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Upton Sinclair's Liminal Entities

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Declaration of Originality:

I hereby declare that the submission of this dissertation is entirely the result of my investigation, and that due reference or acknowledgement is made, whenever necessary, to the work of other researchers.

Signed:

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Dedication

To my father, thank you for being my pillar of strength and for always believing in me. Your constant encouragement and guidance have been invaluable in shaping me into the person I am today. I awe you a debt of gratitude that can only be conveyed through silence. No words can adequately express my thanks for all that you have done.

To my wife and children, thank you for your patience, love, and support throughout this journey. Your unwavering belief in me has given me the strength to overcome the challenges and obstacles along the way. I dedicate this work to you, as a symbol of my love and gratitude.

To my mother, in memoriam.

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I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the individuals who have contributed to the completion of this work.

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I would also like to express my gratitude to my family: my father, wife, and children, I am grateful for their understanding and patience during my long journey.

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Abstract

Upton Sinclair's Dead Hand series books are filled with wonderful insights and are frequently entertaining and instructive. His point of view as a utopian socialist is increasingly out of fashion at the beginning of the twenty-first century. However, it is still a valid and important point of view if we want to continue to act as reformers. If we believe that social improvement is possible. Because the series covers so many components of society, religion, education, journalism, and literature, it provides many ideas and reminds us of the power an idealist can exert. As nihilism continues to be the dominant philosophy in the late twentieth century, it may be wise to look back to a time when the muckraker was dominant in journalism. The Dead Hand series might be useful reading today for young people who believe there is little hope for solutions to modern problems. For his tireless and selfless efforts to uphold the values of the country he loved, Sinclair deserves to be remembered.

Résumé

Les livres de la série « Dead Hand » de Sinclair sont remplis d'idées merveilleuses et sont souvent divertissants et instructifs. Son point de vue de socialiste utopique est de plus en plus démodé en ce début du vingt-et-unième siècle. Cependant, ce point de vue reste valable et important si nous voulons continuer à agir en tant que réformateurs. Si nous croyons que l'amélioration sociale est possible. Parce que la série couvre tant de composantes de la société, la religion, l'éducation, le journalisme et la littérature, elle fournit de nombreuses idées et nous rappelle le pouvoir qu'un idéaliste peut exercer. Alors que le nihilisme continue d'être la philosophie dominante de la fin du vingtième siècle, il peut être judicieux de se tourner vers une époque où le « muckraking » dominait le journalisme. La série « Dead Hand » pourrait être une lecture utile aujourd'hui pour les jeunes qui pensent qu'il y a peu d'espoir de trouver des solutions aux problèmes modernes. Pour ses efforts inlassables et désintéressés en vue de défendre les valeurs du pays qu'il aimait, Sinclair mérite que l'on se souvienne de lui.

ملخص

يتناول هذا البحث دراسة تصوير المجتمع والسياسة الأمريكية في سلسلة "اليد الميتة" للكاتب والسياسي أبتون سينكلير. أراد الكاتب الشهير والناشط الاجتماعي بإيصال فكرة الاشتراكية، وتوجيه انتقاداته إلى الرأسمالية. يهدف هذا البحث إلى تحليل أعماله من منظور اجتماعي وسياسي، حيث يعرض البحث الموضوعات المتعلقة بالفساد والظلم والاستغلال التي يراها متشابكة في نسيج المجتمع الأمريكي. كما يستعرض هذا البحث أسلوب الكاتب الأدبي واستخدامه للرمزية والمجاز للتعبير عن أفكاره. ومن خلال قراءة دقيقة لسلسلة "اليد الميتة"، يستنتج البحث الدور الهام الذي تلعبه أعمال سينكلير في التعليق على المسائل المعاصرة مثل عدم المساواة في الدخل وجشع الشركات وتآكل الحريات المدنية. وعلاوة على ذلك، يسلط هذا البحث الضوء على السياق التاريخي الذي كتبت فيه هذه الروايات، وكيف تتماشى موضوعاتها ورسائلها مع الواقع الحالي. يختتم البحث بتأكيد أن إسهام سينكلير في الأدب والحوار السياسي الأمريكي ما زال يعتبر ذا أهمية ومغزى، ويستمر في إثارة تفاعل القراء حتى اليوم;

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

The radical has played a significant role in American history by challenging special privilege and promoting reforms that have led to changes in social institutions. While complete success has not always been achieved, the radical has been instrumental in introducing progressive ideas such as the progressive income tax and the Pure Food and Drug Act, which were initially viewed as radical but later became integrated into the existing social system. This has resulted in a social system that has been continuously reformed and improved over time.

Upton Sinclair was quite a radical. He typically used his books as his weapons. He held the belief that literature should function as a tool for promoting social justice and the redemption of humanity. Writing books in an unceasing torrent, Sinclair proposed as his ultimate task to change the world into what he thought it ought to be through the medium of literature.[1]

In one of his earliest works of fiction, Springtime and Harvest (1901), Sinclair announced his dream that someday he might "build up a tremendous force for the spreading of light." By 1902, the light Sinclair wanted to spread was the promise of socialism, the new beneficence which he believed would defeat the forces of capitalism and bring on a millennium of joy, prosperity, and justice. The forces of capitalism, however, were stronger than the young Sinclair had imagined. "It would be a longer battle than I realized," Sinclair admitted in his autobiography.[2]

The majority of Sinclair's significant works, from his conversion to socialism in 1902 until he commenced writing the Lanny Budd books in 1939, were intentional attacks on capitalist establishments: The Jungle in 1906 depicted the anguish, suffering, and terror of the wage slavery Sinclair found on the "killing beds" of the stockyards; The Metropolis and The Moneychangers written soon after The Jungle, demonstrated the injustices inherent in the skeptical world of Wall Street Capitalism, King Coal, published in 1917, explained under a thinly veiled fiction the Ludlow, Colorado, coal strike in which thirteen people were massacred. Sinclair also explained the struggle between capital and labor in Jimmie Higgins (1917), the vicious practices of the petroleum industry in Oil!

[1] Upton Sinclair, *Autobiography*, 1962, 124.
[2] Ibid, 34

(1927), the martyrdom of Sacco and Vanzetti in Boston (1928) and the evils of alcohol in The Wet Parade (1931).

By 1930, Sinclair had truly become one of the great social detectives, in Alfred Kazin's phrase, "one of the great social historians of the modern era... In a day when newspapermen could write their social novels in the city room, Sinclair proved himself one of the great contemporary reporters, a profound educative force."[3]

In 1962, Upton Sinclair, at the age of eighty-four, bestowed his vast collection of manuscripts, books, letters, and memorabilia to the Lilly Library of Indiana University. This collection constitutes one of the largest and most extensive collections of any major writer ever assembled, it contains over 250,000 manuscript pieces, weighing more than eight tons. If one considers books in translation and no other twentieth-century American writer is as widely read in foreign lands as Upton Sinclair's output numbers into the thousands of volumes. Additionally, Sinclair maintained a vast and vibrant exchange of letters.

During his lifetime, Sinclair corresponded with Jack London, George Bernard Shaw, Edith Warton, Thomas Mann, William Dean Howells, Maxim Gorki, Julia Ward Howe, Bertrand Russell, Sherwood Anderson, Peter Kropotkin, William Jennings Bryan, Leon Trotsky, Henry James, H. G. Wells, Eugene V. Debs, H.L. Mencken, Eugene O'Neil, Theodore Roosevelt, Theodore Dreiser, Ezra Pound, Albert Einstein and countless thousands of workers in sweatshops and jails all over the world.

As evidenced by the Sinclair collection, Upton Sinclair holds an unmatched position in American literature. As Walter B. Rideout contends, Sinclair is "one of the great information centers in American literature. Few American novelists have done more to make their fellow citizens conscious of the society, all of it, in which they live."[4]

[3] Alfred Kazin, *On Native Grounds: An Interpretation of Modern American Prose Literature* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt P, 1995), 93.
[4] Walter Bates Rideout, *The Radical Novel in the United States, 1900-1954: Some Interrelations of Literature and Society* (Columbia University Press, 1992), 38.

From The Jungle onward, practically every book Sinclair had written was translated and published in Europe and Asia. So respected was the work of Sinclair in Japan that the period 1915 - 1925 came to be called Sinkuru Jidai, which means. "The Era of Sinclair."[5]

Even though Sinclair's concepts were broadly circulated internationally, his literary significance was not ignored by American critics. V.F. Calverton, for one, assigned the beginnings of American proletarian literature to Upton Sinclair.[6] Edmund Wilson, in 1932, described Sinclair as the single most important American writer who "put to the American people the fundamental questions raised by capitalism in such a way that they could not be ignored."[7]

As a testament to the excellence of Sinclair's literary achievements, in the autumn of 1931, there was formed a committee of nineteen scholars who recommended Sinclair to the Swedish Academy of Letters as a candidate for the Nobel Prize. The group was made up of some prominent academics including Harry Elmer Barnes from the New School for Social Research, John Dewey from Columbia University, Paul H. Douglas from the University of Chicago, Albert Einstein from the University of Berlin, Harold Laski from the University of London, Bertrand Russell from Cambridge University, and several other notable scholars. These scholars signed a document that stated Upton Sinclair had made important contributions to American literature and society for the last thirty years. "He is the author of some forty volumes," the document explains, "and is unquestionably the most widely read of writers living today, his books have been translated into more than thirty languages and have profoundly affected the thinking of both the masses and the more alert portion of the cultured world."[8]

In his letter endorsing Sinclair's nomination for the Nobel Prize, George Bernard Shaw admitted that, while Sinclair's literary works do not exhibit artistic and literary refinement, purely literary figures, "who are often great pets in literary circles and perhaps

[5] Sinclair, *Autobiography*, 345.
[6] V. F. Calverton, "Land of Literary Plenty," *The Saturday Review of Literature*, May 11, 1940, 16.
[7] Edmund Wilson, "Lincoln Steffens and Upton Sinclair," *The New Republic*, September 28, 1938, 174.
[8] Upton Sinclair, *My Lifetime in Letters* (Columbia, U. of Missouri P, 1960), 59-60.

do exquisite literary work, may have not influence on the thought of their timer whilst rougher talents such as Sinclair's exercised forcibly by writers to whom literary graces are not ends in themselves but only bait to catch readers for their ideas, may have just the sort of importance that maintains the Nobel prestige."[9]

Furthermore, Shaw argued that although Sinclair's writings may not measure up to those of Henry James, Sinclair is "rather a Daniel Defoe; and though Daniel still lives in his works after two hundred years, his contemporaries put him where several respectable Americans would like to put Sinclair: in the pillory."[10] Despite not being awarded the Nobel Prize, he was recognized with the Pulitzer Prize in 1942 for his novel, Dragon's Teeth. Although it is true that Sinclair's writings do not seem to have a big impact on today's literature or politics and he has not experienced a resurgence in popularity, a writer like Upton Sinclair still deserves to be studied closely.

Upton Sinclair's ambitious six-volume The Dead Hand series is the focus of this study. Sinclair's primary focus in this series is to expose and condemn capitalism as a predatory and harmful economic system. Capitalism, as he sees it, is the exploitation of the working people to benefit the capitalist owners of production. Sinclair argues that the American people are particularly vulnerable to the ruthless forces inherent in capitalism. In The Dead Hand series. Standing in the vanishing realm of capitalism, Sinclair considers himself a chronicler of its last days. In The Dead Hand series, Sinclair sees his mission as liberating the American worker from economic oppression by exposing the contradictions of capitalism. These writings can be studied as an object of rhetorical inquiry because of Sinclair's desire to make his audience aware of the importance of his protests.

Sinclair's conversion to the socialist cause in 1902 made of him a perennial. Crusader. Consequently, one of the principal contributions Sinclair made to American letters, in Alfred Kazin's view, was "an energy of personal and intellectual revolt that

[9] George Bernard Shaw to Mr. Greene, November 13, 1931, Sinclair Manuscripts, Lilly Library, Indiana University.
[10] Ibid.

broke barriers down wherever he passed. From the first he was less a writer than a fresh current of air pouring through the stale rooms of the past."[11]

The fresh ideas that Sinclair put forth often grew into massive whirlwinds. Socialism, for example, was for Sinclair "like the falling down of prison walls about my mind..."[12] After those walls collapsed in 1902, Sinclair, the son of impoverished Southern aristocrats, transformed all of his own personal indignations into a political rage against all the fortifications of special privileges. Sinclair's immense capacity for indignation made of him a missionary zealot rather than a practical politician, thus, his Dead Hand series offers the reader not a political program for the working out of social justice but the prospect of carrying out a divinely intended mission.

In The Dead Hand series, Sinclair directs his anger towards revealing what he believed were the unjust and careless practices embedded within capitalist culture. In The Profits Religion (1918), the first volume of the series, Sinclair examines institutionalized religions, finding them shields of privilege and sepulchers of corruption. The Brass Check (1920), the second volume of the series, exposes, the perfidious effect capitalism has made on American journalism. The Goose-Step (1923), and The Goslings (1924) examine how capitalism has transformed the American school into an instrument of the invisible government of big business. In Mammonart (1925), and Money Writes! (1927) Sinclair analyzes art and literature from the socialist perspective.

The overarching message in all six volumes is that the capitalist system tends to corrupt and oppress people. Sinclair blames all human misery on the system: The American capitalists, Sinclair writes, "who finances political parties and pull the strings of government cannot help what they do; they either have to run their business that way or give place to somebody who will run it no differently. The blame lies with the system..."[13]

[11] Kazin, *On Native Grounds: An Interpretation of Modern American Prose Literature*, 89-90.
[12] Sinclair, *Autobiography*, 109.
[13] Ibid, 71.

Because of his belief that all human anguish is due to the inequities inherent in the capitalist system, in The Dead Hand series, Sinclair portrays a world in which there are only wicked capitalists and virtuous wage earners. He believes that since capitalism thrives on calculated and selfish greed, the only remedy for human issues is to implement a socialist system of governance.

Although Sinclair was an avowed socialist, his socialist philosophy differed markedly from the socialist philosophy espoused by the leaders of the Socialist Party. Unlike Eugene Debs, Jack London, and Morris Hillquit, Sinclair believed that socialism could easily be won peacefully at the ballot box. The leaders of the Socialist Party, while not advocating violence, believed that the capitalists that ruled this country would never allow the enactment of a socialist platform because socialism threatened the capitalists' superior position. Consequently, they maintained, for socialism to be realized, open violence might very likely be necessary. Eugene Debs, in an interview in 1920, issued a clear statement of his attitude toward revolutionary violence:

> As a student of history... I know that these great movements for human emancipation do not come without bloodshed; and although I would not kill a man in self-defense, I am in favor of shedding as much blood as is necessary in order to emancipate the people from capitalist oppression. But not one drop more. Moreover, if bloodshed is necessary, I shall not follow the course of some of America's super-patriots, who insisted on others going into battle while they stayed home and piled while they stayed home and piled up profits.[14]

As a result, despite his passionate self-identification as a socialist and frequent expressions of admiration for the ideology, Sinclair had limited impact on the Socialist Party. "I don't think I have ever called myself a Marxist," Sinclair wrote in 1928, "and I have changed my views so frequently that my Socialist comrades consider me very unreliable."[15] Although. Sinclair was not politically influential within the structure of the Socialist Party, his writings, including The Dead Hand series, served as a powerful educative force.

