

WHOSE CHICAGO, ANYWAY?: 'AESTHETICS' VS.
'PROPAGANDA' IN UPTON SINCLAIR'S
ENDING FOR *THE JUNGLE*

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In one of the introductory chapters of *Mammonart*, Upton Sinclair contends that: "The book will present an interpretation of the arts from the point of view of the class struggle. It will study art works as instruments of propaganda and repression, employed by the ruling classes of the community; or as weapons of attack, employed by new classes rising into power."¹ He will be even more emphatic when, later on, he provides us with his first "universal" statement:

All art is propaganda. It is universally and inescapably propaganda, sometimes unconsciously, but often deliberately, propaganda.²

This book, where Sinclair displays what we may call his "poetics", was written in 1924, eighteen years after his most popular novel, *The Jungle*, was published. After having read and understood Sinclair's ideas on art and, specifically, on literature, it would be naive on our part to discuss *The Jungle* as a political tool. We may or not agree on his opinions, but we should accept the fact that he was conscious, when writing *The Jungle*, or any of his other books, that his writings were acts of propaganda.

So, if our point of departure is that *The Jungle* certainly assumes ideological self-identification, our purpose would be to analyze *how* Sinclair put propaganda into practice and, if possible, to understand *why* he decided to change the tone of the novel in its final chapters, where we find a type of propaganda more obvious than that used by Zola or Henry James, to name just some of the many authors he studies in *Mammonart*, not to say a more obvious type of propaganda than that he resorted to in the previous twenty-seven chapters of *The Jungle*.

Maybe we are beginning to misquote Sinclair at this point of our essay, by using a narrower sense of the term "propaganda" than that he aimed to adopt. The fact is that, in *Mammonart*, he discusses the meaning given to that term, and he calls for a positive understanding of it. His idea is that, since World War I, we have been led to thinking of "propaganda" as a negative word because we associate it with "German propaganda," and so, "the word bears a stigma." His own opinion is that the term, as

used by the definition of a standard dictionary, contains no suggestion of reprobation. The problem, according to him, is that “propaganda may be either good or bad, according to the nature of the teaching and the motives of the teacher.”³

I do not find appropriate to use Sinclair’s Manichean terms when analyzing *The Jungle*. It is not a question of deciding whether this novel displays positive or negative propaganda. The fact is that there is a clear change of tone in the last chapters, which breaks completely off its structure. And it would be too simplistic to decide that the first part of the novel—the first twenty-seven chapters—is a sort of conservative-deterministic propaganda, and that the last part consists of a piece of socialist propaganda. According to William A. Bloodworth Jr., both parts are related to Sinclair’s own experiences in life. In that sense, his experiences in Packingtown “may be seen as the inspiration for the naturalistic part of *The Jungle*,” and “his involvement with the Socialist elite—few if any being wage slaves—may be seen as the source of the last four chapters in which Socialism is offered as an answer to the problems of wage slavery.”⁴ Sinclair himself never dismissed his personal life as an influence in his work; but the problem here is to try to understand how he connected both experiences. On the one hand, we have the fact that he himself lived in the Jungle he portrays; on the other his contacts, at the time of writing the novel, with intellectual socialists, as in 1905 they were busy founding the Intercollegiate Socialist Society. This notwithstanding, Sinclair himself could not give us any definite answer to why he chose a sermonistic style in the last four chapters, leaving aside the naturalistic story we were reading up to that point. His own words are revealing:

The last chapters were not up to standard, because both my health and my money were gone, and a second trip to Chicago, which I had hoped to make, was out of the question. I did the best I could—and those critics who didn’t like the ending ought to have seen it as it was in manuscript! I ran wild at the end, attempting to solve all the problems of America; I put in the Moyer-Haywood case, everything I knew and thought my readers ought to know. I submitted these chapters to a test and got a cruel verdict; the editor of the *Appeal* came to visit me, and sat in my little living room one evening to hear the story—and fell sound asleep!⁵

If there is anything we may agree upon after reading his words, it is the fact that he “ran wild,” and that he seemed to be “attempting to solve all the problems of America.” So, in those chapters, in that sudden break of the structure of the novel, we find a conversion of the protagonist to Socialism, something which can only be explained as a religious experience, and, also, an absolute praise of the wonders of socialism, with the conviction from the part of the author that this movement would eventually disrupt the social status quo in America. The end of the story is certainly far from being naturalist.

