any act that forcefully works to disrupt or dismantle the oppressive forces of the colonizer or the capitalist exploiters. It then becomes easy to see how Jurgis and his fellow tramps from the previous stage of development thought they were fighting back against the capitalists. However, as Fanon warns, “for a man who is in the thick of the fight it is an urgent matter to decide on the means and the tactics to employ: that is to say, how to conduct and organize the movement. If this coherence is not present there is only a blind will toward freedom, with the terribly reactionary risks which it entails” (59). Unfortunately, that insight seems to be spot on for what just occurred in the previous stage. All the tramps felt a shared desire to fight the system and will toward freedom, but the “blind will toward freedom” resulted in a very unorganized effort that ultimately failed to have any substantial effect. Appropriately, since this was Jurgis’s first attempt at resisting the system, Sinclair reflects the theoretical stance of Fanon who claims that, “Individualism is the first to disappear” (47). After recognizing that this individualistic effort isn’t working, Jurgis finds a sense of camaraderie with his fellow inmates in the gaol, and forms an alliance with Jack Duane which will come to fruition after Jurgis is released.

In an uncanny resemblance to Fanon’s insights, Sinclair clearly illustrates through Jurgis’s sham of a trial that “Confronted with a world ruled by the settler (or capitalist), the native (or proletariat) is always presumed guilty” (Fanon, 53). After his presumed guilt lands him in the gaol with Duane and the other inmates, Jurgis recognizes how “the settler paints the native as a sort of quintessence of evil” who is “declared insensible to

ethics” (Fanon, 41). With that recognition, Jurgis accepts the circumstances ascribed to him by the powers that be and embraces his new role in society as a ruthless criminal. In the context of earlier discussion about how Sinclair betrayed the lower classes by inadvertently promoting the animalization of the poor, this section becomes even more significant as it illustrates a sort of moral determinism that comes as a result of the continued disenfranchisement of the poor that eventually leads them to a path of immorality. Even when Jurgis feels initial remorse for his actions, street-savvy Duane explains that, “It’s a case of us or the other fellow, and I say the other fellow every time,” following up with the justification that, “He was doing it to somebody as hard as he could, you can be sure of that” (302). So goes the logic of capitalist competition; whether by legal or illegal means, the law of the land is that the strong survive and the weak don’t. Although critics rarely discuss it, much of Sinclair’s novel, and particularly this section, make some very interesting critiques in their representation of social Darwinism. The logic never seems to result in a judgment one way or the other, but rather illustrates that from Jurgis’s perspective, that is the reality of life, and one must simply learn to live with it or die because of it.

Unfortunately, Jurgis’s disillusionment comes with acceptance of the status quo that seems to very quickly unravel the attempt at resisting the system. Although the initial transfer to the criminal lifestyle appears to be a rejection of the role the system has defined for him as the good worker, created to produce profit and be exploited and abused, Jurgis very quickly begins to blur the line between those he is resisting and those he is supporting. As Fanon notes, “there is very easily brought into being a kind of class of enfranchised slaves, or slaves who are individually free” (60). In considering this

comment, we can begin to see how Jurgis is in many ways fulfilling the image of an affranchised slave, a man who appears to be moving up the ranks and maintains an individual freedom while simultaneously being a slave to capitalism.

Very early in his career as a criminal, Jurgis convinces his partner Jack Duane to take him out to socialize with other criminals. “And so Jurgis got a glimpse of the high-class criminal world of Chicago. The city, which was owned by an oligarchy of businessmen, being nominally ruled by the people, a huge army of graft was necessary for the purpose of effecting the transfer of power” (303). In this scene and the days to follow, Jurgis slowly begins to realize just how integral the criminal class is to the capitalist machine he has been working so desperately to destroy or escape. However, this recognition is slow-going as Jurgis becomes enmeshed in the benefits that accompany his newfound role in society, thinking how “A month ago [he] had all but perished of starvation upon the streets; and now suddenly, as by the gift of a magic key, he had entered into a world where money and all the good things of life came freely” (304). Indeed, even for a time as a reader, it appears that Jurgis has cracked the code and discovered a way, albeit a morally reprehensible one, to succeed within capitalism. He begins to gain knowledge of how corrupt politics work, how graft is systematically incorporated into the economy of trade, and how illegal activity often becomes just another aspect of the business that drives the capitalist society he is a part of.

Interestingly, Fanon creates a binary logic of opposition between settler and native, whereby both are working against the other for their own interests. This mutually opposed and two-class logic applies equally to the capitalist/proletariat dynamic within *The Jungle*, but as Fanon states, “What [the natives] demand is not the settler’s position

of status, but the settler's place. The immense majority of natives want the settler's farm. For them, there is no question of entering into competition with the settler. *They want to take his place*" (61, italics mine). Unfortunately, Jurgis seems to fall into this "immense majority" who seem more interested in taking up the role of the oppressor than simply eliminating the circumstances that make that oppression possible. Jurgis does not appear morally outraged at the illegal and immoral actions of the criminals, grafters, and businessmen (who are blending together at this point). Rather, he seems entirely content to become one of them; as long as he's not at the bottom of the food chain, he appears content with the notion that a food chain exists at all. This fact illustrates that he still has not fully escaped the individualistic mentality that has been used so often to exploit him and his comrades thus far. The desire to work collaboratively with Jack Duane appears a step in the right direction, but as the reader will see, this small act of collaboration will soon cease to be a possibility.

Before the Duane-Jurgis partnership disbands, however, Jurgis takes note of certain realities of his new station in life:

Among the people Jurgis lived with now money was valued according to an entirely different standard from that of the people of Packingtown; yet, strange as it may seem, he did a great deal less drinking than he had as a working man. He had not the same provocations of exhaustion and hopelessness; he had now something to work for, to struggle for. He soon found that if he kept his wits about him he would come upon new opportunities; and being naturally an active man, he not only kept sober himself, but helped to steady his friend (Jack Duane), who was a good deal fonder of both wine and women than he (306).

In this passage, Sinclair manages to simultaneously keep Jurgis down while also creating the appearance of social mobility. He seems to have moved up in the world, as his financial needs are met and his day-to-day life seems both less physically taxing and less stressful. As Jurgis notes, "money was valued according to an entirely different

standard” as he was pulling more money in for less work and also not being scammed quite so easily now that he was savvier to the ways of the world. Unfortunately, this is yet another mirage of social success for Jurgis.