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[14] quoted in Ray Ginger, *The Bending Cross: A Biography of Eugene Victor Debs*, 1969, 402.
[15] quoted in Lawrence S. Morris, "Upton Sinclair, the Way of the Reformer," The New Republic, LIV, March 7, 1928, 93.

Due to its powerful and enlightening impact, there is a historical justification for studying the Dead Hand series. The series, which presents Sinclair's belief that capitalism is the primary cause of human suffering, is one of the initial socialist critiques of modern culture. Furthermore, the series sets Sinclair apart as a skilled social historian. His remarkable ability to uncover information and scour history for pertinent data cultivated a remarkable aptitude for social research.[16]

Equally important, however, is the fact that Sinclair wrote, edited, and published the volumes himself. Thus, this series is Sinclair's least equivocal undertaking. By 1917, Sinclair had come to view publishing houses as instruments for capitalist oppression, part of the capitalist conspiracy to thwart human freedom. Commercial publishing houses, Sinclair argued, were not interested in publishing the truth but rather, in publishing what will "sell." In publishing the series, himself, Sinclair no longer felt he had to compromise his conscience in order to have his messages published.[17]

An examination of The Dead Hand series is therefore necessary. As noted above, the series is one of the first thematic analyses of culture from a socialist perspective. Writing at a time of widespread disillusionment with American progressive reform, Sinclair nevertheless championed the cause of the muckraker. The effects of World War I and its aftermath were so catastrophic that the fires of progressive reform were virtually extinguished by 1918. By the 1920s, Sinclair was almost alone in his role as a radical American social critic. [18]

It is after 1920, there was little radical literature being written in America. Publishing houses had become cautious about publishing radical literature. The orientation of both the audience and the writers of radical literature changed markedly. Finally, there was virtually no radical climate left in the 1920s to which a writer of radical literature could respond. Furthermore, American business, by the early 1920s had become

[16] Jonathon Yoder refers to the staggering amount of research Sinclair did in preparing the *Lanny Budd* books. See Jon A. Yoder, *Upton Sinclair* (New York: Ungar, 1975), 32-35.
[17] Sinclair once confided that he could not get his manuscripts syndicated nationally nor get even one newspaper "to print all that I have to say." That is the reason for my magazine. Sinclair to Charles Zueblin, April 21, 1918. The magazine Sinclair is referring to is *Upton Sinclair's*, a magazine he wrote, edited and published during World War I.
[18] Rideout, *The Radical Novel in the United States, 1900-1954: Some Interrelations of Literature and Society*, 38.

an attractive force in American life. The American writers, Walter Rideout explains, along with "T.S. Eliot… could look out upon their world as a waste land, with H.L. Mencken they could regard it as a zoo, or with any writer for The Saturday Evening Post, they could accept it as an enormous stock market."[19]

Despite the fact that the strongholds of capitalism were largely unaffected by Sinclair's attacks in The Dead Hand series, in the series, Sinclair prefigured the future shape radical literature was to take in the 1930s. In 1929, for example, the economic theories Sinclair had earlier espoused in The Dead Hand series and in his radical novels, were rediscovered by leftist critics and writers. Edward Newhouse, a critic, and writer of proletarian novels, called Sinclair a revelation. "Here was somebody who could offer an explanation to the perplexing chaos,"[20] Newhouse wrote in 1929. Within a month, Newhouse ran through Sinclair's books, asserting that Sinclair "revived the old enthusiasm."[21]

Moreover, Malcolm Cowley, writing in 1932, came to the same economic conclusions Sinclair had developed almost two decades earlier in The Dead Hand series. "I saw all my friends writing the tripe demanded by the present order," Cowley wrote, "stultified and corrupted and unable to make real use of their talents. After that I had to discover the reason for this state of affairs, which comes from the nature of the ruling class which lives by exploiting everyone else."[22] The concept of a ruling class exploiting everyone else is one of the central theses Sinclair had developed in The Dead Hand series.

The series was to prove instrumental in teaching the leftists of the 1930s the irresponsibility of capitalism. To its immediate audience, however, the series had little noticeable influence. Although the series sold more than 250,000 copies and enjoyed worldwide recognition, the forces of capitalism remained invulnerable to Sinclair's attack. Even though his crusade for social justice was ostensibly unsuccessful, one could argue that by the mid-1920s, most other social reformers were also destined to failure. Progressivism and Wilsonian idealism had been buried in Flanders Field, casualties of

[19] Ibid, 111.
[20] Edward Newhouse, "Transition - 1929," *New Masses*, July 1929, 8.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Malcolm Coley, Daily Worker, October 14, 1932, quoted in James Burkhart Gilbert, *Writers and Partisans*, 1968, 92.

the war. What followed that holocaust was the quest for normality, the "Red Scare," the platitudes of the Rotary Club and the mewling of the Babbitts.

For whatever reasons, The Dead Hand series failed to rouse the American people out of their complacency, an examination of its rhetorical makeup is, however, of significance. "As students of persuasion," Leland M. Griffin states, "interested not so much in the accomplished change of opinion as in the attempt to effectuate change, we should find the rhetorical structure of the lost cause as meaningful as that of the cause victorious."[23]

Ultimately, the rhetorical critic of Sinclair's Hand series must allow the discourse to determine the critical tools to be used in its evaluation. To examine and evaluate The Dead Hand series using the filters of traditional methods of rhetorical analysis does not seem wholly adequate. Traditional rhetorical analysis emphasizes the immediate persuasive effects of discourse. In the case of Dead Hand series, although the series was praised by such able critics as George Bernard Shaw, H.L. Mencken, the Dutch novelist Frederick Van Eden, Will Durant and many others, the effect of the series on American culture and American politics was not very noticeable.

Eminent American historians of the 1920s such as Eric Goldman, Arthur Schlesinger, William Leuchtenberg and Richard Hofstadter ignore Sinclair's series.[24] Even a critic of radical history such as Sidney Lens takes no notice of Sinclair's radical criticism written during the 1920s.[25]

It was not until 1970 that one critic of Sinclair noted the historical and intellectual significance of The Dead Hand series. Regardless of the apparent political ineffectiveness of the series, Lewis A. Fretz argues that by writing the series, Sinclair

[23] Leland M. Griffin, "The Rhetoric of Historical Movements," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 38, no. 2 (April 1, 1952): 185, https://doi.org/10.1080/00335635209381762.
[24] Eric Goldman, Rendezvous with Destiny (New York: Vintage Books, 1958): Arthur Schlesinger, The Crisis of the Old Order (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957); William Leuchtenburg, The Perils of Prosperity (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958): Richard Hofstadter, The Age of Reform (New York: Vintage Books, 1955)
[25] Sidney Lens, *Radicalism in America* (New York: Crowell, 1969).

> performed an important service in exposing capitalistic control of major American institutions. Other leftist intellectuals complained of the concentration of power in the hands of an elite, the maldistribution of wealth, the corruption of government by powerful vested interests, and the manipulations of the electorate by demagogic politicians. But Sinclair was virtually the only one who systematically studied and documented these injustices.[26]

Traditional criticism of rhetoric, as Edwin Black observes,[27] usually emphasizes the immediate audience effects of rhetorical discourse. Because Sinclair's Dead Hand series had little immediate influence, to employ traditional methods of rhetorical analysis would not fully disclose the full rhetorical properties of Sinclair's discourse. Moreover, because of its emphasis on the immediate effects of the discourse, traditional rhetorical criticism often minimizes the nurturing rhetorical context which generated the rhetorical discourse. Inasmuch as rhetorical discourse arises from a complex historical milieu, it should not be evaluated as a self-sufficient cause. Consequently, to analyze rhetorical discourse in terms of its audience effect is, as Black suggests, an untenable criterion for rhetorical criticism.

Black suggests that the rhetorical critic consider the audience effects of discourse as only one component of the rhetorical process as an alternative to traditional methods of rhetorical criticism. Rather than evaluating rhetorical discourse according to the response it elicits, Black suggests that the critic focus on analyzing rhetorical transactions. Such analysis would involve synthesizing three interacting variables: rhetorical strategies, that is, the rhetorical characteristics of the discourse, the rhetorical context the historical, extra-linguistic circumstances surrounding the discourse, and the effects on the audience. Consequently, Black's rhetorical system forms the basis of the methodology of this study.

In light of Black's methodology, it can be argued that the presence of rhetorical discourse is an indication of the presence of a particular historical situation that produced that discourse. As Lloyd Bitzer contends, the rhetorical situation and not the rhetor or

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[26] Lewis Arthur Fretz, *Upton Sinclair: The Don Quixote of American Reform*, 1970, 87.
[27] see Black, Rhetorical Criticism: A Study in Method. For an analysis of the proponents of non-traditional rhetorical criticism, see Lester Thonssen, A. Craig Baird & Waldo W. Braden, Speech Criticism, 2nd Edition, (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1970), 280-298.

persuasive intent control rhetorical discourse in the sense that "the question controls the answer, and the problem controls the solution." [28]

To strengthen what he means by the term rhetorical situation, Bitzer provides a formal definition. A historical situation becomes rhetorical, he argues, when the necessary configurations of phenomena present a rhetor with a necessity which the rhetor believes can be removed by the introduction of appropriate discourse capable of modifying the necessity.

Consequently, the critic of Sinclair's Dead Hand series could most profitably analyze that discourse within the matrix of the three interrelated rhetorical components that make up the rhetorical transaction: the rhetorical situation, the rhetorical strategies, and the audience effects. This study will now shift its focus to that task. Chapter Two presents a biographical account of Sinclair's development as a writer and as a social critic, the causes of his revolt, the rhetorical situation widespread while Sinclair was writing the series and Sinclair's perception of that situation. Chapters Three deals with Sinclair's approach to literature. Chapter Four describes and analyzes the major strategies found in the corpus of the discourse. Chapter Five examines the rhetorical characteristics of the series against the broad background of the muckraking movement.

[28] Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," in Richard L. Johannesen, (ed.), Contemporary Theories of Rhetoric: Selected Readings, (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 386.

CHAPTER ONE:
THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS

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To study Upton Sinclair is often to explore feelings of disappointment and dissatisfaction. Despite his books often selling millions of copies, Upton Sinclair often found himself either misunderstood, as was the case with The Jungle, or simply ignored. The mission he conceived for himself, and his books was nothing less than the complete establishment of social justice on earth. If history were to judge men by the tasks they attempted, the least one could say of him was that there was nothing trivial about any of his undertakings. Sinclair's tenacity in fighting numerous battles despite achieving very few victories is worthy of admiration, if for nothing else.

If history evaluates individuals based on their achievements rather than their endeavors, then Sinclair can be considered a reformer of minor significance albeit a fascinating one... Often courageous, rarely bad-tempered, the simplicity of Sinclair's reforms was only matched by the clarity of his mission and the sincerity of his convictions. Sinclair was a prophet of the new dawn who repeatedly argued that the new society of brotherhood and justice is fast coming upon us. "Things look discouraging right now," Sinclair was fond of saying.

"Nevertheless, the great tide is moving underneath. I believe a time of faith is coming."[1] As late as 1940, Sinclair still argued that the collapse of capitalism was inevitable, like "the ripening of the fruit which drops from the tree."[2]

Sinclair enthusiastically adopted socialism as a solution to the dual problems of physical and spiritual poverty, displaying a level of fervor similar to that of St. Paul during his transformative experience on the road to Damascus, Sinclair possessed an unwavering confidence in his capacity to identify and treat societal ailments, a conviction that remained steadfast in the face of external skepticism. Despite the impracticality of some of his ambitions, Sinclair remained convinced that no cause was truly lost, only victories postponed.

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[1] Louis Adamic, "Upton Sinclair - a Prophet of Red Dawn," Open Forum, Vol. 4, No. 48 (November 26, 1927), 1.
[2] Martin Zanger, "Politics of Confrontation: Upton Sinclair and the Launching of the ACLU in Southern California," *Pacific Historical Review* 38, no. 4 (November 1, 1969): 13, https://doi.org/10.2307/3637621.

CHAPTER ONE:
THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS

Sinclair's career as a reformer is the result of a mixture of failures and accomplishments, which can be attributed, at least in part, to his distinctive and individualistic character. However, Sinclair, like all human beings, is also subject to the impact of historical circumstances. That is to say, the intellectual culture into which he was born fostered certain historical developments and muted others. Because, for example, the American people have generally been immune to class consciousness appeals and because socialism has always been viewed as something alien to the American character, many of Sinclair's reformist impulses were destined to fail.

Although American history played a role in some of Sinclair's failures (which outnumbered his successes), they were not solely responsible. Sinclair's adoption of socialism, which had religious, psychological, and ethical undertones, transformed him into a proselytizer rather than a political activist, prioritizing preachy oratory over serious political discourse.[3] Sinclair was more invested in promoting socialist ideology than in advancing the goals of the Socialist Party.

As a result, when Sinclair wrote The Dead Hand series in 1917, he saw class conflict as an insurmountable battle of epic proportions, rather than a situation that could be resolved through compromise and reconciliation. His particular form of socialism tended to be more mystical and utopian rather than pragmatic and political.

Moreover, in the period 1917 to 1927, one can argue that many of Sinclair's reforms were destined to fail because an appropriate rhetorical situation did not present itself to him. The American people that Sinclair had shocked in 1906 with The Jungle were thoroughly inoculated against many of his ideas. In addition, by 1918, the orientation of writers and authors had changed drastically, muckraking was no longer popular.

[3] Alfred James Albrecht, *A Rhetorical Study of Upton Sinclair's 1934 Campaign for Governor of California*, 1966, 215. He argues that Sinclair campaigned more as a moral teacher than as a man seeking public office.

CHAPTER ONE:
THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS

After World War I, American business had become an attractive force in American life. Finally, many commercial publishing houses had rejected many of Sinclair's manuscripts. Out of desperation, Sinclair became his own publisher.

The Dead Hand series embodies powerful rhetoric that is yet to be fully realized or unleashed. Not even the Socialists were receptive to Sinclair's ideas. Within the ranks of the Socialist Party, Sinclair found few converts. The socialists, whose potency as a political force had been permanently eroded because of the World War, accused Sinclair and many others of being a traitor to the socialist cause because of his resignation from the party and support of the American entry into World War I.[4] "You are a renegade from the Socialist Movement," William Bross Lloyd wrote Sinclair, "a deserter in the face of the enemy, deserting at a crucial time in the battle when if ever in the history of the movement we needed the support of all our troops. You go, in my mind, with Judas Iscariot and Benedict Arnold."[5] And, Lloyd might have added, Woodrow Wilson.

The rest of this chapter explores Sinclair's genesis as a socialist and writer, the sources of his revolt, his conversion to socialism and the rhetorical situation operating between 1917 and 1927. This chapter will conclude with an exploration of Sinclair's use of "body rhetoric." In Sinclair's arsenal for social justice, writing was only one, albeit his principal, weapon. It can be argued that in at least two instances, Sinclair effectively used confrontation strategies. Sinclair's "silent picketing" of John D. Rockefeller's New York office dramatized the horrors of the Ludlow Massacre. His reading of the Constitution to a group of San Pedro, California dock strikers and subsequent imprisonment under the California anti syndicalist law did much to put an end to labor oppression in California. Because Sinclair's use of confrontation strategies was so successful, it is to this writer regrettable that Sinclair's use of such strategies was so limited.