We might find here another explanation to why Sinclair decided to turn Jurgis’s desperate life into one of hope. In *Mammonart*, the author gives his opinion on the naturalist school, and he openly objects to the fact that “nowhere in these books is there a hint of anything to be done, whether by individual conversion, the renewal of the moral forces, or by political and economic readjustments.”⁶ We could say by now that had Sinclair been an orthodox advocate of naturalism, he would have finished the book after the death of Antanas, Jurgis’s son, which takes place in chapter XXI.

But following his own opinion on that movement, he decided to change the typical naturalist ending and introduce an individual conversion, a renewal of moral forces and, certainly, a political readjustment which would take place by the ballot, and not by the bullet.

Sinclair needed an optimistic ending, something which can be related to his own idealism; no doubt, anyone who wanted "to put the spirit of Shelley into the form of Zola" would finally end by having to decide upon spirit or form. Sinclair chose spirit, and forgot about form. As Bloodworth quite thoughtfully remarks, the problem he faced with ending the story on a note of Socialist hope was both ideological and literary: "He was obligated to show his readers how the workers would eventually overcome capitalist oppression. Yet by the time he began to end his novel, after spending twenty chapters without really suggesting that his Packingtown victims were part of a larger and hopeful historical or economic movement, it would have been difficult to reveal the solution of Socialism without vitiating the plot that *Appeal* readers had been following."⁷ One could also ponder that Sinclair had not originally planned to end the novel the way he did. In that sense, we should remember that at the time he was completing it in 1905, he was also busy starting the Inter-Collegiate Socialist Society. He could have been so carried away with his enthusiasm for the newfound ideology to find it difficult to resist putting in a plea for socialism. That might be the reason for his imposing these chapters even at the cost of impairing the unity of the structure of the book.⁸

Sinclair's participation in the foundation of the Intercollegiate Socialist Society, apart from providing the novel with a praise of Socialism, can certainly be the cause for one of the main changes that we find in there: the sermonistic style that the author adopted in those chapters. In fact, the kind of Socialism which these societies called for was one of sermons, and Sinclair used them in the novel even when he had previously stated that he was going to avoid them. Thus, two weeks before the novel began as a serial, Sinclair declared in the *Appeal to Reason*, the weekly where it was going to be published: "What Socialism there will be in this book, will, of course, be imminent; it will be revealed by incidents—there will be no sermons."⁹ Sermons did finally come and, as Mookerjee suggests, they seem not to have been expected by the author. It might only be a question of dates, and Bloodworth has studied them in detail: "By the summer of 1905 he had apparently finished his story up to Jurgis's experiences with the packer's son. This much of *The Jungle* was published by J. A. Wayland, publisher of the *Appeal*, in *One Hoss Philosophy* (another Populist-Socialist magazine) in July. No more of the story appeared until October. In September, Sinclair was enthusiastically involved in founding the Intercollegiate Socialist Society (later the League for Industrial Democracy). This effort introduced him to many prominent Socialist leaders, including Jack London, and conceivably convinced him of the importance of getting Socialism into his plot even if he had to do it with sermons."¹⁰ So, one of the possible answers to the question of the eventual change in the plot of *The Jungle* might be chronological. Had Sinclair not been involved with intellectual Socialism before finishing the novel we would probably have read a different ending to that which was published. This only comes to reinforce the thesis that he had not planned to end the story the way he did, and the words where he promises a Socialism exposed through incidents and not through sermons are quite illuminating in that sense.

Sinclair had already presented us with the theme of social struggle in previous chapters of the novel, but he did not develop it in an optimistic way; nevertheless, we

can say that it remains as something credible for the readers of a story which, we should never forget, was being told in the naturalistic mode. So, in chapter V of *The Jungle*, we are given a detailed description of the exploitation that Jurgis and other workers of Packingtown were suffering, and of how workers were beginning to organize:

One of the first problems that Jurgis ran upon was that of the unions. He had had no experience with unions, and he had to have it explained to him that the men were banded together for the purpose of fighting for their rights. Jurgis asked them what they meant by their rights, a question in which he was quite sincere, for he had not any idea of any rights that he had, except the right to hunt for a job, and do as he was told when he got it.¹¹

Jurgis's first reaction to this proposal from the other workers was quite logical, if we think that he was a Lithuanian, a recent emigré from a place where feudalism had not ceased as a political and social structure. Besides, after he was explained what rights meant, he was asked for money, and at that point of the conversation "he froze up directly." Later on, in chapter VIII, we find a further development of Jurgis as a character, as he becomes aware of the exploitation that all the members of his family are suffering:

One of the consequences of all these things was that Jurgis was no longer perplexed when he heard men talk of fighting for their rights. He felt like fighting now himself; [...]. A wonderful idea it now seemed to Jurgis, this of the men—that by combining they might be able to make a stand and conquer the packers! Jurgis wondered who had first thought of it; and when he was told that it was a common thing for men to do in America, he got the first inkling of a meaning in the phrase 'a free country'. (*Jungle*, pp.107-108)

And it is not only that he comes to think of unions as a wonderful idea, there is also a sort of spiritual change for the protagonist, who had sworn previously, in a moment of disillusionment, that he would trust no man, except in his own family. However, now he discovers that he has "brothers in affliction, and allies," and that their one chance for life is in union. It is then that the struggle becomes a crusade: "Jurgis had always been a member of the church, because it was the right thing to be, but the church had never touched him, he left all that for the women. Here, however, was a new religion—one that did touch him, that took hold of every fibre of him; and with all the zeal and fury of a convert he went out as a missionary." (*Jungle*, p.110)

Here we are presented with a conversion in the true sense of the word, a conversion which can be paralleled to the one we find in the last chapters, for Sinclair seems to connect any such experience with religion, and in both passages we find many religious expressions. What happens after this first attempt of making out of Jurgis a crusader for the cause of the workers is something that we can understand as logical when dealing with social determinism. Things begin to turn bad for Jurgis and his family: his wife is forced to turn into prostitution; he goes to jail after trying to kill the man who was responsible for this; when he is released, his wife dies in childbirth; they lose the house they had bought, ... The list of misfortunes is quite long, and they only help to make Jurgis forget about unions or any other social movement. His anomie

begins to develop, and he gets to the point of becoming a strike-breaker, a hobo, an outcast. Such is the naturalist development of character and theme that we find in those first chapters of the novel, and that is why it is hard for us to understand how Sinclair “forgot” about them when writing the final socialist harangue.

It is not that we want to make a skeptic out of our character. Rather, we find it hard to believe that after all his experiences in the deepest levels of human existence, Jurgis, the hobo, the outcast can swallow anything that is given to him, even when the speech he hears at the end might be more refined than the simple explanation that his fellow workers gave him in the early chapters. Eric Homberger has tried to justify the structure of the book, “so often brutally criticized,” by focusing on Sinclair’s “vision of the possibilities of transforming human nature.” Accordingly, the book was locked into a Naturalism which seemed to point relentlessly towards Jurgis’s defeat and death. Yet, it was his belief in the capacity for change, so much a central feature of the socialist imagination in America, that kept Sinclair from providing the novel with a Zolaesque conclusion. Homberger, thus, maintains that the structural problem of the novel was solved by ideology and temperament, as Sinclair was a deeply hopeful person.¹²

Homberger also calls our attention on Sinclair’s optimism, but it is difficult to agree with him that ideology and temperament solved the structure of the novel. Bloodworth’s opinion seems to be more accurate: that is exactly what vitiated the plot. Nevertheless, Homberger’s remark on Sinclair’s belief in the capacity for change might help us to understand the almost supernatural conversion we witness in chapter XXVIII. And we should also take into account at this point Sinclair’s own conversion to Socialism, as it could be quite illuminating, for he himself had experienced this sort of change. We could, then, try to draw a parallel between the conversion of Jurgis, the character, and that of Upton Sinclair, the novelist.

One of the main characteristics of the conversion of the protagonist is its apparent lack of political content. Jurgis, who has been wandering along the streets, enters a hall full of people in order to keep warm. The crowd is very excited, shouting, yelling, and his reaction to that is thinking: “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?” (*Jungle*, p.356) After this, he falls asleep, but a lady awakes him, calling him “comrade,” and it is then that he recognizes the place he has arrived at: “It was like coming suddenly upon some wild sight of Nature – a mountain forest lashed by a tempest, a ship tossed about upon a stormy sea. Jurgis had an unpleasant sensation, a sense of confusion, of disorder, of wild and meaningless uproar.” This is his first reaction, when he has not even heard a word of what the speaker is saying, for “he was too much occupied with his eyes to think of what the man was saying.” (*Jungle*, p.358) At that point, we only get the harangue, the sermon, and for six long pages Jurgis is not even mentioned. We listen to “a message of salvation, “a story of hope and freedom,” where Jesus Christ is referred to over and over again. The last time we hear of Jurgis it is to find him “trembling, smitten with wonder,” (*Jungle*, p.360) and when we come back to him the conversion has already taken place:

There was an unfolding of vistas before him, an upheaving, a stirring, a trembling; he felt himself suddenly a mere man no longer – there were powers within him undreamed of, there were demon forces contending, age-long wonders struggling to be born; (...). The sentences of this man were to Jurgis like the

crashing of thunder in his soul; a flood of emotion surged up in him— all his old hopes and longings, his old griefs and rages and despairs. All that he had ever felt in his whole life seemed to come back to him at once, and with one new emotion, hardly to be described. (*Jungle*, p.366)

There are no other comments made; Jurgis had even shown his logical skepticism before beginning to listen to the orator, and yet, his conversion takes place only through words, words that move him to the point of making him tremble. When we get to the beginning of chapter XXIX, the author gives us the only possible explanation to Jurgis's experience: "it was a miracle that had been wrought in him," "a new man had been born," "the whole world had been changed for him." (*Jungle*, p.370) The Lithuanian is not bothered by the name, he only wants to know more about what that man has spoken of. So, he is introduced to Comrade Ostrinski, a Polish who can speak his native language and who explains to him everything about the Party and its organization.¹³ Jurgis is so overwhelmed by all that "machinery of progress" that he just cannot believe it. Ostrinski understands his feelings perfectly: "That was always the way, said Ostrinski; when a man was first converted to Socialism he was like a crazy person—he could not understand how others could fail to see it, and he expected to convert all the world the first week. After a while he would realize how hard a task it was." (*Jungle*, p.374)

According to Walter B. Rideout, "the sudden realization of truth is as overwhelming to Jurgis as it had been to Jurgis's creator,"¹⁴ and, in fact, Sinclair was possibly referring in the passage quoted above to his own experience as a convert to Socialism, of which he has given an extensive account in many of his writings. Sinclair's period of conversion had taken place between the years 1901 and 1905, and, although he had not converted all the world the first week, he still worked for the cause with the same enthusiasm, using propaganda as the main instrument of persuasion. We can find many interesting comments that Sinclair made about his period of revolt, as he calls it in his *Autobiography*, but we have selected those where a parallel can be drawn between his own experience and that he created for his character in *The Jungle*:

It was like the falling down of prison walls about my mind; the amazing discovery, after all those years, that I did not have to carry the whole burden of humanity's future upon my two frail shoulders! There were actually others who understood; who saw what had gradually become clear to me, that the heart and center of the evil lay in leaving the social treasure, which nature had created and which every man has to have in order to live, to become the object of a scramble in the market place, a delirium of speculation. The principal fact the socialists had to teach me was that they themselves existed.¹⁵

That is Sinclair's most popular comment on his experience, but we have found some other interesting passages in an article he wrote in *Cosmopolitan Magazine* in October, 1906, and which can also be related to Jurgis's conversion: "My nightmare experience had to continue until I discovered the Socialist movement, until I had learned to identify my own struggle for life with the struggle for life of humanity." The deterministic terms that we also find in the novel are present here, and we might perfectly think that it was Jurgis himself who was telling this: "I was no longer obliged to think of civilization as a place where wild beasts fought and tore one another with-

out purpose and without end; I saw the anguish of the hour as the first pang of the great world-birth that is coming."¹⁶ In fact, he explains that such overwhelming conversion made him think of writing a novel "which should portray modern industrial conditions, and show how they were driving the working-man into socialism."¹⁷ Those are the origins of *The Jungle*, a novel which was born out of its author's enthusiasm with the socialist movement, and which had to show how there was no other way out for wage-slaves but Socialism. How this was going to be achieved in artistic terms was another matter. But we should not be unfair to Sinclair: he did portray the industrial conditions of the time in a very realistic way, and so vividly that this portrayal brought about a whole change of the legislation relating the sanitary conditions of those industries, what has been known as the "Pure Food Law." But those were not Sinclair's intentions when he planned the novel: "I aimed at the public's heart, and by accident I hit it in the stomach."¹⁸

His intentions were, then, aiming at the public's heart; he proposed socialism as the only possible solution to the problems that capitalism and greed were creating in America, problems which he exposed in detail in the first part of the novel. The problem was that he also wanted to explain in detail everything relating the socialist movement, and by doing so the tone of the novel changed into that of a tract. He wanted to introduce all that he knew about the Socialist Party and its organization, and the situation he created in his pursuit was leaving Jurgis aside as a character. His only role in those chapters of the novel, after the conversion has taken place, is listening to the many explanations and discussions on Socialism; he becomes the personification of an audience in any socialist meeting or speech. According to Rideout, what happens at that point is that "the Socialist salvation, after its initial impact, is intellectualized," and so, "the reader cannot exist imaginatively in Jurgis's converted state even if willing, for Jurgis hardly exists himself." This critic explains briefly what actually happens in the novel: "*The Jungle* begins and lives as fiction; it ends as a political miscellany."¹⁹

Furthermore, we should point out that the views Sinclair favours in this miscellany are his own views on Socialism, a mixture of intellectual reformism and Christian Socialism. It is not that he does not mention the existence of factions within the party that might have differing opinions as to how Socialism could finally get its place in America, but we shall see later on that his ideas are the ones that prevail throughout this whole part of the novel. We could say that Sinclair's ideas are displayed through the speech by which Jurgis is converted, through the voice of Comrade Ostrinski, and, later on, through Comrade Lucas.