Sinclair takes this opportunity to illustrate the self-reinforcing nature of exploitation of the working poor when he describes how Jurgis “did a great deal less drinking than he had as a working man” because “he had not the same provocations” leading him to the drink. As such, the working conditions and general lifestyle forced on the poor create conditions that make it very difficult to avoid vices such as alcohol and prostitution, which in turn lead to greater financial strain and the vicious poverty cycle. Having seemingly escaped that cycle, Jurgis realizes that “if he kept his wits about him he would come upon new opportunities” that would have been unavailable to him in his past life. By this description of his current situation, we see how Jurgis has in many ways convinced himself, and perhaps the reader as well, that he has successfully taken the place of the oppressor by joining the ranks of the grafters and capitalist bosses. However, a reality check comes shortly thereafter when Jurgis began “wearying of the risks and vicissitudes of miscellaneous crime” (309). At the same time that Jurgis begins to consider a career change, his friend Jack Duane is caught breaking into a safe, only avoiding arrest because the night watchmen knew him and allowed him to escape. “Such a howl from the newspapers followed this that Duane was slated for a sacrifice, and barely got out of town in time” (309). So ends the role of Jack Duane’s life and influence in the progression of Jurgis.

At this time, Jurgis decides to leave the life of a petty criminal and “was moved to give up the career for that of a politician” (309). This new ambition is curiously

reminiscent of the famous quote from Bertolt Brecht's *The Threepenny Opera* when Macheath surmises, "What's picking a lock compared to buying shares? What's breaking into a bank compared to founding one? What's murdering a man compared to employing one?" (79). Jurgis comes to the realization rather anti-climactically when he off-handedly decides that being a criminal is alright for a while, but as illustrated by his mentor Jack Duane, even then you are a disposable cog in the machine that will eventually be "slated for a sacrifice" when it is deemed beneficial to those above you in the social hierarchy. This risk ultimately makes this most recent mode of operation yet another example of a temporary and insufficient fix, which is both individuated and unsustainable.

This leads Jurgis to the next logical conclusion that his acts of resistance are simply misguided. He cannot beat the system, and therefore he will try to benefit from it by joining the ranks of the capitalists as a political supporter. After all, he never really ceased working for them anyway; he simply realizes that if he must work for the cause of those on top, he may as well acknowledge it and attempt to move high enough in the ranks to avoid the imminent dangers that have accompanied all previous modes of operation thus far. This marks the end of Jurgis the petty criminal and the beginning of Jurgis the political activist. Although it is subtle, he is gradually progressing toward a more collectively oriented existence, moving from his origins as a lone worker to this most recent development as a man belonging to a political party and orchestrating his efforts with those of his fellow Democrats (unless the Republicans will pay him more for his support). The sell-out nature does detract somewhat from the genuineness of his sense of belonging to a particular community, and yet, this is as much as he has

accomplished with any mode of being thus far since the destruction of his family unit and the cultural heritage and community that accompanied it.

STAGE FOUR: IF YOU CAN'T BEAT THEM...

"When Jurgis first set out, the captain of the precinct gave him a hundred dollars, and three times in the course of the day he came for another hundred...The balance all went for actual votes...there was universal exultation over this triumph of popular government, this crushing defeat of an arrogant plutocrat by the power of the common people" (315).

"Jurgis was now one of their agents in this process, and he could feel the change day by day, like the slow starting up of a huge machine. He had gotten used to being a master of men; and because of the stifling heat and the stench, and that he was a 'scab' and knew it and despised himself, he was drinking, and developing a villainous temper (329).

This next mode of operation takes on a pretty rapid pace of transition. Even before Jack Duane has been run out of town, Jurgis is beginning to evolve into a higher class of criminal, no longer being satisfied to mug random gentlemen walking down dark alleys but participating in illegal gambling schemes and fixed horse races. The involvement in this kind of orchestrated and organized criminality teaches Jurgis a great deal about the nature of making profits. Indeed, while he was "hanging round in dives and gambling houses and brothels, [he] met with the heelers of both [political] parties, and from their conversation he came to understand all the ins and outs of the game" (308). During the course of these conversations Jurgis saw "a number of ways in which he could make himself useful about election time" (308). As hinted throughout the text, and increasingly emphasized as we move along, the line between legal and illegal business is very blurry in the social picture Sinclair paints for us. The more Jurgis becomes aware of this fact, the more he explores the various modes of operation

available to him. Although he doesn't yet contemplate the moral hypocrisy of working so directly under the men who orchestrated the very forces that caused his plot-of-decline narrative from his first stage of development, Jurgis does offer enough insight and observation to bring to bear the convoluted nature of legal and illegal means of exploitation and disenfranchisement. Once he becomes immune to the guilt of literally beating a man down to steal his possessions, it becomes much easier to do so with more tact and less immediate physical violence.

In consideration of this stage in Jurgis's progression, it is interesting and useful to consider the work of Slavoj Žižek in his book *Violence*. Specifically, the distinction he draws between objective and subjective violence very nicely illustrates the problematic nature of the lessons Jurgis is bringing to bear in this section. Žižek describes subjective violence as "violence performed by a clearly identifiable agent" (1). In the story of Jurgis, it is easy to pinpoint many examples of this. When the foreman forcefully seduces Ona, that is clearly an act of violence on his part. When Jack Duane and Jurgis mug the man on the street, that is an obvious act of subjective violence. Throughout the novel, the plot is filled with examples of this. But more important, and perhaps more interesting, is the fact that Sinclair dedicates so much effort to directing our attention to what Žižek describes as objective violence. Although Sinclair falls short in addressing, or perhaps even falls prey to, "'symbolic' violence embodied in language and its forms," he does an excellent job of placing "'systemic' violence" in the limelight (1-2). The continued use of animalistic language to describe the poor is debatable as to whether it supports this "symbolic violence embodied in language," but the continued critique of the mechanisms of capitalism is undeniable.