[4] Upton Sinclair, "Letter of Resignation," Chicago Sunday Tribune, July 22, 1917, 5. Sinclair's resignation was also printed in the New York Call.
[5] William Bross Lloyd to Upton Sinclair, February 19, 1918, Lilly Library, Indiana University. Hereafter.

CHAPTER ONE:
THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS

I. 1. Origin:

Upton Sinclair was born September 20, 1878, to a poor but Brahmin family in Baltimore, Maryland. His early years were spent in the world of the Southern aristocracy ruined and dislocated by the civil war. Before that war, the Sinclair family had been distinguished and prominent. Many of Upton Sinclair's paternal ancestors had been Navy captains. His great-grandfather, in fact, had commanded the first frigate in the American navy.

Before the Civil War, the Sinclair had lived as genteel plantation owners. But Sinclair's grandfather drowned at sea fighting for the Confederacy. "His descendants," Sinclair wrote in his Autobiography, "... lived in embarrassing poverty, but with the consciousness that they were persons of great consequences and dignity."[6]

Many of Sinclair's relatives did, however, prosper in the postbellum South. His maternal grandfather, John S. Harden, became the secretary treasurer of the Western Maryland Railroad. Sinclair's "Uncle Bland," John Randolph Bland, founded the United States Fidelity and Guaranty Company and for many years served as its president.

But Sinclair's father did not prosper. Genteel though impoverished, Upton Sinclair's father became a salesman and eventually an alcoholic. Drinking became his father's solace in the postwar period. His father's drinking made an indelible impression on the young Upton, and it was the principal reason why Upton Sinclair remained a prohibitionist all his life. The experiences with his father, he asserts, "made me prematurely serious. I began questioning the world, trying to make out how such evils came to be. I soon traced the saloon to Tammany Hall and blamed my troubles on the high chieftains of this organization."[7]

[6] Sinclair, *Autobiography*, 8.
[7] Ibid, 50-51.

Moreover, because of his father's periodic bouts with alcohol, Upton became devoted to his long-suffering mother, "and so have a great respect for women thus it came about that I walked the first suffrage parade in New York behind the snow-white charger of Inez Mulholland. My mother did not drink coffee or even tea, and so when I visited England, I made all my hostesses unhappy."[8]

Partly as an escape from a lonely, sordid childhood the young Upton had only adults as companions, Sinclair became a voracious reader. Unbearable over his father's drinking, suffering from the psychology of the poor relation, literature had become his refuge. "While arguments between my father and my mother were going on," Sinclair writes, "I was with Gulliver in Lilliput, or on the way to the Celestial City with Christian, or in the shop with the little tailor who killed 'seven at one blow.' I had Grimm and Anderson and The Story of the Bible, and Henty and Alger and Captain Wayne Read. I would be missing at a party and be discovered behind the sofa with a book."[9]

While his father and mother, wandering from one boarding house to another when either the rent went up or the family finances went down, could afford few books, the young Upton had access to the library of his favorite uncle, "Uncle Bland." My uncle might own the books; Sinclair would imply; but I owned the literature. His heroes, significantly, were the melancholic Hamlet, the blind Milton and the rebel poet, Shelley. In his later years, Sinclair would argue that it was his early reading that molded his character and helped him develop his revolutionary attitude towards the world.

Even the most casual reader of Sinclair soon discovers the dominant theme pervading almost all of his writings: the contrast between the social classes. The plot of a typical Sinclair novel is often a contrivance that carries the reader from the highest social classes to the lowest.

[8] Lauren Coodley, Upton Sinclair: California Socialist, Celebrity Intellectual (U of Nebraska Press, 2020), 83.
[9] Ibid, 136.

The explanation of this literary phenomenon, Sinclair writes, "is that as far back as I can remember, my life was a series of Cinderella transformations, one night I would be sleeping on vermin ridden sofa in a lodging house, and the next night under silken coverlets in a fashionable home. It all depended on whether my father had the money for that week's board. If he didn't, my mother paid a visit to her father John S. Harden, the railroad official in Baltimore. No Cophetua or Aladdin in fairy lore ever stepped back and forth between the hovel and the palace as frequently as I."[10] As a consequence of these "Cinderella transformations," Sinclair became a radical. The atmosphere surrounding his wealthy relatives Sinclair called the atmosphere of pride and scorn and of values based upon material possessions. "I do not know why I came to hate it," Sinclair writes, but I know that I did hate it from my earliest days."[11]

In 1887, the Sinclair family moved to New York City where Upton's father found employment. The young Sinclair got his first taste of the American educational system while in New York. Upton was not allowed to go to school until he was ten years old because a physician had earlier convinced his mother that Upton's mind was outgrowing his body and therefore, he should not be taught anything. When he finally did enter elementary school in New York City, he writes, "I presented the teachers with a peculiar problem, I knew everything but arithmetic. This branch of learning, so essential to a commercial civilization, had shared the fate of alcohol and tobacco, tea and coffee, my mother did not use it, so neither did I."[12] Sinclair did, however, complete all eight years of elementary instruction in less than two years and enrolled in the City College of New York in the fall of 1892. (The City College in those days was a high school.)

[10] Emily Coakley, "Emily Coakley," August 7, 2018, http://2day.sweetsearch.com/upton-sinclair-muckraking-journalist-and-author-of-the-jungle/.
[11] Ibid, 17.
[12] Ibid, 25-26.

Sinclair's adolescence was difficult. His father during this period had become more dependent on alcohol and thus an irregular provider. Consequently, in 1895, at the age of seventeen, Sinclair had become the sole support of himself and his mother.

While a student at City College, Sinclair's life was quite austere. With the family finances at a particularly low ebb, Sinclair discovered that several New York newspapers and popular magazines bought and published children's stories and jokes. At seventeen, writing jokes for publication became Sinclair's only means of support:

> My jokes became an obsession. While other youths were thinking about dates, I was pondering jokes about Scotsmen, Irishmen, Negroes, Jews.
> I would take my mother to church and make up jokes on the phrase in the prayer book and hymn book. I kept my little notebook before me at meals, while walking, while dressing, and in classes if the professor was a bore. I wrote out my slips of paper, with a number in the corner, and sent them in batches of ten to the different editors, when the pack came back with one missing, I had earned a dollar.[13]

Sinclair, in turn, became a hack writer for popular magazines. He wrote jokes, light verse and stories for Life, Puck, Harper's Young People, and several New York newspapers.

His hack writing, like his joke writing, also became an obsession. Before 1897, Sinclair had written mainly for Argosy and Munsey's. Munsey's, Sinclair writes, "had a department called - fads - and I racked my imagination for new ones that could be humorously written up; each one would be a meal ticket for a week."[14]

At the age of nineteen, Sinclair graduated from City College, enrolled for graduate studies at Columbia University and continued his literary career by writing half-dime novels, this time for Street & Smith's Army and Weekly. Between June 1897 and

[13] Upton Sinclair, Delphi Collected Works of Upton Sinclair US (Illustrated) (Delphi Classics, 2023), 40.
[14] Ibid, 41.

November 1898, Sinclair had authored almost ninety stories, over fifteen hundred pages of published material, totaling over one million words. Sinclair often remarked that his Street and Smith serial dealing with the Spanish American War equaled, in quantity, the complete works of Walter Scott.[15] At times he wrote as many as eight thousand words per day. "I kept two stenographers working all the time," he writes, "taking dictation one day and transcribing the next. In the afternoon I would dictate for about three hours, as fast as I could talk; in the evening I would revise the copy that had been brought in from the previous day, and then take a long walk and think up the incidents of my next day's stunt."[16]

In his Autobiography, written in 1962, Sinclair demeans his early "literary" career. While admitting that hack writing helped him develop facilities by teaching him how to shape a story, hack writing also taught him to use exaggerated phrases and clichés, faults Sinclair would later learn to fight against, though, by his own admission, not always successfully.[17]

Sinclair's literary ambitions, however, far surpassed his early achievements for Street & Smith. Strange as it might seem, he writes:

> I actually enjoyed the work while I was doing it. Not merely was I earning a living and putting away a little money; I had a sense of fun, and these adventures were a romp. It is significant that the stories pleased their public only so long as they pleased their author. When, at the age of twenty-one, I became obsessed with the desire to write a serious novel, I came to loathe hackwork, and from that time on I was never able to do it with success, even though, driven by desperate need, I several times made the effort. It was the end of my youth.[18]

It was Sinclair's idea that the human race could only be saved from its wasteful and foolish ways through the medium of inspired poetry. "Men and women," he writes,

[15] Ibid, 57.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid, 57-58.
[18] Ibid.

"we're going to be taught noble thoughts, and then they would abandon their base ways of living. I had made the acquaintance of Shelley and conceived a passionate friendship for him. Then I became intimate with Hamlet, Prince of Denmark he came to the library of my Uncle Bland in Baltimore, where I spent the Christmas holidays, and we had much precious converse."[19] Both Hamlet and Sinclair, as human beings, shared the experience of being aristocrats who were wrongfully deprived of their rightful inheritance. Hamlet's father was murdered, which ultimately led to his own usurpation.

Sinclair's birthright was destroyed by the Civil War. "I too was a prince, in conflict with a sordid and malignant world at least so I saw myself, and lived entirely in that fantasy, very snobbish, scornful, and superior. Any psychiatrist would have diagnosed me as an advanced case of delusion of grandeur, messianic complex, paranoia, narcissism, and so to the end of his list."[20]

Along with Sinclair's hops of fantasy, came a long and tormenting struggle with desire. Sinclair suffered from a case of incessant purity. For a period of five years or more, Sinclair was subjected to storms of craving. Several women demonstrated what Sinclair called "a coming on disposition." But writes Sinclair, "I would shrink back and turn cold; two or three times, with my reformer's impulse, I told the girl about it, and the petting party turned into a moral discourse."[21]

What were the consequences of Sinclair's compulsive puritanism? Sinclair argues that, in return for sublimating his desires, he got in return, intensity and the power of concentration. He learned to work feverishly for fourteen hours a day "because it was only by being thus occupied that the craving for a woman could be kept out of my soul." Sinclair constantly reminded himself of the wisdom of Solomon: "He that ruleth his spirit is greater than he that taketh a city."

[19] Ibid, 51.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid, 52.

Sinclair found the pace of his graduate studies at Columbia University to be tediously slow, and he also grew tired of his professors. However, he was delighted to learn that the university's rules permitted him to drop courses and enroll in new ones without any extra fees. Consequently, Sinclair would enroll in a course, stay long enough to get the professor's point of view and the list of books to be read and then, he would drop the course. "Four years in succession I did this," he writes, "and figured that I had sampled more than forty courses, but no one ever objected to my singular procedure. The great university was run on the assumption that the countless thousands of young men and women came there to get a degree. That anyone might come merely to get knowledge had apparently not occurred to the governing authorities."[22]

It was during this period that Sinclair was going through an intense and indescribable state of "mystical" ecstasy. One winter evening in 1896, his mind "on fire with high poetry" (as Sinclair's mind was often!), Sinclair went walking through New York's central Park. Suddenly, he writes, "this thing came to me, startling and wonderful, beyond any words to tell; the opening of gates in the soul, the pouring in of music, of light, of joy that was unlike anything else and therefore, not to be conveyed by metaphors."[23] Sinclair was standing in the park, completely captivated and overwhelmed. He felt so happy that it made him dizzy, and he couldn't tell the difference between pleasure and pain.[24]

This mystical experience, which Sinclair claims to have occurred to him many times in diverse forms at unpredictable times and places, often took a literary form. Falstaff and Prince Hal, Hamlet, Don Quixote and Shelley, "held conversation each in his own character, yet glorified, more so than in the books," Sinclair writes in his Autobiography; "I was laughing, singing with the delight of their company; in short, a mad man, talking to myself, making incoherent exclamations. Yet I knew what I was doing, I knew what was happening, I knew that this was literature, and if I could remember the tenth part of it and set it down on paper, it would be read."[25]

[22] Ibid, 64.
[23] Ibid, 60.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.

The most remarkable outcome of these ecstatic experiences was that they made Sinclair believe that he was under the influence of a power beyond himself. He felt like something had taken control of him. Could these experiences be proof that I am a genius? Sinclair pondered. "That I cannot say," he writes, "I only know it seemed like it, and I took it at its face value."[26] While these "ecstasies" were proof enough to Sinclair that he was a genius, these "ecstasies" also developed in Sinclair a lack of self-criticism, Sinclair put absolute faith in the evidence gained from his own experiences. If he seemed like a young egotist, Sinclair writes in 1962, "do not blame me, because that youth is long dead."[27]

As a result of these experiences, Sinclair became a haunter of the mountain tops and deep woods, "the only safe places" where he could give himself up to these ecstasies. But, by the beginning of the year 1900, his ecstasies had become a burden his spirit could no longer bear. These visions of life must be made known to the rest of humanity, he asserted, so that "men and women might be won from their stupid and wasteful ways of life."[28] And Sinclair was to be the self-anointed redeemer of humanity. Thus, by the year 1900, Sinclair's experiences of ecstasy convinced him that he was not only a genius but that his life had a quasi-divine sanction.

No longer could Sinclair endure writing potboilers. With a few hundred dollars saved up, in the spring of 1900, Sinclair ventured off to write the great American novel. Like the prophets of old, Sinclair had to go off on an errand into the wilderness, "far away, somewhere in a forest, where the winds of ecstasy might sweep through my spirit."[29]

Although the weather was very cold and snowy that spring, Sinclair rented a small slab-sided cabin called Fairy Glen, in the woods of Quebec. Snow was falling on the day Sinclair moved into the cabin. That day Sinclair "met a farmer driving a load of straw or something to town, and he pulled up his horses and stared at me. 'Hello! Be you a summer boarder?' 'Yes,' I confessed. 'Well,' and the old fellow looked about at the snowflakes

[26] Ibid, 60.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid, 77.
[29] Ibid.

in the air 'which summer?'"[30] With the fires of his heart to warm him, "I began to write my wonderful novel the story of a woman's soul redeemed by high and noble love."[31]

While writing the novel, Sinclair fell in love with Meta Fuller and on October 18, 1900, he and Meta were married. Neither the novel nor the marriage was successful. The novel was called Springtime and Harvest and, as he admits in his autobiography written over sixty years later, that first novel would be an embarrassment for him to read and "not even loyalty to this present task has caused me to open its pages."[32]

During the period when he was writing Springtime and Harvest, nevertheless, Sinclair was convinced that he had written a true work of genius, the most wonderful book ever written. "I always think that about every book I write," Sinclair acknowledges, "the blurb the publisher puts on the jacket 'This is Upton Sinclair's best work' is perfectly sincere as far as the author is concerned. I write in a fine glow, expecting to convert my last hostile critic, and when I fail, the shock of disappointment is always as severe as ever."[33]

Sinclair worked tirelessly day and night, writing Springtime and Harvest, the ecstasy coming to him again and again. He worked relentlessly, endangering his health, trying to catch those moments of ecstasy, and imprisoning them in language. At last, before the winter of 1901, Sinclair finished his novel. Amidst "the brown leaves falling in showers about me, and the cries of blue jays and the drumming of partridges in the air," Sinclair wrote the closing scenes.[34] He left for New York, picturing himself the conquering hero, convinced he had indeed written the great American novel "for which all the critics of those days were waiting on tiptoe."[35]

[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid, 78.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid, 81.