I have already commented how the miraculous speech which convinces Jurgis of the wonders of Socialism makes up a religious harangue more than a political one. Socialism is never mentioned, the orator seems to be speaking in parables, and there are obvious references to Jesus Christ. This, certainly, is not a matter of chance. Sinclair was displaying here the ideas of two of the most influential men in his conversion to Socialism: Algie M. Simons and George D. Herron. Homburger, in fact, found out a letter which Sinclair wrote in 1958, where he claimed that the orator of *The Jungle* was based on Algie M. Simons, a man who had been a charity worker in the stockyards, and whose writings on the stockyard conditions had helped Sinclair when writing the novel.²⁰ But the content of the speech makes also reference to the perspective which Herron held within the Socialist party: Christian Socialism. When Sinclair met Herron for the first time, in the autumn of 1902, he had already ended his career as a

congregational minister, and was entirely devoted to writing and lecturing on Socialism. Sinclair describes Herron in his *Autobiography* as “a strange combination of moral sublimity and human frailty,” and admits that it was to him that he owed his survival as a writer.²¹

So, in the sermon we find in *The Jungle* there is a complete fusion of Socialism and Christianity, to the point that readers may be confused at the beginning, thinking that Jurgis has entered a religious meeting. The orator speaks with the tone of a priest, his message is one of salvation, and he seems to be addressing Jurgis in particular when he says in a prophetic tone:

Because I feel sure that in the crowd that has come to me tonight [...] there will be some one man whom pain and suffering have made desperate, whom some chance vision of wrong and horror has startled and shocked into attention. The scales will fall from his eyes, the shackles will be torn from his limbs –he will leap up with a cry of thankfulness, he will stride forth a free man at last! A man delivered from his self-created slavery! (*Jungle*, p.361)

And we should not forget how Sinclair also connected the first conversion of Jurgis with religion, that which took place in chapter VIII. In fact, the writer never denied how he still kept his faith in religion, although not in the church, and how he always related Socialism and Christianity. Thus, we can quote from Mookerjee the answer that Sinclair gave to Frank Harris in an interview, where he was asked how he came to see the vices of the individualist competitive system and realize its atrocious injustice with the flaming passion that sears every page of *The Jungle*:

What brought me to socialism was more Christianity than anything else. I saw that those who professed Jesus did not practise him nor seem to understand him. I wanted to. And the more I came to doubt his divinity, the more important it seemed to me to understand and apply the human side of his teaching.²²

Once the narrator has made the connection between Socialism and Christianity in the novel, he goes on showing in a more straightforward way how the Socialist Party worked, but we should not forget that he was giving his own vision on the matter. So, Comrade Ostrinski is the one who tells Jurgis everything about the organization of the party, after making him familiar with some terms which are completely new for him: “the competitive wage system,” “the capitalist class,” “the proletariat,” “class consciousness,”... He never questions the way in which Socialism is going to get to power in America, so, he speaks of the day “when the working class should go to the polls and seize the powers of government.” (*Jungle*, pp.372-373) He also makes reference to the unions, and how strong they were in Chicago, but, because Sinclair had to introduce a “but” when referring to these groups, “their organizations did the workers little good, for the employers were organized also, and so the strikes generally failed, and as fast as the unions were broken up the men were coming over to the Socialists.”²³ (*Jungle*, p.373) Sinclair was clearly showing here his right position within the Socialist Party, a position which made him believe that Socialism would come to America through elections, and not through a revolution, and which made him despise the labor movement, although unions were also represented in the party, with

William D. Haywood as their leader. Ostrinski also remarks the importance of newspapers and publishing houses in order to spread the propaganda of the party. In that sense, it is quite interesting to listen to the voice of the narrator when, resorting to ur-metafiction, he mentions the *Appeal to Reason*. We wonder what the first readers of the novel thought as they were being explained everything about the weekly which they were actually reading. But there is one thing which many of them must have kept in mind, and that is Sinclair's declaration of intentions two weeks before the publication of the novel; and they must have thought about it when they read all that detailed information about the *Appeal*, for that is unlikely to be Socialism through incidents, his words notwithstanding. It is a whole account of the past and present of this "propaganda paper," as it is described in the novel, where we are told of its seriousness and of how "no message of importance to Socialists ever went through that a copy of it did not go to the *Appeal*." (*Jungle*, pp.389-391)