The most recent example of the emphasis on the systemic violence, which constitutes a form of objective violence, is the extensive description of the business-as-usual nature of corrupt politics and grafting. In describing the Racing Trust, Sinclair notes how,

It built magnificent racing parks all over the country, and by means of enormous purses it lured the people to come, and then it organized a gigantic shell-game, whereby it plundered them of hundreds of millions of dollars every year. Horse-racing had once been a sport, but nowadays it was a business; a horse could be 'doped' and doctored, undertrained or overtrained; it could be made to fall at any moment—or its gait could be broken by lashing it with the whip, which all the spectators would take to be a desperate effort to keep it in the lead (307).

The fact that the game is rigged is problematic in itself, but the more concerning elements are that the public is largely unaware of the exploitation taking place, and therefore participate unperturbed. This in turn leads to the “often catastrophic consequences of the smooth functioning of our economic and political system” (Zizek, 2). Because no clear offenses are taking place, and furthermore that no clear culprit is available for reprimand, it becomes very easy for the general public to assume that this is just the way things are and that they must learn to deal with it. We have seen Jurgis go through this thought process and come to that exact conclusion numerous times throughout the course of this novel, albeit to no avail as he continues to develop rather than become ideologically or socially stagnant.

With that being said, Sinclair does have a tendency to veer into the realm of the subjective throughout the various stages of Jurgis's development. With every social ill that befalls Jurgis, there seems to be a representative figure on which the exploitation is blamed. When Jurgis has his adventure with Master Freddie, for example, Freddie describes how his father shows off his mansion to “Lossa folk from [the] country” and “Made it all out of hogs, too—damn ole scoundrel! Now we see where our pennies go—

rebates, an' private-car lines" (286). In this moment of drunken honesty, Freddie inadvertently expresses the perspective of the working class were they privy to the knowledge he has; namely, that his father is the vessel to which all their money is funneled, ultimately being used on personal luxuries. In a moment of ironic twist, Freddie learns that Jurgis is one of those very people whom his father has exploited most directly and celebrates the coincidence saying "Guv'ner ought to be here—glad to see you. Great fren's with the men guv'ner—labor an' capital, comun'ty int'rests, an' all that" (286). Even in his immense ignorance of the reality of the situation, Freddie again hits on a moment of insight. This description of his father as a man for the people, "Great fren's with the men," bears a distinct similarity to Zizek's description of what he calls the "liberal communists" who "give away with one hand what they first took with the other" (21). Zizek further emphasizes this contradiction of humanitarianism when he claims that "Charity is the humanitarian mask hiding the face of economic exploitation" (22). Although packer Jones might very well promote himself as the friend of the worker, as his son testifies, there is the reality that any ability he has to do a good turn to the workers is first created by the exploitation of their labor.

A more immediate and blunt example of this personification of exploitation occurs in this most recent stage of development when Jurgis begins working for "the political lord of the district, the boss of Chicago's mayor" (312), Mike Scully. Offering no opportunity this time for ignorance or misinterpretation, Sinclair describes how

It was Scully who owned the brickyards and the dump and the ice pond—though Jurgis did not know it. It was Scully who was to blame for the unpaved street in which Jurgis's child had been drowned; it was Scully who had put into office the magistrate who had first sent Jurgis to gaol; it was Scully who was principal stockholder in the company which had sold him the ramshackle tenement, and then robbed him of it. But Jurgis knew none of these things, any more than he

knew that Scully was but a tool and puppet of the packers. To him Scully was a mighty power, the 'biggest' man he had ever met (312).

This passage is both enlightening and problematic. On the one hand, Sinclair seems to negate all the work he has done in illustrating the objective, systemic violence taking place by creating an image of Scully as the man responsible for all the evils of Jurgis's life. After all, "it was Scully who was to blame for the unpaved street in which Jurgis's child had been drowned." This sort of individualization of blame is exactly the sort of subjective misrepresentation of the social ills that are plaguing the working class and American society in general. The act of assigning blame to an individual or group of individuals suggests that the problems can be alleviated simply by punishing those assigned blame or removing them from their position. However, this perception is a fallacy. In reality, these men are simply more cogs in the great machine, and can be replaced just as easily as the workers who are so enthusiastically exploited. If we recall Foucault's description of the mechanisms of the panopticon, "it does not matter who exercises power. Any individual, taken almost at random, can operate the machine" (202). As such, it is merely a distraction and a technique for maintaining the status quo by assigning blame to an individual or group, consequently shifting the focus away from the structural flaws that allow the creation of the conditions that propagate this systemic exploitation of the masses. Sinclair qualifies this problematic image of Scully by stating that "Scully was but a tool and puppet of the packers" (312). This statement effectively illustrates that eliminating Scully would do nothing to serve the interests of Jurgis or the other working poor being exploited. In much the same way that Jack Duane was "slated for sacrifice," merely making a bit more room for another criminal, so would eliminating Skully simply pave the way for another boss who would exploit the working classes just

as enthusiastically. Unfortunately, Sinclair's passage still could be misinterpreted as identifying the culprit as those in power rather than the structural mechanisms that allow anyone to hold that power. In this way, even Sinclair's bold attempt to draw attention to the root of the problem could come up short. Even someone as insightful as Sinclair can be somewhat limited in his ability to maintain the gaze on the objective forms of violence.

The degree to which this holds true for the other form of violence Zizek names is difficult to say. The form of objective violence Zizek describes as "symbolic" is "embodied in language and its forms" (1) and is present throughout *The Jungle*. The question is, does Sinclair do so unknowingly, or is he deliberately attempting to draw our attention to such language and the social consequences of its form? Describing the gaol as "that wild-beast pen" (214) and the men who are contained by it as "creature[s] of impulse" (263) is exactly the sort of language that dehumanizes the poor, and consequently dispossesses them of their humanity. This is a very subtle form of violence that does not receive much attention in the novel, perhaps precisely because it is so abstract. That is to say, the material consequences of such language is not readily apparent, and furthermore, the language used to describe the circumstances of the characters is not necessarily used by the characters. As such, it seems apparent that Sinclair is unconsciously complicit with this form of objective violence rather than speaking against it.