I. 2. Rebellion:

Then, the unexpected happened: every publisher Sinclair sent the manuscript rejected it. The reason most publishers cited on their rejection slip was that, in their opinion, Springtime and Harvest would not be a commercial success. Ignoring the fact that book publishers stay in business by publishing commercial successes, the heartbroken Sinclair could not understand what his book's marketability had to do with getting the American people the "truth." Whenever a commercial publisher rejected a manuscript of Sinclair and it frequently happened, Sinclair never interpreted being rejected as meaning that perhaps what he had written was not very valuable.

Rather, Sinclair never doubted his own judgment because of his ecstatic experiences. By the time Sinclair was preparing The Dead Hand series, he interpreted a publisher's rejection slip as proof of a capitalist conspiracy against the "truth."

Convinced of the value of Springtime and Harvest's message, Sinclair decided to publish the book himself. This experience left indelible scars on the sensitive Sinclair. To him, the humiliation of having his novel rejected by one publishing house after another convinced him that commercial publishing houses know nothing of the "spirit" and exist only for the ends of commerce and material welfare.[36]

Finally, in the spring of 1901, Funk and Wagnalls agreed to publish Springtime and Harvest under a new title. The book was eventually released in October 1901, with the new title, King Midas. Unfortunately, as previously predicted, the novel did not perform well.

Despite the book's lack of success, Sinclair remained enthusiastic about his literary pursuits. From the spring of 1901 until January 1902, Sinclair had written two novels, Prince Hagen (not published until 1903) and the Overman (which was not published until 1907) and a blank verse narrative. During this period, in order to survive, Sinclair lived in a garret, writing potboilers, sketches and book reviews. Inspired by

[36] Ibid.

Nietzsche Also Sprache Zarathustra, Sinclair wrote The Journal of Arthur Stirling in six weeks.

The Journal of Arthur Stirling was supposed to be the real diary of a young poet who committed suicide because no one would listen to his work and no publisher would publish his masterpiece, "The Captive." In order to make the journal appear as authentic as possible, Sinclair had an obituary of the fictional Stirling published in the New York papers.

The book created a sensation. Practically everyone accepted it as a true story which did not surprise Sinclair because, he argues, in the spiritual sense it was a true story. In a postscript to the 1923 edition of the book, Sinclair wrote, "No truer book than The Journal of Arthur Stirling has ever been written, it is the book of all my boyhood hopes and dreams, and it is as dear to me as the memory of a dead child."[37] Sinclair conceived of Arthur Stirling as a young, aristocratic, messianic poet and, like Sinclair himself, an unrecognized (although self-proclaimed) genius.

However, it didn't take long for the truth about the Arthur Stirling hoax to come to light. The book depicted a series of embarrassing and disrespectful experiences that Arthur Stirling supposedly went through with publishers and editors. But some of the publishers who had rejected Sinclair's Springtime and Harvest realized that those same incidents had actually happened to Sinclair himself.

Sinclair, however, was not yet finished with the subject of starving, idealistic poets who were forced to sacrifice their lives for their art. In an extraordinary essay entitled "My cause,"[38] Sinclair officially admitted the hoax of Arthur Stirling. In that essay, however, Sinclair also announced his plan as to how such geniuses as Arthur Stirling might be saved from humiliation. Sinclair's plan was to establish an institution of higher learning supported and financed by the very wealthy for the purpose of endowing young

[37] Sinclair, *The Journal of Arthur Stirling: The Valley of the Shadow*, 206.
[38] Sinclair, Upton. "My Cause." In *Upton Sinclair Anthology*, edited by Upton Sinclair. California: Murray & Gee, 1947.

men of literary talent. The institution, to be called "The American University of Literature," would consist of the "noblest and truest and reverent literary men of the time."[39] Poets such as Arthur Stirling (and seemingly, Upton Sinclair) would thus be assured of an existence.

"My Cause," begins, "I, Upton Sinclair, would be a singer and penniless rat, having for seven-year waged day and night with society a life and death struggle for the existence of my soul, and having now definitely and irrevocably consummated a victory having routed my last foe and shattered my last chain and made myself master of my own life; ... have sat me down to compose this letter to the world, before taking my departure for a long sojourn in the blessed regions of my own spirit."[40]

When he was writing his Autobiography in 1962, Sinclair envisioned to look up this essay and quotes from it, "but," he admits, "I found I could not read it without pain."[41] Because, Sinclair argues in "My Cause," the world has never been very gracious to its men of genius unless they conform to performing whatever the public wants, he contends that the salvation of American literature depends upon saving young poet geniuses from the brutal forces of "what the public wants."

Because his ecstatic experiences assured him of the rightness of his cause, Sinclair further argues that it does not matter if one single person who reads "My Cause" is convinced that Sinclair is right. According to Sinclair, it is for the world to recognize him as a diviner of true Revelation:

> You do not understand, for you do not have the memory of the midnight hour when I knelt with a fire of anguish in my soul and hot tears upon my cheeks, and registered my vow: So help me Almighty God and His angels, if I come out of this torture house alive, never will I rest in this world again until I have saved the man who comes after me! until I have made it impossible for joy and tenderness

[39] Sinclair, "My Cause," 302.
[40] Sinclair, *Autobiography*, 196.
[41] Sinclair, "My Cause," 311.

> and rapture and awe to be lashed and spit upon and trampled and mashed into annihilation as mine have been! until I have made this world a place in which a young artist can live![42]

In "My cause," Sinclair proclaims himself an indignant warrior against the gross materialism of the publishing company. The fever of Sinclair's "My cause," prompted one critic to call it "the sort of article that many young writers have thought of preparing, most of them, however, destroy it instead of sending it to a publisher."[43]

The principal interest in The Journal of Arthur Stirling and "My Cause" is the psychological moment at which each had been written. Unable to support his family, a virtual failure as a serious writer, in writing The Journal of Arthur Stirling, Sinclair was taking the time and occasion to deal with his own obsessive internal conflicts: could he exist as an artist? Living in poverty, trying to get his books published, harassed by his family to find steady employment, The Journal of Arthur Stirling and "My Cause" demonstrate the fear Sinclair had as to his survival as a writer.

In The Journal of Arthur Stirling, Sinclair depicts, through the personality of Arthur Stirling, a man tormented, wanting to remain free, his integrity and purity intact. "The fundamental laws of life ... I leave for small boys to gape at," Sinclair writes in the journal, "my interest is in the stars."[44]

Looking back on The Journal of Arthur Stirling, Sinclair writes, "I look back upon it now as an amusing illustration of the guilelessness of my attitude toward the world. If any such plan (The American University of Literature founded to save poetic geniuses) were to be proposed today, I would say that it was a device to emasculate literature, as the newspapers and the colleges and the church have all been emasculated, and I would argue that it was better for the young author to starve all his life than to compromise with the powers that are in control of the wealth of the world today."[45]

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[42] Ibid.
[43] Arnold Peter Biella, *Upton Sinclair, Crusader*, 1954, 79.
[44] Sinclair, *The Journal of Arthur Stirling: The Valley of the Shadow*, 80.
[45] Ibid, 207.

By 1906, Sinclair even conceived of the problem otherwise. No longer is the problem one of freeing the poet from the harsh realities of a materialistic environment, "but the freeing of mankind from the curse of wage slavery, if only Arthur Stirling had realized that truth. It would not have ended with his suicide but with the discovery of the wonderful fact that, instead of being alone and impotent in the presence of organized and worldwide crime, he was one of a mighty army of socialists. Socialism would have saved Arthur Stirling. It would have made the book a challenge rather than a suicide."[46]

The Journal Arthur Stirling was, in fact, the story of a suicide. Arthur Stirling, like Upton Sinclair, was a poet in conflict who would not compromise, who refused to write what people wanted to read but rather what he thought people ought to read. Poetry, as Sinclair had envisioned it, ought to be good, redemptive poetry was, therefore, inspired poetry. The ultimate purpose of Sinclair was to teach mankind to exalt spiritual rather than materialistic values through the medium of "inspired" poetry.

And though. Sinclair eventually learned the risks of such a task, Arthur Stirling did not. The Journal of Arthur Stirling was, indeed, the death cries of Sinclair's ingenuousness, of his ascetic idealism. "My error," Sinclair wrote, "lay in supposing that it is literature that makes life instead of life that makes literature."[47] It prefigured the end of Sinclair's career as a poetic rebel. Sinclair, the propagandist survived.

I. 3. Collectivism:

In the fall of 1902, having written The Journal of Arthur Stirling, Sinclair met Leonardo Abbott in the office of the Literary Digest. Abbott was a socialist, and, thinking Sinclair might be interested in learning about the socialist movement, gave Sinclair some socialist pamphlets and a copy of Wilshire's Magazine. Sinclair's subsequent discovery of socialism took a form reminiscent of his recurring bouts of "ecstasy":

[46] Ibid, 207.
[47] Ibid.

> 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 by 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 marketplace, a delirium of speculation. The principal fact the socialists had to teach me was that they themselves existed.[48]

It can be argued that, because Sinclair's conversion to socialism took the recurring form of "ecstasy," his conversion experience is at least partly to blame for his faults as a researcher, a reformer, and a novelist. His ecstasies fostered a lack of self-criticism and allowed the unquestioned acceptance of the evidence of his own senses. Sinclair was never one to bother probing for more insight or depth about any of the problems he diagnosed.[49]

Thus, even in his novels (including The Jungle) Sinclair never labored to make his fictional characters and situations convincing. His sole criterion was whether they were "truthful." And his measurement of truth was always based upon his subjective, "ecstatic" evaluations.

However, not all the rage, despair, and humiliation that Sinclair's literary career had suffered kept him from creating colossal literary plans. Now it was to be a trilogy of novels: "Ecstasy," he writes, "was taking the form of battles, marches and sieges, titanic efforts of the collective soul of America."[50]

In May 1903, Sinclair, his wife Meta and their infant son, David, moved to a cabin near Princeton University where Sinclair planned to write a projected Civil War trilogy of novels, to be called Manassas, Gettysburg, and Appomattox. (Only the first novel,

[48] Sinclair, *Autobiography*, 109.
[49] At one time, Sinclair argued that he did not have to probe any deeper into social problems because he fully understood the problems and found solutions when he was but twenty-five.
[50] Sinclair, *Autobiography*, 100.

Manassas, was ever written.) Sinclair claimed that the purpose of the trilogy was to redeem America from its sordidness and shame by the "contemplation of the heroism and glory of the past."[51]

The problem Sinclair was immediately faced with was to find someone capable of appreciating such a literary achievement and willing to financially subsidize such an undertaken. Completely exhausted, financially impoverished, his literary career in sharp decline, Sinclair sought an endowment from leading American philanthropists and universities, all without success. Finally, Sinclair appealed to his new socialist friend, George D. Herron, "and for the first time found a comrade."[52] Herron advanced Sinclair two hundred dollars and promised him thirty dollars a month, payable over 12 months. "How I could have lived without that money I am entirely unable to imagine,"[53] Sinclair acknowledges in his Autobiography.

In an essay entitled "Everyman his own Reviewer,"[54] Sinclair described his new novel as a "try for a national epic."[55] Like The Dead Hand series yet to be written, Sinclair examined history in epic, monumental proportions. Thus, the Civil War for Sinclair was an ennobling experience in which thousands of people left the pleasure and comforts of their homes to do battle with the devil of chattel slavery. The Civil War, he further contended, is therefore an example of men exalting the spirit of freedom and brotherhood over the spirit of mammon and slavery. Such a novel was to be an inspiration. The dedication of the book reads: "That the men of this land may know the heritage that has come down to them."

In addition to demonstrating Sinclair's peculiar penchant for taking poetic license with history (no historian has yet described the American Civil War as an ennobling battleground of Manichean proportions), Manassas is important because it prefigured the methods Sinclair would later employ when he wrote The Dead Hand series. The

[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid, 111.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Upton Sinclair, "Everyman His Own Reviewer," *The Independent*, November 1904.
[55] Ibid, 1150.

preparation of this novel entailed a great amount of historical research. Sinclair consulted hundreds of newspapers, pamphlets, histories, and biographies of the Civil War, thus developing the ability to absorb and assimilate enormous amounts of historical evidence.

Moreover, Manassas also demonstrates the method Sinclair would constantly employ in preparing and writing his many novels. In preparing Manassas, Sinclair retreated into the woods of New Jersey and there, undisturbed by the outside world, Sinclair awaited the winds of ecstasy that would sweep through him. "The men of that time civil war, came to me and spoke in their own persons, and with trembling and awe, I wrote down their actions and their words."[56] Sinclair would go through each scene in his imagination until he had memorized it before he would set down a word of it on paper. An episode like the battle scene in Manassas, Sinclair explains, took three weeks in gestation. The characters and incidents of that scene were never out of Sinclair's consciousness for one waking moment "nor did the emotional tension of their presence relax."[57] Only after he had experienced these ecstatic recreations could Sinclair begin the painstaking process of writing.

Manassas was published in August 1904 by the Macmillan Company, a company which, only three years before, had rejected Sinclair's first novel, Springtime and Harvest. While it was critically acclaimed, it sold fewer than two thousand copies.[58] Sinclair interpreted this to mean that the men of this land did not care about the heritage that has come down to them or, at any rate, they did not care to hear about it from him.[59] In the course of four and one-half years, Sinclair had written six novels, a narrative poem, published four of the novels and had earned less than one thousand dollars. It was evident that his literary profession did not have a very promising start.

Nonetheless, Manassas marked the turning point in Sinclair's career. Fred D. Warren, editor of the socialist newspaper, the Appeal to Reason, was so impressed by Manassas that he advanced Sinclair five hundred dollars for the serial rights to a new

[56] Sinclair, *Autobiography*, 102.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid, 117.
[59] Ibid.

novel Warren wanted Sinclair to write about industrial wage earners. Because Sinclair had so vividly portrayed the battle over chattel slavery in America, Warren suggested he do the same for wage slavery in America. Sinclair selected the Chicago stockyards as the scene for this new novel.

In October 1904, Sinclair set out for Chicago and for seven weeks lived among the workers of Packingtown. He walked around Chicago white faced and horror-stricken. "It seemed to me," he wrote in his Autobiography, "I was confronting a veritable fortress of oppression. How to break those walls or scale them, was a military problem."[60]

Sinclair visited workers' homes and listened to their stories about conditions in the meatpacking industry. He also roamed the stockyards dressed as a worker. In the seven weeks he lived there, he talked to scores of people who lived in the stockyards - district attorneys, doctors, dentists, nurses, politicians, police officers, as well as the immigrants who worked on the "killing beds."

By a stroke of good fortune, Adolph Smith, a correspondent for the Lancet, a leading medical journal in Great Britain, was in Chicago doing research on the stockyards at the same time that Sinclair was doing research for his novel. Because Smith was also a leading authority on slaughterhouses, whenever Sinclair was in doubt about the evidence he was uncovering, "when I wondered if possibly my horror might be the over sensitiveness of a young idealist,"[61] he would consult with Adolph Smith.

Wandering about the stockyards district one Sunday afternoon, Sinclair saw a wedding reception taking place in the rear of a saloon. He slipped into the room and stood unobtrusively against a wall. There were the characters for my novel, he thought the bride, the groom, the families, the children. "I watched them one after another, fitted them into my story, and began to write the opening scene of my novel, going over it and over it, as was my custom, fixing it fast... It was two months before I got settled at home and first

[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid, 118.

put pen to paper, but the story stayed, and I wrote down whole paragraphs, whole pages exactly as I had memorized them."[62] He began writing the novel on Christmas Day, 1904.