As we have had a chance to see, Sinclair's reformism believes in electoral work and propaganda. And, as Bloodworth apparently points out, it does not suggest the overcoming of capitalism as the task of the working class: "The responsibilities fall mainly on the shoulders of men like himself –articulate, educated, even wealthy spokesmen. [...] Of course, no one is planning a revolution."²⁴ That was one of the main differences between men like Sinclair and Victor Berger, placed on the right of the Socialist Party, and individuals like Theodore Dreiser or Eugene Debs, on the left wing. So, whereas reformists thought that the Socialist Party would win mayoral elections through patient work and education of the working class, and then, eventually, get to the Supreme Court, those on the left wing of the party distrusted the functionality of electoral policies. In fact, the novel ends foreseeing a Socialist victory in the Chicago mayoral elections, captioned by, "CHICAGO WILL BE OURS!." However, the opposite actually happened in the 1907 mayoral election in Chicago: the socialist vote collapsed. Socialist voters did not support their own candidate, but a reform Democrat. The radical vote was split and discredited, while the new mayor, in the words of Homberger, was "frankly and openly the candidate of plutocracy."²⁵

As we commented above, Sinclair did introduce in the novel the ideas of people who, belonging to the Socialist Party, did not adhere to his particular vision of it. This is done through the discussion that, with the presence of Jurgis in the role of one of the audience, takes place between Comrade Lucas and Comrade Schliemann. What happens exactly is that, the day before the mayoral election, Jurgis is invited to the house of a Chicago millionaire who did not belong to the party, but was in sympathy with it. Among the guests there was also the editor of a big Eastern magazine, who wrote against Socialism but who, according to the millionaire, "did not know what it was." Jurgis was initially invited in order to talk to this editor about "pure food," (*Jungle*, p.394) but in the end he did not speak, he only listened to the endless discussion between Lucas and Schliemann.

Lucas is described as "a mild and meek-looking little gentleman of clerical aspect;" he had been an itinerant evangelist, "it transpired, and had seen the light and become a prophet of the new dispensation." (*Jungle*, p.395) This description reminds us of the Christian Socialist George D. Herron, and Lucas's whole discourse is one where the defense of both doctrines becomes the most important issue.²⁶ Schliemann, on his part, was a Swede, "a tall, gaunt person, with hairy hands and bristling yellow beard; he was a university man, and had been a professor of philosophy –until, as he

said, he had found that he was selling his character as well as his time.” (*Jungle*, p.395) He used to talk about a coming revolution, and he did not disregard violence when referring to it: “he would enunciate such propositions as made the hair of an ordinary person rise on end.” (*Jungle*, p.396)

The discussion between both men starts out when Schliemann, in his aggressive way, attacks institutions, and the subject suddenly becomes religion. Comrade Lucas interrupts him in order to make clear that one thing is religion and the other is “men’s perversions of it;” he says that he is not going to defend the Vatican, but the word of God, and he begins another sermon in which Jesus is described as “the world’s first revolutionist, the true founder of the Socialist movement.” (*Jungle*, p.397) He gets very excited with his speech, talking “in full career,” for “he had talked this subject every day for five years, and had never yet let himself be stopped.” (*Jungle*, p.398) Schliemann’s reaction to the attitude of the evangelist is that of laughing, of making funny comments out of Lucas’s serious words, something which tells us a lot of how Sinclair wanted the Swedish character and his ideas to be regarded by the readers of the novel. So, we come to a point where the focus has only been on the conversation of two of the members of the meeting, but the “passage of arms,” as the narrator calls it, is broken by the editor who knew little about Socialism, and remarks that “he had always understood that Socialists had a cut-dried programme for the future of civilization; whereas here were two active members of the party, who, from what he could make out, were agreed about nothing at all.” (*Jungle*, pp.399-400) So, he asks them what it is exactly that they have in common, as they belong to the same party; it is not so easy for both men to answer the question but, “after much debating,” they come to two conclusions:

First, that a Socialist believes in the common ownership and democratic management of the means of producing the necessities of life; and, second, that a Socialist believes that the means by which this is to be brought about is the class-conscious political organization of the wage-earners. Thus far they were at one; but no farther. (*Jungle*, p.400)