However, there may be a subtlety present that places Sinclair in a more positive light. If we consider the dehumanizing language that Sinclair uses to describe the poor and their circumstances within the larger context of the novel's message as a whole, then

perhaps we can read this language as simply representative of the underlying ideology of the capitalist society within which the characters operate. In the same way that Sinclair attempts to unreservedly expose the reality of the living conditions of the working poor in the meat packing industry, so does he appear to be illustrating with brutal honesty the perceptions of the poor maintained by the American public. The fact that Sinclair methodically traces the events of Jurgis's life and follows a logical progression of events allows for a more sympathetic view of his circumstances and perspective. This works in direct opposition to the dehumanizing nature of the language used to describe Jurgis and his comrades, as following the events of their lives illustrates that they are not only complex individuals with complex identities, but they are also being placed in a position exterior to civilization without good reason. A slightly optimistic view of the language, therefore, would perceive it as merely representative of the zeitgeist during the Progressive era, but unsupported as illustrated by the overall message contained in Jurgis's experiences and evolution as a character. With that said, there is some question of how far intent extends and when it is no longer sufficient defense. That is to say, even if Sinclair is using problematic language specifically with the aim of illustrating why it is problematic, if he fails to make it clear that it is, in fact, problematic and propagating a negative view of the working poor as less than human, then perhaps his short-coming should be admitted as such, while still recognizing that it was almost certainly unintentional. Ultimately, it is difficult to gauge precisely if the effect of such animalistic language to describe the poor had a positive effect of encouraging outrage and empathy, or if it simply slipped under the radar and rather reinforced such notions as the poor being worthy of sympathy, but only as beings or objects of inferior status.

There is a certain reality that struggling to survive in an impoverished state necessitates, or at least strongly encourages, less desirable activity on the part of the poor. However, as illustrated by Jurgis's encounter with Master Freddie, vices are not specific to the poor, but perhaps manifest themselves differently. For example, a poor person may be more likely to literally steal from a person, just as Jurgis and Jack Duane do when they mug the casual passerby in an alley. However, the capitalist perspective sees this as more morally reprehensible than the slightly less direct theft that occurs by the upper class. For example, when Jurgis is gouged by the beer supplier during his wedding reception, by whom "you were sure to be cheated unmercifully," (21) there is no language of animalistic qualities used to describe those misdeeds. When Master Freddie is drunk, there is no description of the "beast" rising within him that was assigned to the tramps Jurgis associated with during that particular phase of his life. The suggestion that the poor may actually contain certain "beastly" qualities appears to be draw an arbitrary line in the moral spectrum of actions. Why is it that a poor person who steals or participates in sexual activities is primitive whereas a successful capitalist doing the same thing is somehow illustrating an external flaw in the system? The fact is, capitalism encourages immoral and selfish activity on all fronts, but the perception of which acts qualify as "beastly" is often determined depending on the demographic that most often partakes in it. This is ultimately why Sinclair's animalistic imagery may prove to be harmful. It is not necessarily false that life conditions cause the poor to act in morally questionable (or condemnable) ways, but it is a misrepresentation of reality to imply that they are the only ones who do so. The inhumane activity caused by capitalism occurs on

all fronts, and therefore should not be directed solely at the poor, in essence allowing for victim blaming to take place.

At this point, it may be useful to consider yet another theorist who offers her own perspective on effective means of changing the system. Feminist theorist Audre Lorde is famously known for, among other things, the notion that we cannot work within the confines of a system if we wish to change it. This sentiment is expressed quite clearly in her essay entitled, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House,” which clearly explains the position she takes regarding this issue. In her essay, Lorde describes how “when the tools of a racist patriarchy are used to examine the fruits of that same patriarchy,” then “only the most narrow perimeters of change are possible and allowable” (111). Although her essay is largely based on and directed at racism and sexism, the underlying logic and conclusion is transferable: it is not possible to fix a corrupt system while operating within the parameters that system sets for us.

When applying the perspective of “The Master’s Tools,” to the novel, we realize that Jurgis, and any other character for that matter, will never be able to effect any sort of significant change or effectively combat capitalism while operating within the confines of a capitalist system. As we have illustrated through this stage and all those prior, every mode of engagement that Jurgis has attempted has done exactly that, even if it wasn’t his intention. With the first mode of engagement, Jurgis gave his best effort to be “the good worker” and work entirely within the confines of the system. Obviously this enacted no change whatsoever on the system, and furthermore, had very adverse effects for Jurgis and his family. The second and third modes of engagement were both attempts at

resisting the system, but both ultimately failed as modes of being. This failure occurred on two levels. The first was a personal failure in that both being a tramp supposedly off the grid and being a criminal “outside” the confines of legal operations were ineffectual in alleviating the struggles the capitalist system imposed on Jurgis. The second failure was on a socio-political level, in that neither act of supposed resistance made any progress in changing the system. As was illustrated at the end of the tramping phase, Jurgis, “like many thousands of others” before him realized when “all the joy went out of tramping,” it was a necessity to return to the city, “delud[ing] himself with the hope that by coming early he could avoid the rush” (266). It seems Jurgis, among many others, recognized that they could not effectively fight the system nor avoid it. Indeed, there was the eventual disillusionment that they never escaped it to begin with, which of course results in many of them going back to their places at the factories, often for diminished wages.

The second act of supposed resistance, “Being Criminal,” goes through a very similar progression. Jurgis realizes he “had no affection left in his life—only the pitiful mockery of it in the *camaraderie* of vice” (italics Sinclair’s, 269). This second visit to jail is very different from the first; the former visit, Jurgis was a family man and the epitome of the struggling individual. This time around, “he was free to listen to these men, and to realize that he was one of them—that their point of view was his point of view” (299). This initially appears to be a move in the direction of the political and a move away from the personal, however, Jurgis has yet to realize that he is still working with what Lorde would call “the master’s tools.” Although working outside the realm of legal activity, Jurgis would soon discover that “it was the way of the game, and there was

no helping it” (302). He gets “a glimpse of the high-class criminal” and the “huge army of graft [that] was necessary for the purpose of effecting the transfer of power” (303). In this way, it becomes clear to both Jurgis and the reader that his actions are having absolutely no effect on the way society operates. Quite the contrary, he seems as much a part of the capitalist machine as he ever had been.

The “camaraderie” Jurgis feels with people such as Jack Duane in the criminal stage and dirty politicians such as Mike Scully in the current stage is a bastardization of the connection someone like Lorde is trying to encourage. She recognizes that collective action needs to take place to effect meaningful social change, and for that to happen, people must not only acknowledge but accept and encourage differences while still working together for a shared goal. The trouble with Jurgis’s most recent attempts at collective action is two-fold. Firstly, there is not really a recognition of differences but a weak foundation of common interests that will crumble as soon as it is in the short-term best interest of a supposed comrade to dispose of his allies. This becomes apparent when Jack Duane is “slated for sacrifice” (309) in the criminal stage and is reiterated when Jurgis is designated to scab labor and then eventually swindled by someone who was supposed to be his friend, resigning him to “tak[ing] his chances with the common herd” (335).