The novel appeared, incompletely, in the Appeal Reason from February 25, 1905, through November 4, 1905. It was published in book form in February 1906. The New York Evening World said of it, "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."[63] Jack London wrote a manifesto about it, calling it "the Uncle Tom's Cabin of wage slavery."[64] The book was The Jungle. Upton Sinclair is quite justified in asserting that The Jungle articulated the anguish and misery of the inarticulate immigrant working people of Chicago's stockyards.[65]

However, even though Sinclair had a tendency to do so, it's impossible for a writer to predict the outcomes of a novel with absolute certainty. Sinclair's declared purpose in writing The Jungle was to gain converts to the socialist cause. Instead of that, the readers of The Jungle were shocked by learning of the conditions under which their meats were prepared. Sinclair's readers, therefore, were not nearly as concerned about the condition of the workers as they were about the conditions so affecting their health. Floyd Dell, Sinclair's first biographer, argues that because Sinclair's deepest concern in The Jungle had been the workers, Sinclair realized, "with bitterness that he had become a celebrity not because the public cared about the workers, but because it did not want to eat diseased meat."[66]

Such bitterness often afflicted Sinclair because he designed most of his book for social rather than literary purposes. As Alfred Kazin points out, few writers seemed to have written less for the sake of literature as Upton Sinclair.[67] About The Jungle, Sinclair himself admitted: "I aimed at the public's heart, and by accident I hit it in the stomach."[68]

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[62] Ibid, 119.
[63] quoted in Sinclair, *Autobiography*, 131.
[64] Letter to Appeal to Reason, November 18, 1905.
[65] Upton Sinclair, "What Life Means to Me," *Cosmopolitan, XLI*, October, 1906, 595.
[66] Floyd Dell, *Upton Sinclair: A Study in Social Protest*, 1970, 106.
[67] Kazin, *On Native Grounds: An Interpretation of Modern American Prose Literature*, 93.
[68] Sinclair, *Autobiography*, 135.

Jack London was correct in describing The Jungle as the Uncle Tom's Cabin of wage slavery. Both novels share the same virtues as well as the same faults. Both Harriet Beecher Stowe and Upton Sinclair were sincere and highly motivated. Both novels demonstrate how the power of storytelling can be harnessed to bring about meaningful change in political and social realms. Additionally, both works enjoyed a broad readership, reaching a wide audience.

However, both novels share the same weaknesses: stereotypes and oversimplifications. In uncle Tom's Cabin, for example, no black person was ever as noble or quite as admirable as Uncle Tom, no white child was ever quite as virtuous or as pure as Little Eva. No slave owner was ever quite as wicked as Simon Legree. Likewise, no immigrant could ever have been so upright or as worthy as the Rudikus family in The Jungle. Both novels were born out of the authors' fervent emotions and personal convictions, rather than being driven by a detached and analytical approach.

There are also structural reasons why The Jungle's fundamental purpose was so misunderstood. The utter "evilness" of everybody in the novel except the Jurgis Rudikus family alienates a good deal of the reader's compassion. In addition, the hardships suffered by Sinclair's main characters are not caused by any one person or group, but by the systems and structures that make up the world. Literally every nonimmigrant and every social force in Sinclair's novel function only to subvert and destroy the goodness and virtues of the Rudkus family. What emerges from The Jungle is not a novel of social conflict but a metaphysical and moral protest.

Therefore, Sinclair fails to establish a clear connection between the issues within the meat industry and the remedy of socialism in a manner that can be easily comprehended by the readers. It is evident that the challenges faced by the meatpacking sector can be effectively addressed through appropriate legislative measures, without necessarily requiring a drastic overhaul of the government. As a result, the portrayal of socialism as a solution to the hardships endured by the workers is not convincingly proven.

Sinclair did achieve international recognition through the worldwide propagation of The Jungle. It was a bestseller in American and England and was translated into seventeen languages. It is ironic that the international reputation Sinclair earned as a novelist should rest upon a novel so universally misinterpreted.

The success of The Jungle shows how much impact a rhetorical situation can have on rhetorical discourse. Sinclair's novel, emerging from the stormy background of the muckraking era, struck a resonant chord with the American people for several historical reasons. First, Jungle was published during a time of widespread interest in consumer affairs. Many people in 1906 were anxious about the quality of their foodstuffs. Sinclair's Jungle, as Mark Sullivan observes, was the final rather than the first climax "to a long agitation that had been carried on in solid and convincing ways by patient investigators, food chemists in the employ of the State and Federal Government, journalists of the exact minded 'Muckraker' type, leaders of women's clubs, and other reformers and altruists."[69] The suspicion that something was very wrong with American foodstuffs, Sullivan claims, had a long and varied history.

> Sinclair's novel was the last and perhaps the most strident refrain of what had been a very lively melody. Unlike the rhetorical situation during which Sinclair wrote The Dead Hand series, the rhetorical situation surrounding The Jungle provided the principal incentive for the novel's success. The fact that the novel was almost completely misinterpreted supports Lloyd Bitzer's contention that it is the rhetorical situation and the rhetor that prescribes and determines the meaning and significance of the discourse.

Still glowing from the fame, he had achieved overnight with The Jungle, Sinclair wrote a spirited article for Cosmopolitan entitled "What Life Means to Me."[70] In this essay, Sinclair recounts his early years as a hack writer, his initiation into the socialist movement and his reasons for writing The Jungle.

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[69] Mark Sullivan, *Our Times: America at the Birth of the Twentieth Century* (Scribner Book Company, 1996), 483.
[70] Upton Sinclair, "What Life Means to Me," Cosmopolitan, XLI (October, 1906), 591-595.

His early years, Sinclair explains were lived with three "intimate friends who loved me very dearly," had molded Sinclair's character and had become the source of his radicalism: Jesus, whom Sinclair calls the first revolutionary, Hamlet, like Sinclair, a prince in conflict with a sordid environment, and Shelley, the poet legislator of mankind.

His early novels, Sinclair continues, were not only failures but created terrifying experiences. These nightmares would continue, he says, "until I discovered the Socialist movement, until I learned to identify my own struggle for life with the struggle for life of humanity."[71] Discovering Socialism was a wonderful experience, Sinclair asserts, "for it gave me the key to all my problems."[72]

Consequently, Sinclair's conversion to Socialism was a psychologically defensive act, for it gave him the rightful place in the world that the ruined Southern Aristocracy had earlier denied him. Socialism gave Sinclair the means to repossess his rightful place by providing him with a noble cause with which to identify: it gave him as he him self-admitted, the key to all his problems.

In "What Life Means to Me," Sinclair argues that socialism made of his life an opportunity "to be a trusty leader in the most wonderful adventure that the world has ever seen."[73] Sinclair had seen the troops being marshaled in the battle for socialism "and heard the trumpets calling and I am a captain in the fight!"[74]

Sinclair's socialist theories led him to interpret political matters through the lens of Christian symbolism, thereby simplifying all complexities into a dichotomy of Good versus Evil. In addition, those theories so amazed him that they effectively insulated him from any conflicting evidence. Sinclair strongly implied that the world condition poverty, hunger, disease, alcoholism, prostitution is about to be purged by the benevolent forces of socialism leaving a regenerated society that would emphasize brotherhood, comradeship, mutual service, justice, and human kindness.

[71] Ibid, 592.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid, 595.
[74] Ibid.

Throughout Sinclair's career as a reformist, he was rarely interested in the give and take of a practical political program nor did he offer specific political programs, since he firmly believed that the problems facing the world were destined to be transcended anyway. Socialism was thus not a political philosophy but, for Sinclair, a new dispensation, a new divine order for worldly affairs, the Novus ordo seclorum. Thus, his particular brand of socialism spared him the burden of careful analysis. At sixty years of age, more than three decades after he had written The Jungle, Sinclair was still defending socialism for the same reasons he cited in "What Life Means to Me." The way to be happy, Sinclair declared in 1938, "is to get a cause that is worthwhile and identify your life with it. Then, no matter what happens if you are hit by a streetcar and crippled or if you lose your sight your life is still worthwhile... I believe I have the right idea, and I'll die holding on to that belief."[75]

Sinclair never questioned his own convictions. Like the blind Milton whom he much admired, he was still serving the cause by awaiting the kingdom. Still inspired by his own theories of the Cooperative Commonwealth that is to be, there is every indication that Sinclair died holding on to such beliefs.

I. 4. The Rhetorical Situation of the Series:

Within four years after he had written The Jungle, Sinclair had lost the audience that the novel had won. There are several reasons for his sudden oblivion. His devotion to socialist causes sapped much of his energy: he had become a regular contributor to the Socialist newspaper, the Appeal to Reason, and often undertook lecture tours and speaking engagements.

Furthermore, Sinclair's founding of Helicon Hall, a utopian cooperative home colony, in November 1906, easily subjected him to mockery. Helicon Hall was regarded in the popular press as a "free love nest." It burned to the ground in March 1907 less than six months after it had opened and before any of Sinclair's ideas could have been carried

[75] Douglas W. Churchill, "Upton Sinclair at 60 Looks Back on his Crusades," New York Times Magazine, September 18, 1938, 22.

out. During its existence, however, Helicon Hall was visited by such personalities as John Dewey and William James. The young Sinclair Lewis was the furnace man for a short while.

In addition, Sinclair's sudden unpopularity was partly caused by the fact that his particular brand of socialism was not entirely adopted by the members of the Socialist Party. For example, in 1907, Sinclair authored a book entitled The Industrial Republic, in which he predicted that William Randolph Hearst would win the Democratic Presidential nomination and, as a Democratic President, would usher in a socialist form of government. The leaders of the Socialist Party Eugene Debs in particular argued that the only hope for socialism in this country lay with the Socialist Party and not either of the two major political parties.

Because of his belief in Hearst as an advocate of Socialism (later, Sinclair would argue that Woodrow Wilson was socialism's best hope), many socialists criticized Sinclair, for they believed that he oversimplified the problems facing them. Never interested in political strategy, Sinclair was never a motor force in the development of the Socialist Party.

By the time Sinclair published The Profits of Religion in 1918, his unpopularity among many members of the Socialist Party was further caused by the position he adopted regarding the American entry into World War I. In 1909, Sinclair had written a stinging denunciation of warfare called "War: A Manifesto Against It."[76] In it, Sinclair had urged the workers of the world to refuse to wage war since wars are motivated by capitalist greed and managed for capitalist profits. However, by 1917, Sinclair defended the war effort, resigned from the Socialist Party, and argued that World War I was a justifiable war.[77] Because the Socialist Party bitterly opposed the war effort, the militant position Sinclair advocated severely damaged his reputation among American socialists.

[76] Upton Sinclair, "War: A Manifesto Against It," Wilshire's, XIII (September, 1909), 7.
[77] Upton Sinclair, "Letter of Resignation," Chicago Sunday Tribune, July 22, 1917, 5.

Sinclair, however, lost the audience The Jungle had created by more than the fact that he isolated himself from the Socialist Party. Sinclair, by 1910, had earned the reputation of an eccentric, and even his friendliest critic must admit that such a reputation was at least partly justified.

In an article entitled "Perfect Health," published in Cosmopolitan in 1910,[78] Sinclair announced, with perfect frankness, that he had discovered a cure for all human diseases with the possible exception of tuberculosis. The cure was fasting, "the secret of perfect and permanent health... It is Nature's safety valve, an automatic protection against disease."[79] He further argued that he was living proof that perfect health is attainable. I shall continue to have perfect health, Sinclair wrote, "just as long as I stand by my present resolve, which is to fast at the slightest symptom of being ill with a cold or a headache, a feeling of depression, or a coated tongue, or a scratch on the finger which does not heal quickly."[80]

Articles such as "Perfect Health" damaged Sinclair's reputation almost beyond repair. Of this period, one critic of Sinclair maintains that:

> Sinclair fell easily into the classification of crank and faddist. He was eccentric. He traveled from one cooperative colony to another. He lived on "squirrel food," or wheat or vegetables. The rank and file of the socialist movement could no longer take him seriously, it was nonsense to recommend the fast to people who seldom had enough to eat. He was appealing instead to those members of the middle class who could afford to experiment with cures, the great body of the middle class found it easy to ignore him. Obviously, a sensible man could discount Sinclair as a serious thinker.[81]

[78] Upton Sinclair, "Perfect Health: in The Fasting Cure," New York: Mitchell Kennerley, 1911), 9-38.
[79] Upton Sinclair, *The Fasting Cure* (Applewood Books, 2008), 25.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Biella, *Upton Sinclair, Crusader*, 135.

Upton Sinclair, however, took himself and his ideas about health very seriously. The denunciations he suffered as a result of his article, "Perfect Health," had taught him nothing. For in 1914, Sinclair authored an article for Hearst's Magazine called "The Laying on of Hands,"[82] in which he argued that he possessed the ability to relieve pain through mental telepathy. In the years just before World War I, Sinclair developed an intense interest in mental telepathy, clairvoyance and telekinesis, befriending mediums, and spiritualists.

Eight years after Sinclair had written "The Laying on of Hands," he advocated yet another spectacular route to perfect health. Dr. Albert Abrams, a San Francisco physician, asserted that he had developed a method of diagnosing and treating diseases based upon the measuring of electronic reactions in human blood. Convincing Sinclair of the efficacy of his methods, Dr. Abrams found a firm advocate.

Dr. Abrams reasoned that the presence of disease measurably influenced the rate of electronic discharges in the bloodstream. Based upon this hypothesis, Dr. Abrams calculated the various rates of discharge caused by common diseases. He called these rates "ERA," or "Electronic Rates of Abrams." Based upon this theory, Dr. Abrams constructed a vibration detector machine. By the simple means of inserting a subject's blood specimen, Dr. Abrams claimed he could thus determine the disease with which the subject had been infected.

Not only could Dr. Abrams diagnose diseases, but, with ... the help of his invention, called the "oscilloclast," Dr. Abrams claimed he could diseases as well by destroying the disease's vibrations and setting up a sympathetic vibration in the subject's body. Sinclair was dizzy with excitement, proclaiming Dr. Abrams the greatest medical genius of the century.

[82] Upton Sinclair, "The Laying on of Hands," Hearst's International Magazine, XXV (April, 1914), 467-476.

While observing Dr. Abrams, Sinclair again experienced ecstasy. This time, the ecstasy took the form of a vision in which all men were forever freed of all disease: "I speak the literal truth when I say that after I had sat for a week in Abrams' clinic, I had lost all feeling of the horror of the three dread diseases, tuberculosis, syphilis and cancer."[83]

Characteristically, Sinclair now felt equipped with a new savior of the world. He set out to convince a skeptical America of the marvels of Dr. Abrams' discoveries. He wrote an article for Pearson's entitled "House of Wonder," which created a sensation.[84] The American Medical Association denounced Dr. Abrams' discoveries as frauds and declared Sinclair a dolt suffering from an incurable case of credulity.

Sinclair's reputation as a serious thinker had eclipsed as dramatically as it had arisen. Most of his novels had been relegated to instant obscurity. Moreover, as Biella points out, the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature does not index any of Sinclair's articles for its 1915 - 1918 volume, although the stubborn Sinclair was writing as much as ever. It was not until Sinclair published Oil! in 1927 that he would enjoy critical acclaim as a novelist of distinction.

Thus, by the time he wrote The Dead Hand series, Sinclair's reputation as a persuader had been thoroughly discredited. However, because of the rhetorical situation, most other social reformers also found themselves on an odyssey of defeat during this same period.