Sinclair was perfectly aware that there were different perceptions within the Socialist Party, as he belonged to it and, consequently, had adopted one of them. Besides, the readers of the *Appeal* were supposed to know about those differences, and so it would have been too risky to avoid mentioning them. So, what he did was giving a hint of what other people belonging to the party thought, although he did not explain their ideas with the same care and detail, and made a caricature out of the character of Schliemann, a man who called himself a “philosophic anarchist.” At the same time, his idealism and hope could not make him leave the discussion between the two men as irreconcilable: he had to think out the points in common that socialists might have, so as to leave them clear in the novel. Nevertheless, we should not think of this issue as one which worried socialists at that time, for, as James Weinstein points out the Party was far from homogeneous or orthodox in the present sense of that word, although before 1920 such differences were generally accepted as normal and desirable aspects of the process of developing a viable mass party.²⁷ So, Sinclair introduced some of those differences in the novel, but made sure that his ideas were the only ones which could be seen as positive and feasible. It was a matter of using deftly propaganda, and he behaved accordingly.

And this is *how* Sinclair put propaganda into practice in *The Jungle*: by showing the evils of capitalism and offering the Socialist "salvation"; by turning from incidents to sermons. We shall never get to know *why* it was that he changed his initial intentions, why sermons became the climatic contexts of the novel. But we suspect that there is not One single reason for that; a conjunction of personal, professional and political factors collide in Sinclair's writing that ending: his economic problems at the time of finishing the novel, his contact with intellectual Socialists, his personal optimism, which made him disregard the ideological undertones of naturalist pessimistic endings (that resurface in later works). To this we may add that he was not all that worried about writing a piece of artistic work for, although aware of his condition as an artist, he also wished, "if possible to make a popular book, one that would be read by the people and would shake the country out of its slumber."²⁸ We come again to a dilemma discussed above: he had to choose between the spirit of Shelley and the form of Zola, and at the end of the novel his idealism made him follow the English Romantic poet. In any case, there not being other explanation left, we can only recall Sinclair's words of resignation: "I did the best I could."²⁹

The Jungle will remain, then, as a showpiece of how overt propaganda is inserted in a novel, although we may find different opinions as to whether it should be considered a true work of art. So, Mookerjee quotes in his book the words of Sir Herbert Read, an art critic who claims that "even if we admit that all art is propaganda, surely all propaganda is not art."³⁰ Sinclair was never much of a literary critic in the traditionally accepted sense of the word, but in *Mammonart* we may find his answer to Read, for he states there that mankind is "under the spell of utterly false conceptions of what art is and should be; of utterly vicious and perverted standards of beauty and dignity." And he lists, then, a number of "great art lies" which, prevail in the world. Lies number one and number six read as follows:

Lie Number One: the Art for Art's Sake lie; the notion that the end of art is in the art work, and that the artist's sole task is perfection of form. It will be demonstrated that this lie is a defensive mechanism of artists run to seed, and that its prevalence means degeneracy, not merely in art, but in the society where such art appears.

(...)

Lie Number Six: the lie of Vested Interest; the notion that art excludes propaganda and has nothing to do with freedom and justice.³¹

The end of art for Upton Sinclair was not, obviously, in the art work, and he saw as his task to fulfil further than perfection of form. Yet, we must say that the first twenty-seven chapters of *The Jungle* show a preoccupation with form which goes together with the social end that the writer had tried to project in the novel. He did not exclude ideological usefulness in that first part of the book, but, as already commented, he was showing Socialism through incidents. When we get to the sermons, form is completely neglected, and it is more difficult for some people to think of those chapters as part of an art work. Writers who use art as a self-conscious ideological tool sometimes find problems when they introduce their epistemology without losing their audience's interest in what they have created. That is the main problem with *The Jungle*, one which makes us understand what Read meant when he said that all propaganda was not art, even if we sympathize with Sinclair's rebuke of the Arnoldian standards related to art.

Sinclair himself had very ambiguous opinions as regards technical aspects that novelists face, and that is possibly what accounts for whatever conditioned the last chapters of *The Jungle*. This is what he says towards the end of *Mammonart*:

The relationship between the novelist's purpose and his story is very simple; the two things are one, and of equal importance, and the novelist must have them both in hand at every moment of his work. The consequence of losing either is equally fatal. The novelist who loses his grip upon the story and the characters who are living the story, begins at once to write a tract or a sermon –I know all about that, having done it. But equally fatal it is to lose your grip upon your purpose; for then you are doing meaningless reporting, and becoming a camera instead of a creative intellect.³²

He might perfectly be referring here to the criticism that *The Jungle* arose after its publication, and in that case, although we must agree with him that he lost his grip upon the story of Jurgis and, so, began to write a sermon, we must also accept the fact that he did not lose his grip upon his purpose. So, what Rideout suggests as Sinclair's "refusal, or inability, to make a final imaginative fusion of material and purpose,"³³ did not concern the novelist so much as if he had only become a biased camera, finishing the story by leaving Jurgis alone, hopelessly struggling in the jungle of Chicago.