Lorde points out that it is “real connection which is so feared by a patriarchal world” (111). Furthermore, she describes how it “is an old and primary tool of all oppressors to keep the oppressed occupied with the master’s concerns” (113). In the previous two stages, Jurgis illustrates both of these statements. His inability to develop “real connection” with his comrades as well as his tendency to continually be distracted

by the “master’s concerns” both contribute to the ultimate failure of both attempts to resist and exist within this exploitative system. If his criminal friends had established a more deeply held and “real” connection, they wouldn’t be so eager to abandon one another for the sake of personal gain. In this way, they maintain that same competitive nature that is promoted by capitalism and creates a self-sustaining system of exploitation. Furthermore, if the scab laborers weren’t so concerned with what was best for the packers, who are supposedly their allies, they would be able to recognize what is collectively beneficial to all the working class community. As a brief call to action, Lorde suggests that “In a world of possibility for us all, our personal visions help lay the groundwork for political action...In our world, divide and conquer must become define and power” (112). With this knowledge, it becomes clear what must happen for Jurgis to progress beyond the limits this capitalist system have confined him to. As expected, the attempt to join the packers and become one of the exploiting class is only a temporary and individual fix. Eventually, Jurgis is once again discarded as soon as he is no longer useful, at which point he must start over and “take his chances with the common herd” (335). This will be his final chance to discover a successful mode of engagement, and it will also be the most political of any he has attempted thus far. If he wishes to truly reach a point of socio-political self-actualization, he must find a way to truly accept the differences of his social comrades while also seeing that they all have a shared interest in the well-being of the common.

STAGE FIVE: SOCIALISTS UNITE!

A tremendous roar had burst from the throats of the crowd...Evidently the speaker had arrived, thought Jurgis; what fools they were making of themselves! What were they expecting to get out of it, anyhow—what had they to do with elections, with governing the country? Jurgis had been behind the scenes in politics (356).

And now a dream of resistance haunts him, hope battling with fear; until suddenly he stirs, and a fetter snaps, and a thrill shoots through him, to the farthest ends of his huge body, and in a flash the dream becomes an act! (366).

After he is disposed of by the packers once more, having not only lost his place as a political supporter and a scab laborer but also relinquishing all his life savings (approximately \$300) to his swindling associate, Jurgis does not immediately find his next station in life. Rather, there is another period of transition that carries with it its own lessons and observations. Jurgis once again returns to the gates of the factories seeking employment, “But never since he had been in Chicago had he stood less chance of getting a job than just then” (335). He wanders the city almost aimlessly searching for whatever options may be left for him to pursue. Unfortunately for Jurgis, “Everywhere he went...there were hundreds of others like him; everywhere was the sight of plenty—and the merciless hand of authority waving them away” (336). Even when a bit of good fortune leads Jurgis to his last remaining family member, Marija, he finds that she has acquired employment as a prostitute, living in a brothel, addicted to morphine, and constantly in debt to her madam/landlady.

In consideration of this section and the transition leading us to Jurgis's evolution into a socialist, it is instructive to look to the writings of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri in their text, *Declaration*. Specifically, the section dedicated to "Rebellion against the Crisis" is useful for recognizing the conditions that lead to social upheaval. In the earlier portion of this text, Hardt and Negri describe four social roles that exist within a capitalist society which they call subjective figures against the crisis. These figures are the indebted, the mediatized, the securitized, and the represented. They claim at the beginning of the "Rebellion against the Crisis" chapter that "All four dominant figures in contemporary society have the capacity to rebel, and also to invert themselves and become figures of power" (31). Although all four figures exist contemporarily, and in greater numbers relative to the Progressive era, the indebted category is the one that operates to the most significant degree at the turn of the twentieth century and is represented in *The Jungle*. There are likely a number of reasons for this. For example, with the advent of the internet and other such technological advancements, it is increasingly common for the average person to be exposed to the media. As such, the mediatized become a much greater portion of society than they have been in the past. Also, as a necessity for keeping the masses at bay, the ruling class has been required to allow more (or at least the illusion of more) security and representation for the majority of Americans. Hardt and Negri ask why we as a society "accept being treated like an inmate," where "total surveillance is increasingly the general condition of society as a whole" (20). This constitutes a major consequence of the politics of fear on which much of contemporary society operates, but which maintains roots early in the development of American society. Much of this fear stems from anxiety brought on by financial strain

and the struggle to make a living. As such, the analysis dedicated to the role and functions of the indebted will largely be the most instructive regarding the analysis of this final mode of operation for Jurgis.

The struggle of the indebted is very quickly illustrated at the earliest stages of the novel when Jurgis and his family are crushed by the financial strain of buying a home and feeding themselves. However, even after the majority of the lessons have been learned throughout the novel, the characters who have managed to survive thus far have not escaped the trap of indebtedness. Interestingly, when Marija gives Jurgis a speech of forgiveness for abandoning her and the rest of the family, she claims that they don't blame him, saying "the job was too much for us... We were too ignorant—that was the trouble. We didn't stand any chance. If I'd known what I know now we'd have won out" (347). Yet even with this claim, she is still under the yoke of debt. Marija describes how she is addicted to morphine and "seem[s] to need more of it every day" (352). When Jurgis asks her why she can't save up enough to leave, she elaborates on the exploitative practices of the debtors who over-charge the girls for all kinds of services, whether they are provided or not. She describes how "That's the way they keep the girls—they let them run up debts, so they can't get away" (352). And so, even in her very profitable position, Marija still has not discovered how to escape this poverty trap, forever at the mercy of her debtors and madam.