The entire historical context during which Sinclair had written the series was marked by what Eric Goldman calls a reconquest of the American mind by conservatism. Congress in the early 1920s passed much pro-corporation legislation, thus defeating many of the accomplishments of the earlier progressive reformers. The courts reinterpreted the New Freedom laws nurtured by the Wilson administration in such a way as to harass the labor movement and foster a new era of trust building. The army of reformers so

[83] Quoted in Biella, *Upton Sinclair, Crusader*, 213-14.
[84] Sinclair, "The House of Wonder," Pearson's, Magazine, XLVIII (June, 1922), 9-17.

conspicuous before World War I, was, by the early 20s, in Goldman's view, "a beaten army, muscles aching, its ranks thoroughly depleted."[85]

The remnants of that earlier era found their only political outlet in the third-party efforts of Senator Robert LaFollette in the campaign of 1924. Seven months after that campaign, LaFollette was dead and with him died much of the impetus for progressive reform. A social reformer in the 1920s had become, in Goldman's phrase, "a nagging aunt unwanted in the cozy rendezvous of business and America."[86]

"The political outlook is bright," Lincoln Steffens had exclaimed in 1910. "The radical politics, the thinking of men who are giving their minds to social philosophy, is reaching far into the future, and if the ideas of men are an indication of the course of human action, then the future is secure. And it is secure. We are living in a great century, and, after it, there will probably be a still greater era."[87] What happened to that social philosophy Steffens spoke of so cheerfully? Why had the ardor for reform cooled down so dramatically after World War I?

By 1920, Goldman argues, the people to whom Steffens addressed himself in 1910 no longer existed:

> "The people" were a collection of special interest groups. Whatever the reality there may have been in the progressive conception of the people was almost completely dissipated as a result of developments climaxing in the decade after World War I. For years, the increasing specialization of society had been encouraging occupational groups to organize for the advancement of their interests, and now the trend was tremendously accelerated. By creating a need for the speedy recruitment of specialists, the war put the government in a situation, where, for the first time, it dealt with large numbers of people not as uncategorized citizens but as doctors, or historians, or cement experts. By speeding up the

[85] Eric F. Goldman, Rendezvous with Destiny, (New York: Vintage Books, 1956), 223.
[86] Ibid. 224.
[87] Quoted in Kazin, *On Native Grounds: An Interpretation of Modern American Prose Literature*, 69.

urbanization and mechanization of American society, both the war and the years immediately around it made the unorganized individual far more conscious of being alone in a complex and potentially cruel maze.[88]

By 1920, the socialists were in an even worse set of circumstances than were the progressive reformers. By 1915, the Socialist Party membership slipped to 80,000 from its high of 125,000 in 1912. By 1916, only two socialist daily papers were in existence with a combined circulation of only 50,000. In 1912, there had been five daily socialist papers. Many intellectuals, save Morris Hillquit, Victor Berger, and Eugene Debs, deserted the party ranks in 1916 and supported Woodrow Wilson. Furthermore, the 1917 Espionage Act curtailed much of the socialist's activity. The Act forbade any form of opposition to armed forces recruitment and, a year later, the Act was amended to include such offenses as "profane, scurrilous and abusive language," about the government or the Constitution, or saying or doing anything, "to obstruct the sale of government bonds."[89]

As a consequence of the Espionage Act, mailing privileges for socialist magazines were denied and several leaders of the Socialist Party, including Eugene Debs, were indicted under the provisions of the Espionage Act. Although, in 1920, the Socialist Party vote reached an all-time high of 919,799 votes, Daniel Bell explains this phenomenon as a quixotic political whim of fate and "a personal vote, a gesture of homage to a gallant figure,"[90] Eugene Debs.

During this period, Upton Sinclair, alone in that complex and cruel maze, wore the faded armor of the social reformer. The Dead Hand series is thus a monument to Sinclair's faith in the American people's willingness and ability to take up the crusade

[88] Goldman, Rendezvous with Destiny, 226-27.
[89] For an analysis of the American Socialist movement, see Daniel Bell, "The Background and Development of Marxian Socialism in the United States," in D.D. Egbert and Stow Persons, eds., Socialism and American Life, X, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952), 213-405. Also, see Will Herberg, "American Marxist Political Thought," in Socialism and American Life, I, 487-522.
[90] Daniel Bell, "The Background and Development of Marxian Socialism…", in Socialism and American Life, 326.

for reform, to exalt spiritual over materialistic concerns. But clearly, the time was out of joint.

I. 5. Upton Sinclair and "Body Rhetoric":

Even though literature was Sinclair's principal weapon in his crusade for social justice, it was by no means the only weapon in his arsenal. "Few men of letters in America have been so conspicuous in public affairs," one critic contends.[91] Sinclair loudly pushed himself into many public affairs. His "silent picketing" of John D. Rockefeller's New York Offices during the Colorado coal strike in 1914 dramatized the plight of the coal strikers throughout the country. Secondly, Sinclair's imprisonment under the California anti syndicalist law in 1923 for attempting to read the Constitution to a group of workers on strike at the San Pedro, California Harbor drew national attention and was instrumental in ending labor oppression in that state. Sinclair clearly was one of the most energetic of American social critics.

The Rockefeller incident had its inception in Ludlow, Colorado, where officials of the Colorado Fuel and Iron Mines murdered fourteen people during a coal strike in April 1914. Three women and eleven children had been burned to death. The newspapers of the country, including those of New York City, had been virtually silent about the tragedy.

Sinclair, learning that John D. Rockefeller owned the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company, charged Rockefeller with complicity in the murders. Subsequently, Sinclair wrote a letter to Rockefeller in which he begged him to cease and desist being a party to such atrocities as had been committed in Ludlow. "If you step forward and say that you are ashamed of what has happened," Sinclair wrote, "and that you will use your influence in the councils of the coal operators in favor of a just settlement of the strike, the public will then acquit you."[92] Rockefeller ignored Sinclair's plea.

[91] Biella, *Upton Sinclair, Crusader*, 11.
[92] Sinclair to John D. Rockefeller, May 26, 1914.

Therefore, in order to dramatize the situation in Ludlow, Colorado, and bring pressure to bear on Rockefeller and the mining company, Sinclair organized a "mourning parade" in front of Rockefeller's office in New York.

Sinclair's wife, Mary Craig Sinclair,[93] volunteered to picket the Rockefeller offices along with her husband, but Sinclair writes:

> she insisted that she had to have a proper costume. She waited until the department stores opened, and then she got herself an elegant, long white cape. When I arrived in front of Rockefeller's office at nine in the morning, I found no men but four ladies, one of whom had provided herself with a many-colored banners and a loud screaming voice. I invited her to set the banner against the wall... and to stuff her handkerchief in her mouth; we then took up our silent parade in front of the office of Mr. John D. Rockefeller.[94]

Sinclair and his little band of women silently paraded in front of Rockefeller's office. Although Sinclair was arrested almost immediately on a charge of using "threatening, abusive and insulting behavior," and spent three days in jail, the silent parade continued for several weeks under the direction of Mrs. Sinclair. George Sterling and Clement Wood, both poets, joined the silent parade; likewise, Irish-born novelist, Alexander Irvine, and suffragette Elizabeth Freemen.

Meanwhile, a group of students from the Ferrer School, an anarchist institution, decided to carry the street demonstration to the Rockefeller estate in Pocantico Hills. When the police beat them up for trying to hold a free speech meeting in nearby Tarrytown, New York, Sinclair scurried to Tarrytown in an effort to persuade the local townspeople to allow the students to hold their meeting. His efforts were not successful.

[93] Sinclair divorced his first wife, Meta Fuller in 1912 and married Mary Craig Kimbrough in 1913.
[94] Sinclair, *Autobiography*, 211.

Just then, Sinclair relates, a millionaires' whose estate adjoined the: Rockefeller estate, offered to let Sinclair and the students hold their free speech meeting in her open-air theater. "I went there and made a speech and was not beaten up," Sinclair recounts, "Let would be reformers make a note of this item and always have their free speech meetings on the property of millionaires."[95]

It is difficult to say exactly what effect Sinclair's silent parade had on either Mr. Rockefeller or on the conditions of the miners and their families in Ludlow, Colorado. Shortly after the parade ended, however, Rockefeller's company negotiated with the striking miners and recognized the miners' right to unionize. Of one thing there can be little doubt: Upton Sinclair learned how to dramatize a situation that became known as the Ludlow Massacre by taking his arguments to the streets.

Nine years later, Sinclair, now living in Pasadena, California, encountered a compelling circumstance that necessitated his return to the streets. In the 1920s, although Sinclair was in close contact with radical movements in California, he preferred not being an active participant. But, when the Industrial Workers of the World led a strike at the San Pedro harbor, this situation, in Sinclair's opinion, warranted his utilizing confrontation politics. The San Pedro strikers demanded union recognition, higher wages, improved working conditions, and the repeal of the California criminal syndicalism law. At the height of the strike, the city jails of Los Angeles were overflowing with strikers.[96]

Early in the evening of May 15, 1923, Upton Sinclair had obtained written permission to read the Constitution at a meeting that had been organized on behalf of the striking dock workers. The meeting had been held on private property with the written permission of the owner. After Sinclair had read the First Amendment of the Constitution, he was arrested by the police and held incommunicado for several days.

[95] Ibid, 214.
[96] For a detailed account of the San Pedro incident, see Martin Zanger, "Politics of Confrontation: Upton Sinclair and the Launching of the ACLU in Southern California," *Pacific Historical Review* 38, no. 4 (November 1, 1969): 383-406, https://doi.org/10.2307/3637621.

Following his release from jail, Sinclair wrote a protest letter to Louis D. Oaks, chief of police in Los Angeles. The letter was widely circulated and was published in The Nation on June 6, 1923.[97] In this letter, Sinclair accused Oaks of brutal defiance of the law. Sinclair further pledged:

> to do what little one man can do to awaken the public conscience, and that meantime I am not frightened of your menaces. I am not a giant physically, I shrink from pain and filth and vermin and foul air, like any other man of refinement; also, I freely admit that when I see a line of a hundred policemen with drawn revolvers flung across a street to keep. Anyone from coming into private property to hear my feeble voice, I am somewhat disturbed in my nerves... I intend to do my duty to my country. I have received a telegram from the American Civil Liberties Union in New York, asking me if I will speak at a mass meeting of protest in Los Angeles, and I have answered that I will do so.[98]

The editorial comment in The Nation called Sinclair's San Pedro confrontation, "a nobly patriotic protest which should have our reader's support."[99]

The result of Sinclair's protest was the founding of the Southern California branch of the American Civil Liberties Union. Because of Sinclair's participation in the San Pedro dock strike, one critic argues, "one cannot question whether his concern for civil liberties or his considerable organizational talent in laying the groundwork for the Southern California branch of the American Civil Liberties Union."[100] No mass arrests of strikers took place after 1923 and, Sinclair contends, the Southern California A.C.L.U., "made it no longer possible to crowd six hundred strikers into a jail built for one hundred."[101]

[97] Quoted in Sinclair, *Autobiography*, 344.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Zanger, "Politics of Confrontation: Upton Sinclair and the Launching of the ACLU in Southern California," 396.
[101] Sinclair, *Autobiography*, 345.

Sinclair never again became directly involved in confrontational politics after 1923. However, Sinclair was undoubtedly better prepared for his 1934 gubernatorial campaign because of his experiences in 1923. By 1926, Sinclair was no longer interested in championing the causes of working-class people. “I am devoting my life to pleading with working-class people to develop brains of their own,” he wrote. “I tell them that if this system of exploitation of labor is ever banished from the world, it will be because the workers themselves do it.”[102] It has been argued that, had Sinclair not participated in the San Pedro strike and the subsequent establishment of the Southern California A.C.L.U., California history might well have evolved differently.[103] However, upon the establishment of the A.C.L.U. branch in Southern California, Sinclair returned to his study to write novels and broadsides.

I. 6. Summary:

Upton Sinclair is a unique figure as both a reformer and a writer. He is not just a reformer or propagandist, nor is he simply a writer or novelist. There are no contemporary figures quite like him. Sinclair consistently prioritized the spirit over material gain, and frequently fought for causes that seemed unattainable.

He became a reformer for several reasons. Born into a once-powerful family demoralized by the Civil War, Sinclair suffered from the psychology of the poor relation. Living in poverty, associating with his wealthy relatives, the young, sensitive Sinclair lived in the presence of affluence that belonged only to others. It made no sense to the young Sinclair that, so few had so much while so many had so little. “I plagued my mother’s mind with that problem,” Sinclair wrote, “and never got an answer. Since then, I have plagued the ruling class apologists of the world with it, and still have no answer.”[104]

Literature became Sinclair’s escape from the ugliness and squalor of his surroundings. It was a powerful influence that led him to rebellion. The young Sinclair

[102] Upton Sinclair, What’s the Use of Books? (New York’s Vanguard Press, 1926), 7.
[103] Zanger, “Politics of Confrontation: Upton Sinclair and the Launching of the ACLU in Southern California,” 406.
[104] Sinclair, *Autobiography*, 107.

identified with Jesus and foresaw himself a disciple of the "rebel carpenter, the friend of the poor and lowly, the symbol of human brotherhood."[105] Sinclair also identified strongly with the melancholy Hamlet. Like Sinclair, Hamlet was a prince in conflict with his miserable circumstances. Third, Sinclair identified with Shelley, Sinclair's symbol of the rebel poet attacking class privilege.

Besides literary influences, another major influence that ultimately led Sinclair to protest was his early failure as a serious writer. His first four novels were not only failures but, for Sinclair, nightmarish experiences. George D. Herron saved Sinclair from his meager existence in 1902. Herron gave Sinclair financial support and helped him discover socialism.

Socialism, to Sinclair, was the key to all his problems. It became the vehicle which enabled Sinclair to identify with a noble cause. However, because he tended to deal with socialist issues in Christian imagery, his interpretation of socialism reduced social and political problems to a battle between Good and Evil. In an article entitled "The Socialist Party: Its Aims in the Present Campaign,"[106] for example, Sinclair prophesies the ultimate confrontation between the forces of socialism and those of capitalism:

> It is needful only that (the socialist) shall have seen: the vision of the coming day, when all men shall work shoulder to shoulder at the common task of man, neither seeking to enslave their brothers, nor fearing less their brothers enslave them. A man who has once seen this is a changed man forever the world no longer seems the same to him. He knows himself as one step toward the victory, and every new convert he can make is another step. There are no backward steps... Thus, the mighty army marches on to victory, fearing nothing, heeding nothing, never compromising, never bargaining, understanding that between right and wrong, between justice and injustice, there can be no meeting ground, no union, only a battle to the death.[107]

[105] Ibid.
[106] Sinclair, "The Socialist Party; Its Aims in the Present Campaign," Collier's, XXXIV (October 29, 1904), 10, 12.
[107] Ibid.

Socialism thus has fully prepared Sinclair to bear witness to the coming cataclysmic, the final and ultimate war.

Although The Dead Hand series in particular demonstrates that Sinclair was a skilled researcher who meticulously accumulated damaging evidence, it also shows that he habitually analyzed his data only through the prism of his own beliefs. In a letter to Sinclair, Frederick Van Eeden, the Dutch novelist, pointed up many of Sinclair's defects as a writer. With all Sinclair's knowledge of historical facts, Van Eeden asserted, Sinclair's understanding of them is poor. "Your mind," Van Eeden writes, "lacks absolutely any deeper philosophy or profound sense of superior matter."[108]

Driven by his reformist instincts and personal understanding of socialism, Sinclair forged a firm ideology, giving birth to The Dead Hand series. The next three chapters examine The Dead Hand series in relation to that philosophy.