Anyway, we should not be surprised by Upton Sinclair's preference for purpose over material. He was actually convinced that propaganda was one of the most important tools for spreading Socialism in the United States, and so, he wrote *The Jungle*, and he saw the role of the writer, as of any artist, as something more than creating art for art's sake. In that sense, the novel can be credible, for it follows faithfully the ideas of its author. Another matter would be to analyze whether propaganda is the best tool in order to achieve political power, but that task deserves more space than these pages.

We can only conclude that in *The Jungle* we find both art and propaganda; maybe all the novel is propaganda, as Sinclair suggests with his general statement, "all art is propaganda," but some passages are more overtly propagandistic than others, and the formal aspect of art is neglected. Whatever our appreciation of *The Jungle*, it can lead us to reflect on the relationship between ideology and creative writing, and then we may be more alert when deciding what should be ruled as art.

Notes

1. Upton Sinclair, *Mammonart* (Pasadena: Published by the author, 1925) 8.
2. *Ibid.* 9.
3. *Ibid.* 10a.
4. William A. Bloodworth, Jr. *Upton Sinclair* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1977) 55.
5. Upton Sinclair, *The Autobiography of Upton Sinclair* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1962) 114.
6. Sinclair, *Mammonart* 278.
7. Bloodworth, Jr. *Op. Cit.* 52.
8. See R.N. Mookerjee, *Art for Social Justice: The Major Novels of Upton Sinclair* (Metuchen: Scarecrow, 1988) 57.

9. Bloodworth, Jr. *Op. Cit.* 48.
10. *Ibid.* 55.
11. Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985) 71-72. Thereafter *Jungle*, plus page number.
12. Eric Homberger, *American Writers & Radical Politics, 1900-39* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986) 43-44.
13. The author introduces in this passage an interesting type, that of the immigrant (in this case Polish) who brought Socialism from his native land and spread its ideas among other fellow immigrants. Foreign-language federations existed within the Socialist Party, but they had varying success. Problems arose when some on the left wing accused the federations of not integrating immigrant socialists into the Party, and of trying primarily to build up a base for supporting their European movements. Problems of communication also appeared, as foreign-language locals seldom got in touch with neighboring English-speaking locals, and so were ignorant about the mainstream Party and its propaganda. As a whole, we could say that the immigrant socialists were never integrated into the Party. See Charles Leinenweber, "Socialism and Ethnicity," John H.M. Laslett and Seymour M. Lipser, eds. *Failure of a Dream?* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1974) 259-262.
14. Walter B. Rideout, *The Radical Novel in the United States, 1900-1954* (New York: Columbia UP, 1992) 34.
15. Sinclair, *Autobiography* 101.
16. Upton Sinclair, "What Life Means to Me," *Cosmopolitan*, (October 1906): 592.
17. *Ibid.* 593.
18. *Ibid.* 594.
19. Rideout, *Op. Cit.* 35-36.
20. Homberger, *Op. Cit.* 48.
21. Sinclair, *Autobiography* 102.
22. Mookerjee, *Op. Cit.* 21.
23. In fact, Sinclair is here suggesting the effects of such employers associations as National Association of Manufacturers, and its influence in the Roosevelt Administration when determining labor policies.
24. Bloodworth, Jr. *Op. Cit.* 63.
25. Homberger, *Op. Cit.* 53.
26. Christian Socialism was one of the minor factions within the Socialist Party. Although their opinions on social matters were somehow akin to those held by Eugene Debs, some disagreements may appear –Debs being an atheist. Christian Socialists advocated industrial unionism, opposed the IWW and insisted on the primacy of political action. See James Weinstein, *The Decline of Socialism in America, 1912-1925* (New York: Vintage, 1969) 19-23.
27. Weinstein, *Op. Cit.* 2.
28. Sinclair, "What Life Means to Me," 593.
29. Sinclair, *Autobiography*, 114.
30. Mookerjee, *Op. Cit.* 33.
31. Sinclair, *Mammonart*, 8-9.
32. *Ibid.*, 352.
33. Rideout, *Op. Cit.* 31.

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