In regards to this struggle of poverty, Negri and Hardt describe how "When you bend under the weight of debt...you realize how much the capitalist crisis individualizes and strains the human passions" (32). After everything we have seen Jurgis go through in the course of his development, there is ample evidence of this being the case. He has

been individuated and strained since the very first day he arrived in Chicago, attempting to do whatever was necessary for the survival of himself and his family. Now, many pages and adventures later, he is finally becoming aware of what Negri and Hardt designate as the “collective condition” imposed on the masses by the capitalist system. Jurgis sees that Marija’s struggle to escape the crushing pressure of debt is symptomatic of the entire working-class struggle at this time, and this realization leads him to the Socialist movement, which consequently is the culmination of Jurgis’s socio-political development. Jurgis’s final leap from existing as an individual to joining a collective effort mirrors the insights of Hardt and Negri who describe how revolution often arises from the exploited classes reaching a breaking point and collectively rejecting their station in life: “A process of singularization is thus incarnated: a self-affirmation, a self-valorization, and a subjective decision that all open toward a state of being together. All political movements are born this way: from a decision of a rupture to a proposition of acting together” (*Declaration*, 33).

After Marija provides Jurgis with a little money to survive, he stumbles upon a social movement that will open his eyes to the true nature of his existence. He is again temporarily out of work and has no source of income or sustenance. He wanders aimlessly looking for an opportunity when “Providence had sent this storm of cold rain—and now all it was necessary to do was to set off a few fireworks, and thump a while on a drum, and all the homeless wretches from a mile around would pour in and fill the hall!” (339). This is the first of two political meetings that Jurgis attends in this stage, but the interesting point is the role material conditions play in sparking political interest. It is

only the physical necessity to get out of the rain that prompts his attendance for the political meeting, which he knows is mostly a farce as he “had been behind the scenes in politics,” and knew how little the masses actually had to do with governance. Nevertheless, after being forcefully removed from the first speech, the second attempt proved much more effective when a voice came into his ear, “a woman’s voice, gentle and sweet” suggesting that if he “would try to listen, comrade, perhaps [he] would be interested” (357). To this, “his heart gave a great leap. Comrade! Who was it that called him ‘comrade’?” (357). It was the physical necessity to get out of the rain that brought him to this Socialist meeting, but it was the encouraging acceptance of a woman, “young and beautiful; she wore fine clothes, and [was] called a ‘lady,’” that prompted him to actually pay attention to what was being said. Only after the material conditions of a warm room and full stomach are met (which was accomplished through the charitable efforts of another woman just before the meeting) can Jurgis then concern himself with political issues. As it happens, he finds the content of the Socialist speaker’s speech both inspiring and highly relevant to his own life. Much like the escaped prisoner in Plato’s “Allegory of the Cave,” Jurgis experiences initial discomfort, but ultimately sees the world in an entirely new light that will never allow him to return to his old perspective. In a moment of enlightenment, Jurgis “felt himself suddenly a mere man no longer—there were powers within him undreamed of” (366). He finally achieves the social consciousness he has spent the entire novel striving toward, and now “he was free, he was free! Even if he were to suffer as he had before, even if he were to beg and starve, nothing would be the same to him” (368).

As Hardt and Negri describe, “All political movements are born this way: from a decision of rupture to a proposition of acting together” (33). Jurgis was on the right track early on in his vagabond stage when he wanted to resist the system, but he was misguided when he thought he could do it by individual action. In a section reminiscent of our discussion of Foucault’s panopticism, Hardt and Negri begin the section entitled “Break Free” by describing “modalities of flight” (40) as one of the most significant forms of social resistance today. They claim that “All you can do is flee” and that “Most often, flight involves not coming out into the open but rather becoming invisible” (40). This appears to be what Jurgis and the other tramps had in mind when they left the city to pursue to the vagabond lifestyle. However, Hardt and Negri are quick to assert that “Sometimes flight takes unusual forms,” citing an example of religious subversives who “conducted a kind of secret flight while staying still” (41). That is to say, while outwardly the subversive group was supposedly practicing the religion being forced on them by the dominant social power at the time, they practiced their true faith in secret while remaining geographically stationary. In this way, Hardt and Negri illustrate that the notion of escape and flight, particularly on an ideological plane, does not necessarily require or correlate with physical space and movement. This goes a long way in further illustrating the misguidedness of Jurgis and the other tramps’ failed attempt at resistance. The Socialist speaker Jurgis receives his enlightenment from describes the mentality of the working class, saying “There is nothing else I can do. There is no wilderness where I can hide from these things, there is no haven where I can escape them; though I travel to the ends of the earth, I find the same accursed system” (359). This illustrates the necessity to resist or employ flight while still remaining stagnant geographically. The

subversive efforts of the Marranos described in *Declaration* are one example of how this can be accomplished.

Usefully, Hardt and Negri cite Foucault and Machiavelli when they promote the idea that “power is not a thing but a relation” (41). As such, to challenge the current power structure, we need not avoid a certain thing or place but should rather alter the relation between ourselves and the dominant social power. This is why an individual act of escape does nothing to change the current power structure for Jurgis or his comrades when they attempt tramping; they do nothing to change the relation between themselves and the packers because all they have accomplished is fulfilling the disposal portion of the work-cycle that exists in the current structure. The immigrants come find work for exploitative wages, when the packers have no use for them they dispose of the workers, when they need more workers they hire more. By being vagabonds, all the workers have managed to do is voluntarily reinforce the cycle of exploitation. This is why collective action is necessary, because only as a collective group can they alter the relation between the workers and the packers. Hardt and Negri urge that “We must discover a force that reconnects action to being together,” (33) and this is precisely what occurs when Jurgis opens his mind to the Socialist movement. Jurgis realizes now that “The thing was not to talk, but to do; the thing was to get hold of others and rouse them, to organize them and prepare for a fight” (369). In this way, Jurgis has reached the socio-political enlightenment that simultaneously realizes the necessity of organized resistance as well as the importance of action to accompany thought.