[108] Frederick Van Eeden to Sinclair, May 31, 1923.

CHAPTER TWO:
THE DEAD HAND SERIES: A DESCRIPTIVE INVESTIGATION

CHAPTER TWO: THE DEAD HAND SERIES: A DESCRIPTIVE INVESTIGATION

Unlike Upton Sinclair, few writers have poured their souls out so often to so many people with so few tangible results. Like "a twentieth-century Amos thundering against the fat cows of plutocracy,"[1] Upton Sinclair attacked what he considered to be the principal source of American corruption and predatory greed, the American capitalist system. Sinclair wrote books with almost the same efficiency and speed as Henry Ford produced automobiles, writing at "fever pitch to save men so-called immortal soul by the Bible of Karl Marx."[2] And he was as prolific as he was pitiless.

One of Sinclair's most ambitious undertakings was what Granville Hicks called "examples of muckraking at its best,"[3] The Dead Hand series. One day in 1917, Sinclair announced to his wife that he was going to write a systematic and comprehensive criticism of the world in one volume.[4] What started out as one volume gradually evolved into six: The Profits Religion (1918), The Brass Check (1920), The Goose-Step (1923), The Goslings (1924), Mammonart (1925) and Money Writes! (1927).

Each of the six volumes revolves around a central idea: economic exploitation stands as the fundamental source of power. For Sinclair, capitalism as an economic system is the great enemy of man, corrupting not only human institutions but human character itself. Organized religion, the press, the educational system, the arts, and business Sinclair calls insidious conspiracies that magnify and perpetuate a corrupt wealthy class at the expense of working people.

Because a socialist political system emphasizes cooperation, brotherhood, and love rather than competition, greed, and hatred, Sinclair asserts that the establishment of a socialist form of government is the only cure. Not only because of Sinclair's focus of purpose, but because The Dead Hand series best represents the pure, idealistic American muckraker, it is unique in the history of American literature.

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[1] Pattee, *The New American Literature, 1890-1930*, 1992, 153.
[2] Abraham Blinderman, *Critics on Upton Sinclair: Readings in Literary Criticism* (Coral Gables, Fla.: University of Miami Press, 1975), 274.
[3] Granville Hicks, "The Survival of Upton Sinclair," *College English* 4, no. 4 (January 1, 1943): 215, https://doi.org/10.2307/370787.
[4] Upton Sinclair, *Mammonart: An Essay in Economic Interpretation*, 1975, 383.

Here is Sinclair, filled with the spirit of righteousness, armed with a vision of a world to win over for the cooperative commonwealth that was to be. Long after the earlier reformers had discarded their muckrakes, Sinclair continued to assault the most prominent capitalist institutions, informing the entire reading public of the irresponsibility and shortcomings of organized religions, newspapers, the schools, art, literature, and economics. While the bastions of capitalism remained immune and largely invulnerable to the charges Sinclair levied against them in the series, in writing The Dead Hand series, as Lewis Fretz observes, Sinclair performed an invaluable service by persistently and methodically exposing the flagrant abuses caused by capitalist control of American institutions.

Among other leftist critics, Fretz continues, had complained of the nefarious effects caused by a capitalist elite. But only Sinclair comprehensively studied and documented these charges.[5] Although the series failed to attract a wide audience, the charges Sinclair made could not easily be dismissed. Though we might scoff at Sinclair's socialist theories, one critic observed, "we must, at all events, think and think deeply."[6]

Furthermore, as Fretz argues, Upton Sinclair was "one of the noteworthy exceptions to the disillusionment of the liberals during the 1920s."[7] Indifferent to the rampant materialism of the Harding-Coolidge era, Sinclair raked with resolute zeal and vigor. He never lost faith in the American people's ability to correct an injustice once that injustice had been brought to their attention. All the people needed to overthrow their capitalist oppressors was the truth: Sinclair assumed that people everywhere, at last freed by his version of the truth, would rebel against The Dead Hand of capitalism. Although no rebellion ever took place, Sinclair's series was a potent educative force and a dominant influence in developing converts to the Socialist Party.

[5] Lewis Arthur Fretz, *Upton Sinclair: The Don Quixote of American Reform*, 1970, 87.
[6] B.P.H., rev. of Mammonart, by Upton Sinclair, Boston Transcript, March 28, 1928, 10.
[7] Lewis Arthur Fretz, *Upton Sinclair: The Don Quixote of American Reform*, 1970, 87.

Betty Yorburg contends in Utopia and Reality: A Collective Portrait of American Socialists that the numerous writings of Upton Sinclair for many people "started the process of active or deliberative political self-identification,"[8] As Walter B. Rideout maintains, Sinclair attempted to be "the persuading intermediary between the contending classes."[9] Sinclair's principal vehicle was his books. "To me," Sinclair wrote in his autobiography, "literature was a weapon in the class struggle of the master class to hold its servants down, and of the working class to break its bounds."[10]

Most of the weapons in Sinclair's literary arsenal reflect the nineteenth-century social gospel, the roots of which extend back many centuries, to the preaching of Isaiah and Amos, of Jesus and St. Paul. In nearly every century, there have been men who attempted to apply the moral strivings of the Judeo-Christian tradition to contemporary social problems. "What is man born for but to be a Reformer," writes Ralph Waldo Emerson, "a Remaker of what man has made, a Restorer of truth and good?"

Like the nineteenth-century advocates of the social gospel, Sinclair confronted an impasse: should he attempt to reform the system or the individual within the system? Sinclair never successfully solved this problem. Apparently, Sinclair assaulted the social system. At the same time, however, he exhorted the capitalist to repent, to give up his profits, to cast aside the very system that created him.[11]

[8] Betty G. Youburg, *Utopia and Reality: A Collective Portrait of American Socialists* (Columbia Univ Pr, 1969), 70.
[9] Rideout, *The Radical Novel in the United States, 1900-1954: Some Interrelations of Literature and Society*, 36.
[10] Sinclair, *Autobiography*, 249.
[11] For an interesting discussion of nineteenth-century social gospellers, see Paul H. Boase, ed., The Rhetoric of Christian Socialism (New York: Random House, 1969), especially pages, 3-39.

Wearing the tattered threads of the reformer's cape, voicing strident opposition to the cozy rendezvous of American business and American society, in the 1920s, Sinclair almost was radical American literature. From The Jungle onward, as Rideout maintains, Sinclair's works served to inform the entire reading public about the abuses of capitalism, the problems of organized labor, and the harassment of radicals.[12] In sum, Sinclair single-handedly sustained the muckraking tradition in 1920s America.

The Dead Hand series, aside from its more obvious concerns with muckraking, is cloaked in theological terms and metaphors. For example, in The Profits of Religion (1918), the first of the series, Sinclair counts himself "among the followers of Jesus of Nazareth. His example has meant more to me than of any other man, and all the experiences of my revolutionary life have brought me nearer to him."[13]

As early as 1901, Sinclair declared that he wanted to follow the example of Jesus by devoting all of his time and energy to worshipping God and preaching God's message that Sinclair knew God had given him.[14] Furthermore; Sinclair's belief was that he was charismatic, that he was different from ordinary mortals and had divine sanction. His writings, particularly The Dead Hand series, are constantly sermonic and didactic.

Sinclair never abandoned this mystical conviction, his "Jesus' complex." In his autobiography written in 1962, Sinclair declared that:

> The vision of life that had come to me must be made known to the rest of the world, in order that men and women might be won from their stupid and wasteful ways of life. It is easy to smile over the "messianic delusion," but in spite of all the smiles, I still have it 1962, long ago my friend Mike Gold wrote me a letter, scolding me severely for what he called my "Jesus complex"; I answered, as

[12] Rideout, *The Radical Novel in the United States, 1900-1954: Some Interrelations of Literature and Society*, 38.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Upton Sinclair, *The Profits of Religion* (Bottom of the Hill, 2010), 176.

humbly as I could, that the world needs a Jesus more than it needs anything else, and volunteers should be called for daily.[15]

As a result of his mystical beliefs, Sinclair was motivated to create a new system of ethics and a new theology. Along with such celebrities as B. L. Mencken, Ezra Pound and Walter Lippmann, Sinclair firmly believed that the America of 1918 was on the verge of a cultural and social renaissance.[16] For them, the First World War marked the end of an era. Capitalism was dying, leaving as its legacy a regenerated socialist millennium. Sinclair believed that the nefarious manifestations of capitalism were temporary and would soon be overcome, and that the inevitable course of history sanctioned and encouraged the development of socialism. As a result of this belief, he never developed a political strategy for achieving socialism.

But the socialist millennium did not arrive on schedule in 1918. Instead, the Socialist Party itself had become a victim of the war, and after 1918 it was no longer a potent political influence in American life. President Wilson's administration systematically eliminated the main avenues of socialist propaganda. The Espionage Act of 1917 effectively silenced opposition to Wilson and the war effort. Most important, however, was the loss of the most popular vehicle for socialist propaganda, the Appeal to Reason.

The only socialist newspaper with a national circulation, the Appeal to Reason abandoned the socialists' cause, changed its name to the New Appeal and supported Wilson and the war. Clearly, Sinclair's Dead Hand series was not launched under the best of circumstances.

[15] Sinclair, *Autobiography*, 77.
[16] Gilbert, *Writers and Partisans*, 33-34.

II. 1. The Profits of Religion:

The initial publication of The Profits of Religion was in serial form in Sinclair's magazine, which was called Upton Sinclair's. Later, in 1918, it was published as a complete book. Because of Sinclair's role as both publisher and editor of the book, it did not receive significant attention or promotion.

Nonetheless, Sinclair sold well over 50,000 copies in the year 1918. Sinclair called The Profits of Religion a study of supernaturalism "as a source of Income and a Shield to Privilege."[17] Institutionalized religions, Sinclair argued, were not only cradles for social parasites but the natural ally of every form of exploitation and repression.[18] The House of Morgan had invaded the House of God, and Sinclair sought to run these new money changers out of the temple.

This first volume of The Dead Hand series is divided into seven books. Book One is called "The Church of the Conquerors" and it traces the historical development of religions in the western world. Book Two, "The Church of Good Society" is Sinclair's exposé of the Anglican and Protestant Episcopal Church of which Sinclair had once been a member.

Sinclair's analysis of the Roman Catholic Church's abuses in Book Three, "The Church of the Servant Girls." The least organized book, Book Four, is an analysis of Protestantism in general. Book Five, "The Church of the Merchants" is an analysis of how the radical Jesus had been transformed into a "glorified merchant keeping books." In Book Six, which Sinclair called "The Church of the Quacks," Sinclair provides an analysis of several minor religious cults. Sinclair concludes The Profits of Religion with Book Seven, "The Church of the Social Revolution," an explanation of Sinclair's vision

[17] Upton Sinclair, *The Profits of Religion* (Bottom of the Hill, 2010), V.
[18] Ibid, 17.

of "the church redeemed by the spirit of Brotherhood, the church which we Socialists will join."[19]

The Profits of Religion opens with an introductory parable: a man, unmistakably the author, wanders onto a vast plain where crowds of people, squatting uncomfortably and sweating profusely, are trying to lift themselves by pulling at their own bootstraps. Sinclair asks one of them to explain these rather bizarre goings-on: the bootstrap lifter replies:

> I am performing spiritual exercises. See how I rise?
> But, I say, you are not rising at all.
> Whereat he becomes instantly angry. You are one of the scoffers!
> But, friend, I protest, don't you feel the earth under your feet?
> You are a materialist! But, friend, I can see.
> You are without spiritual vision!
> And so, I move on among the sweating and groaning hordes. Being of a sympathetic turn of mind, I cannot help being distressed by the prevalence of this singular practice among so large a portion of the human race. How this is possible that none of them suspect the futility of their procedure? ...
>
> Then I observe a new phenomenon: a man gliding here and there among the bootstrap lifters, approaching from the rear, and slipping his hand into their pockets. The position of the spiritual exercisers greatly facilitates his work, their eyes being cast up to heaven, they do not see him, their thoughts being occupied, they do not heed him he goes through their pockets at leisure, and transfers the contents to a bag he carries, and then moves on to the next victim.[20]

[19] Ibid, 300.
[20] Ibid., 11-12.

Sinclair watches him for some time, puzzled by his behavior. Finally, Sinclair asks:

> What are you doing sir?
> Be answers, I am picking pockets.
> Oh, I say, puzzled by his matter-of-fact tone. But I beg pardon are you a thief?
> Oh, no, he answers, smilingly, "I am the agent of the Wholesale Pickpockets Association. This is prosperity."
> I see I reply. And these people let you.
> It is the law, he says. It is the gospel!

For Sinclair, most religious leaders are thieves. They dress up in reverence but are ultimately self-serving parasites who prey on a confused and superstitious populace. Sinclair's attack, though, is both comprehensive and ecumenical. He regards all organized religions with grave suspicions. Catholics, Anglicans, Baptists, Mormons, Mazdaznans, "Billy Sunday Baseball and Salvation Army bass drum Bootstrap lifters,"[21] are all part of what Sinclair regards as the predatory capitalist system. Sinclair makes it clear that he is not attaching religion per se, but rather organized religions. Religious impulses, Sinclair argues, satisfy a basic need in mankind, what Sinclair calls "the soul's longing for growth."[22]

In Book One, "The Church of the conquerors," Sinclair traces the development of religion, which he defines as "the priestly lie," from Job to the Inquisition. In twenty-three pages, Sinclair analyzes several hundred years of religious development. His main argument is that the rites and doctrines of the world's great religions have been foisted upon a superstitious and confused world by corrupt ministers and priests. Furthermore, Sinclair asserts that the measure of civilization ever achieved by any nation is the extent to which it has curtailed the power of organized religion. Sinclair asserts that the Tibetans,

[21] Ibid, 15.
[22] Ibid, 17.

Koreans, and Chinese are completely under the influence of organized religion and consequently have no intellectual life.