Having an epiphany is an excellent start to a revolutionary path, but only through collective action can that thought be translated into real social change. Hardt and Negri

illustrate this point quite bluntly when they state that “Information alone is not enough” (37). They claim that “even if [we] were to read all the books by Noam Chomsky and all the material released by WikiLeaks, [we] could still vote the same politicians back in power and, ultimately, reproduce the same society” (37). Even in the early 20th century, Sinclair seems to be very aware of this pitfall as he follows Jurgis through his enlightenment period. After being introduced to his mentor in the Socialist party, Ostrinski, Jurgis declares that he could not believe “all this wonderful machinery of progress had been created by his fellows...it seemed too good to be true.” To this Ostrinski responds “That was always the way...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 in the first week. After a while he would realize how hard a task it was” (374). And so Jurgis begins to illustrate the fact that information alone is not enough to achieve social awareness nor instigate revolution. Early in his final stage of development, Jurgis describes how “The campaign so far had been characterized by what the newspapers termed ‘apathy.’ For some reason the people refused to get excited over the struggle, and it was almost impossible to get them to come to meetings, or to make any noise when they did come” (339). Jurgis himself falls prey to this apathy, that is until the message of the Socialist party finally gets through to him. However, this could not have been the case until he experienced the things he did. The reader will recall the indifference and skepticism the Socialists encountered early in the novel when trying to enlighten Jurgis, but after being run through the mill, he finally sees the truth in what they have to say. It is at this point that he realizes the struggle of convincing others of these truths before they too experience similar struggles and losses.

For both Sinclair and Jurgis, the hope is that the listener (or reader) will be wise enough to learn from the experiences of others rather than insisting that it must happen to them first before they will heed the lessons.

While he attempts to spread the Socialist message, Jurgis often encounters resistance from fellow proletariats who fail to see the degree to which they have been institutionalized. He describes how “You would begin talking to some poor devil who had worked in one shop for the last thirty years, and had never been able to save a penny...and when you would tell him about Socialism he would sniff and say, ‘I’m not interested in that—I’m an individualist!’ And then he would go on to tell you that Socialism was ‘Paternalism,’ and that if it ever had its way the world would stop progressing” (386). Now more than ever, Jurgis has become the spokesperson for Sinclair’s pro-Socialist agenda, but he also offers us as readers some insight into the conversations and arguments that take place in relation to Socialism and the arguments for and against it. As clarified in this section and others like it, the resistance is often grounded in a politics of fear of what may come if Socialism “has its way,” usually leading to assumptions that it will impede progress. This perspective is obviously rooted in the capitalist ideology that only through economic expansion can society hope to achieve progress, whatever that means. Hardt and Negri support the message promoted in this section when they claim that “Power cannot survive when its subjects free themselves from fear” (43). It is Jurgis’s hope, and by extension that of Sinclair, that the movement will not only enlighten the workers, but through that enlightenment, free them of the fear that imprisons them.

Through Jurgis, Sinclair thoroughly responds to this fear-driven perspective by first asking “for how many millions of such poor deluded wretches there were whose lives had been stunted by Capitalism that they no longer knew what freedom was?” (387). Sinclair goes on to outline how progress could more appropriately be gauged based on living standards of the common person than by economic expansion, but then also offers an alternative argument through a minor character known as “the millionaire Socialist” (388). This character makes his millions the capitalist way by owning a successful business, but then uses his resources to promote the Socialist agenda, claiming that “It was a process of economic evolution...Life was a struggle for existence... [and] those who lost in the struggle were generally exterminated...The workers were simply the citizens of industry, and the Socialist movement was the expression of their will to survive” (389). Thus, in a social-Darwinian method, Sinclair approaches the issue from two almost diametrically opposed perspectives leading to the same conclusion. On the one hand, there appears to be a humanist ethic that operates on what is fair and defends the interest of the masses. On the other resides an entirely economic and ruthless perspective where the strong overpower the weak, placing the collective proletariat class in the position of the newly strong. Both however agree that it is absolutely correct that the best interest of the masses should be the priority of society moving forward. Ideally, the listener (or reader) would be swayed by the humanist logic that believes concern for human lives should be a social priority, but by offering this dualistic perspective, Sinclair shows that even those who insist on supporting a logic of competition should support the strength and social power of the masses.

This portion of the text foreshadows the direction it will go in the following pages when a newspaper editor comments, “somewhat naïvely, that he had always understood that Socialists had a cut-and-dried programme for the future of civilization; whereas he had two active members of the party, who, from what he could make out, were agreed about nothing at all” (400). His confusion and misconceptions led to the assertion from the party that both shared “beliefs in the common ownership and democratic management of the means of producing the necessities of life” and “that the means by which this is to be brought about is the class-conscious political organization of the wage-earners” (400). Here Sinclair mirrors the insights of Hardt and Negri when they say that “What is most important in each of these struggles...is to understand how the powerful refusals, expressed in various ways, are accompanied by processes capable of forming new social bonds. They do not seek to restore an order and they do not ask for justice or reparations for the offended, but they want instead to construct another possible world” (36). This is a very significant point being made by Sinclair as well as Hardt and Negri. The Socialist party in *The Jungle* and the contemporary forces mentioned in *Declaration* share the interest in upsetting the social order, but neither claim to have a cut-and-dried solution to all of society’s problems. Rather, they wish to create the circumstances for forging a new world and what Hardt and Negri call “mak[ing] new truths” (37). In some ways, this further explores the notion brought up earlier by Audre Lorde that the master’s tools can never be used to dismantle the master’s house. If we accept that premise, it is clear why the forces of revolution must operate outside the realm of current reality and truths, instead attempting to form new truths and a new reality of existence. It is difficult to say exactly what that will look like, which is why even while proponents of change can share

that desire for a new system, they can still maintain discrepancies of what it should look like and how it should be achieved. Sinclair, for instance, promotes a traditional, orthodox perspective of Socialism that believes the proletariat class needs to regain ownership over the means of production, whereas Hardt and Negri appear to have a less tangible goal for taking steps to upset the current order. With that said, they do promote certain clearly defined steps for action such as the collective refusal to pay debt. Even if there are discrepancies of specific actions to take, the overall goal does not necessarily have to be complete and total agreement on all parties for upsetting the status quo, but rather a recognition of diverse perspectives while always maintaining the priority of achieving significant social change through collective social action. Although the goal of “significant social change” seems vague, and it is, we may effectively name just a few injustices that need to be altered as a tangible starting point to making progress toward this goal. Sinclair would suggest the workers need to gain ownership over the mode of production and the fruits of their labor. Hardt and Negri would direct efforts at refusing to pay debts unfairly bestowed on the working class. Neither will solve all the social ills of a capitalist society, but both may be effective in encouraging progress. The important thing to do is take action and to do so collectively.

As Hardt and Negri describe, there is a “truth that Spinoza foresaw: real security and the destruction of fear can be achieved only through the collective construction of freedom” (43). It seems Sinclair also realizes this as he follows Jurgis through the inferno that constitutes the wage-slaves trials in a capitalist society, only to come out the other end of this machine processed but still alive. As his friend Ostrinski declares, Jurgis had “been through the mill, comrade!” but they would “make a fighter out of

[him]" (371). Indeed, at this point Jurgis seems entirely willing to accept that he no longer exists as a man, or even as a character from our perspective, but as a representative of an idea. That idea is the belief that every person deserves the right to live a life free of exploitation, free of slavery however it be imposed, and free to pursue a life of dignity and fulfillment. The universality of this perspective is illustrated when Jurgis declares that this exploitation "was true everywhere in the world" (376), and that the packers represented a structure of capitalist exploitation that "had hoisted the black flag and declared war upon civilization" while "upon the ocean of commerce it sailed as a pirate ship" (378). In this final stage, Jurgis has entirely relinquished his role as an individual and has self-actualized as the representative character he was destined to be.

CONCLUSION

“Everything that needs to be said has already been said. But since no one was listening, everything must be said again.” -André Gide

So what have we accomplished here? As stated at the onset of this endeavor, Sinclair’s work has been discussed at length for a century from a wide variety of perspectives. And yet, the cultural, historical, and social significance of the novel seems lost in obscurity. If nothing else, I hope to have illustrated that this text is by no means limited to the *Super-Size Me* legacy it has been designated by popular culture after existing so long on the fringe of the literary canon. Furthermore, I hope that the eclectic mix of social and cultural theory has exemplified the many-faceted and highly involved social commentary that takes place throughout the novel, as well as supports a more holistic reading of the text that opposes the binary reading often promoted in the critical discourse.

The five-stage analysis is, to my knowledge, an entirely new way of approaching the text and may receive some push-back as being overly structured or too confining. In an attempt to acknowledge this but also to clarify, yes, the stages constitute a self-imposed structure on the text that may not have been consciously created by Sinclair, and yes, they are obviously overly simplistic and restrictive to the progression of the text and Jurgis in specific. With that said, the point is not to forcefully impose an overly restrictive structure on the text but rather to approach it in a methodical way to assist in demystifying what is taking place on a social/political/cultural level, as well as to make trans-historical connections and perhaps identify where certain points were lost in the critical discourse. Rather than seeing the five-stage structure as an absolute structure

imposed on the text, I think it is more productive to view it as a thought experiment in itself, saying ‘what if we approach the text from this perspective? Can we gain anything new by reading it this way?’ By approaching the text thus, an analysis well-grounded in the critical discourse from a simultaneously cultural, social, and political perspective emerges that can reestablish the significance and insight of the novel in the context of the Progressive era but also in relation to the contemporary social climate.

Recognizing the connection the text has to our current social issues, as well as the roots of our capitalist nation, allows us to analyze the problems of contemporary society in a more holistic fashion and hopefully better prepares us to engage with those issues in a more well-informed way. We should take into consideration the fact that Sinclair consciously chose to promote his message through a fictional text, albeit very well-grounded in actual facts. One could speculate, as many have, that by doing so he hoped to reach a wider audience and perhaps to make certain truths more real than they would have been in a purely fact-driven account such as those offered in documentaries and sociological reports. As social activist Michael Harrington said, "The poor can be described statistically; they can be analyzed as a group...But they need an American Dickens to record the smell and texture and quality of their lives" (17). Perhaps Sinclair was a little too effective with communicating the “smell and texture” to the point where the ideological point was lost, but that gives us all the more reason to revisit this text after the stench of the packing industry has long subsided while the social ills described within it remain with us.

By methodically working through the various stages of Jurgis’s socio-political development with the accompaniment of various theoretical texts, we can extract all

kinds of contemporarily relevant lessons about the nature of power, society, capitalism, and exploitation that may not have had the same effect when either *The Jungle* or the theoretical texts operate individually. By approaching the text with numerous paratextual concepts, the trans-historical and socially diverse message of the text remains in the spotlight, avoiding the ever-present tendency with this text to get lost in the muck that has trapped so many critics in the past. Ultimately, Sinclair made it very clear that he had no interest in writing literature simply for the sake of entertaining the masses. In all likelihood, he would have seen this as yet another means of distracting the public from what really matters in our lives. With that understanding, it is important to see that in the greater social scheme, this text is not the manifesto of all things progressive and revolutionary, but rather a prescriptive text that attempts to draw our attention to very significant social ills, perhaps with the hope that people will find themselves in a similar state of enlightenment that Jurgis arrives at near the end of the novel. At that point, it seems only logical that they would pursue knowledge of these issues of capitalistic exploitation and social wrongs with greater enthusiasm and breadth, leading them to many of the social theory texts and concepts that were incorporated in this analysis.

With any luck, this work will instigate conversation and work of a similar nature, attempting to bridge the gap between socially conscious literature and social/cultural theory work. Sinclair said that attempting to write an artistically sound novel about major social issues was similar to trying to paint a beautiful picture on a sinking ship (Bachelder, 73). In the spirit of his dedication to prioritizing social issues over artistry, perhaps we as critics and literary analysts should respect his position by attempting to connect his work to the socially engaged work to follow (such as that by the likes of

Harrington, Foucault, or Lorde), rather than confine it to the Progressive era portion of the literary canon. Sinclair wanted to have a significant impact on the way the general public thought about how American society operates, so we as readers and critics should take note, particularly in the socially charged climate we are currently experiencing, and consider the many points he brings to our attention in an effort to recognize and grapple with what he saw as an ultimate truth of social existence: only through collective social action can the masses truly exercise the power they maintain in defense of the rights of the common person. For those who are skeptical of the social impact of literary fiction or who wonder what could possibly be left to say about Sinclair, I would ask what could possibly be more worthy of discussion than the continued and extensive exploitation of the large majority of the human population, both domestically and abroad? As quoted from André Gide at the start of this conclusion, “Everything that needs to be said has already been said. But since no one was listening, everything must be said again.” I don’t think a better case than that needs to be made, and I think it very accurately explains why this thesis exists and why I think similar work should be undertaken in the future. I make no claims that I have all the answers or that anyone else does, simply that there have been important insights made in the past that have yet to be adequately recognized, and only after that happens can we progress to the next stage.

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