For the next five books of The Profits of Religion, Sinclair goes romping down the vistas of the ages, swatting every venerable head that showed itself, beating the dust out of ancient delusions."[23] Sinclair struck at every major and several minor faiths without exception, sanctifying incompetence, canonizing stupidity, and opposing and suppressing every cultural and scientific achievement in the history of the West. Anglican clergymen, for example, Sinclair criticizes as "friends of every injustice that profits the owning class."[24] To Sinclair, the Catholic Church is biding its time in America, readying its forces for a political takeover.[25]

The Protestant Episcopal Church of America, the church of which Sinclair had once been a member, Sinclair defines as "a great capitalist interest, an integral and essential part of a gigantic predatory system a sepulcher of corruption."[26]

While Sinclair portrays religious leaders as sycophants of capitalism, he exhorts the reader of The Profits Religion to willingly suspend their own religious prejudices and beliefs. If, implies Sinclair, I symbolically dismember the majority of religious institutions in this country, it is not motivated by blind distrustfulness or personal bias. Rather, Sinclair asserts that he symbolically demolishes organized religions "as an architect who means to put a new and sounder structure in its place. Before we part company, I shall submit the blueprint of that new home of the spirit."[27]

After reading The Profits of Religion, one might have serious doubts about Sinclair's claim that religions have such a corrupting influence on society. Sinclair alleges that religions are socially and personally dangerous because of their stealth, their cunning,

[23] Ibid, 311.
[24] Ibid, 63.
[25] Ibid, 107-109.
[26] Ibid, 94.
[27] Ibid, 18.

their insidiousness. Organized religions are enemies, he asserts, precisely because they look so much like friends:

> I have seen a photograph, from "somewhere in France," showing a wayside shrine with a. statue of the Virgin Mary, innocent and loving, with her babe in her arms. If you were a hostile aviator, you might sail over and take pictures to your heart's content, and you would see nothing but a saintly image; you would have to be on the enemy's side, and behind the lines, to make the discovery that under the image had been dug a hole for a machine gun. When I saw that picture, I thou it to myself there is capitalist Religion![28]

Not only does capitalist religion disguise hypocrisy and malice, but worse, Sinclair argues, capitalist religions have deliberately perverted the historical message of Jesus. The capitalist Jesus, he maintains, is ascetic, comfortable, autocratic, princes like and arrayed in kindness. "Jeweled images are made of him Jesus, sensual priests burn incense to him, and modern pirates of industry bring their dollars, wrung from the toil of helpless women and children, and build temples to him, and sit in cushioned seats and listen to his teachings expounded by doctors of dusty divinity!"[29]

Against the capitalists' version of Jesus, Sinclair sees Jesus as a proletarian rebel, a carpenter's son who drove the moneychangers out of the temple and died a common criminal's death. To prove his point, Sinclair translates several biblical passages into modern English: The Pharisees of yesterday are the capitalists of today. To the fevered Sinclair, the capitalist use of Jesus is both blasphemous and the greatest irony of history: the capitalists have made the radical Jesus respectable.

In addition, Sinclair not only contends that it is the capitalists that have distorted and subverted the message of Jesus, but Sinclair offers his explanation of this phenomenon by narrating the story of the temptation of Jesus. The devil, according to

[28] Ibid, 191-192.
[29] Ibid, 198.

Christian tradition, took Jesus to a high place and offered Jesus all that he could see if he, Jesus, would worship him. Jesus refused. The devil, however, is unremitting, Sinclair asserts. In Sinclair's opinion, while the devil failed to get Jesus, he later returned to capture Jesus' Church.

When the Roman Emperor was converted to Christianity and the Christian Church became the strongest political and social force in the Western world, Sinclair explains, the teachings of Jesus of necessity had to be made subservient to political and social considerations. In the Middle Ages, Sinclair continues, the devil, "went off laughing to himself. He had got everything he had asked from Jesus three hundred years before; he had got the world's greatest religion."[30]

In spite of the devil's formidable successes, however, Sinclair asserts that the memory of the church's proletarian founder, can never be entirely suppressed. Consequently, Sinclair argues, the church's history has been one of the incessant struggles with rebels who have been inspired by the example of Jesus and filled "with the spirit of the Magnificent and the Sermon on the Mount, and of the bitter class-conscious proletarian, James, the brother of Jesus."

This proletarian strain in Christianity, according to Sinclair, has spawned generation after generation of rebels who "live like Jesus as outcasts, and die like Jesus as criminals, and are revered like Jesus as founders and saints."[31] Sinclair puts himself in this tradition of the Christian rebel a man brought up in a Christian church and loved it but was "driven out by the formalists and hypocrites in high places."[32]

Although the modern capital capitalist, like the ancient Pharisee, is clever, predatory, and formidable, the voice of Jesus, Sinclair explains, can never be silenced:

[30] Ibid, 191-192.
[31] Ibid, 83.
[32] Ibid, 290.

> But the longing for justice between man and man, which is the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, is the deepest instinct of the human heart, and the voice of the carpenter cannot be confined within the thickest church walls, nor drowned out by all the pealing organs in Christendom. Even in these days, when the power of Mammon is more widespread, more concentrated, and more systematized than ever before in history even in these days of Morgan and Rockefeller, there are Christian clergymen who dare to preach as Jesus preached. One by one they are cast out of the church, but their voices are not silenced, they are like the leaven, to which Jesus compared the kingdom of God a woman took it and hid it in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened. The young theological students read, and some of them understand; I know three brothers in one family who have just gone into the Church and are preaching straight social revolution and the scribes and the Pharisees have not dared to cast them out.[33]

Sinclair ends The Profits of Religion with a portrayal of "The Church of the Social Revolution." Such an institution should be "conducted by men and women of consecrated life who would specialize in teaching a true morality of freedom, not of slavery, morality… of freedom, not of slavery, founded upon reason, not superstition."[34] The task of such an institution would be to root out ignorance and superstition, fear and submission, "the old habits of rapine and hatred which man has brought with him from his animal past."[35] This Church of the Social Revolution, according to Sinclair, is fighting to exist, using the weapons of reason, freedom and love. It can use no other weapons without self-destruction. Yet, Sinclair writes, "it has to meet enemies who fight with the old weapons of force and fraud. Whether it will prevail is more than any prophet can say."[36]

[33] Ibid, 293-94.
[34] Ibid, 301.
[35] Ibid, 309.
[36] Ibid, 310.

The struggle is now at its height, if it fails, "the soul of the race will be eaten out by poverty and luxury, by insanity and disease, by prostitution, crime and war…"[37] Sinclair does not believe that such a calamity will befall mankind: the forces of resistance, "the Socialist movement, in the broad sense,"[38] are gathering and capable of reconstructing society upon the basis of reason, freedom and love.

The struggle for Socialism will be long and arduous, Sinclair cautions, anxious with vexation and disillusionment. Let us not fail, he concludes, "… let us not write on the scroll of history that mankind had to go through yet new generations of wars and tumults and enslavement, because –we- could not lift –ourselves- above those ancient personal vices which wrecked the fair hopes of our fathers' chauvinism and intolerance, vindictiveness and vanity, envy, hatred and malice and all uncharitableness."[39]

II. 2. The Brass Check:

The Profits of Religion was the first, word: Sinclair hurtled against the blockades of capitalism. Having launched The Profits of Religion, one critic observes, Sinclair, "confidentially awaited the explosion. He was chagrined when apparently nobody noticed it."[40] Many people, however, did notice Sinclair's second explosive, The Brass Check.

The Brass Check, the second volume of The Dead Hand series, was published in 1920 and was the most favorably received. Sinclair sold almost 150,000 copies of the volume its first year of publication and it was the only volume of the series to appear on the bestseller list.[41]

The thesis of The Brass Check is that the modern American newspaper is "a gigantic munition factory, in which the propertied class manufactures mental bombs and

[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid, 311.
[39] Ibid, 315.
[40] Biella, *Upton Sinclair, Crusader*, 173.
[41] Sullivan, *Our Times: America at the Birth of the Twentieth Century*, 523.

gas shells for the annihilation of its enemies."[42] Newspaper owners, according to Sinclair, value a person not because of his intelligence, goodness or wisdom but only "because he is wealthy or of service to vested wealth."[43] More importantly, however, Sinclair argues that the function of the American press is to safeguard the interests of property and extend the influence of the propertied classes. The American newspaper is thus "the day-to-day, between election propaganda,"[44] Sinclair maintains, "whereby the minds of the people are kept in a state of acquiescence, so that when the crisis of an election comes, they go to the polls and cast their ballot for either of the two candidates of their exploiters."[45]

With the possible exception of five American newspapers, The New York Call, The Jewish Daily Forward, The Milwaukee Leader, Seattle Union Record and The Butte Daily Bulletin, Sinclair claims that there is not a newspaper in America that does not openly support the interests, preservation and protection of entrenched wealth.[46]

The title of the book[47] was inspired by a campaign speech of William Travers Jerome. In this speech, Jerome, a candidate for the district attorney in New York City at the turn of the century, described the system of prostitution then operating in New York. He pictured "a room in which women displayed their persons," Sinclair explains, "and men walked up and down and inspected them, selecting one as they would select an animal at a fair. The man paid his three dollars, to a cashier at the window, and received a brass check, then he went upstairs and paid his check to the woman upon receipt of her favors. And suddenly the orator Jerome put his hand into his pocket and drew forth a bit of metal. Behold! he cried, the price of a woman's shame!"[48]

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[42] Upton Sinclair, *The Brass Check: A Study of American Journalism* (University of Illinois Press, 2003), 412.
[43] Ibid, 125.
[44] Ibid, 222.
[45] Ibid, 223-224.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Sinclair wrote to a friend for advice on the title of the book. Among the titles Sinclair was considering were Typhoid Mary, The Poison Squad, Cancer at the Breast, The Gas Attack, The Daily Lie, Give Us This Day, Our Daily Lie, and The Madam Kept, 170.
48 Sinclair, *The Brass Check: A Study of American Journalism*, 2003, 15-16.

For Sinclair, the symbol of the brass check represents the most demonic perversity in the world. A symbol of the degradation of women, The Brass Check symbolizes American newspapers, which systematically "betray the virgin hopes of mankind into the vile brothel of big business."[49]

Sinclair divides his history of prostitute journalism into three parts, The Evidence, The Explanation and The Remedy. The third part of The Brass Check, The Remedy, is the shortest and least developed part of the book. Sinclair's solution to the problems of the American press is the same as his solution to the myriad other problems he documents in other volumes of the series: a peaceful overthrow of the capitalist system.

The first part of The Brass Check, called The Evidence, documents the charges Sinclair brings against the press. Essentially autobiographical, Sinclair charts the history of his many crusades and the many injustices he had suffered at the hands of the American press: suppression, distortions, misquotations, outright perfidy, especially in regard to The Jungle.

Early in the first part of the book, Sinclair puts himself on the witness stand in what he calls the case of the American people versus the American press. "I take the oath of a witness," Sinclair writes, "the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help me God. After this pledge, earnestly given and earnestly meant, the reader must either believe me, or he must exclude me from the company of civilized men."[50] Throughout the remainder of The Brass Check, Sinclair leaves little room for the reader to question the truthfulness of his allegations.

Sinclair further claims that there are no imprecisions, no deductions, no assumptions in the book: "I wish the reader to understand that the incidents happened as I say they happened, and that upon the truth of every statement in this book I pledge my

49 Ibid, 9.
[50] Ibid, 53.

honor as a man and my reputation as a writer."[51] Despite Sinclair's claim, however, not only are there surmises in The Brass Check, but Sinclair is not above the use of rumor testimony and gossip. For example, Sinclair writes that:

> There was a certain labor leader in America who was winning a great strike. It was sought (sic) to bribe him in vain, and finally a woman was sent after him, a woman experienced in seduction, and she lured this man into a hotel room, and at one o'clock in the morning the door was broken down, and the labor leader was confronted with a newspaper story, ready to be put on the press in a few minutes. This anecdote was told to me, not by a Socialist, not by a labor agitator, but by a well-known United States official, a prominent Catholic.[52]

Besides occasionally relying upon fictional evidence to support his arguments, Sinclair often uses his own battles with the American press as one extended analogy. If the American press can be used deliberately and systematically to destroy and discredit him, "It can be used to disorganize the people's movement throughout the world, and to set back the coming of Social Justice."[53] Fearing that the reader might justifiably interpret Sinclair's evidence as an apologia or a defense of his many crusades, Sinclair argues that "I would not take ten minutes of my time for such a purpose."[54] Not Sinclair, but the cause of social justice has been maimed through the knaveries of prostitute journalism, he contends.

In Part two, called The Explanation, Sinclair attempts to establish high credibility for his indictment of American journalism by calling upon supporting witnesses. By quoting well-known publishers, writers and political figures who support his particular position, Sinclair attempts to establish the trustworthiness of his arguments, implying that although the reader might discredit him, no thoughtful reader of The Brass Check could discredit all these other witnesses. For example, Sinclair quotes Ben Hampton, publisher

[51] Ibid, 10.
[52] Ibid, 178.
[53] Ibid, 102.
[54] Ibid.

of Hampton's, who relates how Wall Street put him out of the publishing business. Judge Ben Lindsay, founder of the children's court of Denver, relates how viciously and falsely he was treated by the press when he campaigned for the governorship of Colorado. Sinclair also quotes Charles Edward Russell's indictment of the Associated Press.

Sinclair, however, had other objectives in Part II of The Brass Check besides creating high credibility for his arguments. Sinclair also attempts to explain how Big Business regulates and controls the American press. Sinclair's explanation has four parts. Wall Street controls the press through direct ownership of the press, by owning the owners of the press, through advertising subsidies and, when all else fails, through direct bribery.

Sinclair asserts that Big Business has swiftly achieved full ownership of the press. For instance, interlocking directorates that control copper mines in certain regions of the United States also own the local newspapers, ensuring that no negative coverage of the copper industry is printed. Additionally, Sinclair contends that the same individuals who own industries such as steel, coal, lumber, milling, railroads, and banks also own nearly all of the newspapers across the nation.

Secondly, Big Business interests exercise pernicious control over the content of newspapers by owning the owners of the press. Sinclair considers this the subtlest yet the most effective means of control. Disregarding the most obvious forms of ownership such as mortgages and other financial ties, newspaper owners are "owned by ambition, by pressure upon their families, by club associations, by gentlemen's agreements, by the thousand subtle understandings which make the solidarity of the capitalist class."[55]

Subsequently, Sinclair contends, newspapers are controlled by the conscious as well as the unconscious values and ideals emanating from a capitalist culture. The dictatorial control the capitalist class exerts over the newspaper business, Sinclair alleges, is neither accidental nor haphazard. The perversion of the news, he asserts, has been

[55] Ibid, 258.

deliberately and systematically carried out. In a passage reminiscent of a Jonathon Edwards' sermon, Sinclair addresses the reader:

> You will miss the point of this book if you fail to get clear that the perversion of news and the betrayal of public opinion is no haphazard thing, for twenty-five years that is, since the day of Mark Hanna it has been a thing deliberately planned and systematically carried out, a science and a technique. High-priced experts devote their lives to it, they sit in council with the masters of industry, and report on the condition of the public mind, and determine precisely how this shall be presented, and how that shall be suppressed.[56]

They create a public psychology, a force in the grip of which you, the victim, are as helpless as a moth in the glare of an Arclight. And what is the purpose of it all? One thing and one thing only that the wage slaves of America shall continue to believe in and support the system whereby their bones are picked bare and thrown upon the junkyard of the profit system.

To Sinclair, we, the public, are all hanging by a slender thread, gripped in the force of a deliberately created public psychology, masterminded by the angry go of Wall Street as part of a vicious scheme to keep America capitalists. As if this were not enough, Sinclair argues that there are still other ways the American captains of industry can control the press besides creating an insidious public psychology.

Sinclair maintains that Big Business regulates the press through the vehicle of advertising subsidies. Sinclair defines advertising as "the legitimate graft of newspapers and magazines, the main pipeline whereby Big Business feeds its journalistic parasites."[57]

[56] Ibid, 262.
[57] Ibid.

It is typical for Sinclair to make use of such stipulated definitions. Throughout The Dead Hand series Sinclair does not pretend that he is arguing objectively. By using stipulated (as opposed to lexical) definitions, Sinclair deliberately and self-consciously assigns a new meaning to much of the language he uses. For example, Sinclair assigns the term advertising a new meaning "legitimate graft" within the confines of his discourse. Whatever the term might have meant in other contexts Sinclair annuls by this stipulation. Advertising as "an act of publicly attracting attention to a product" is abolished in Sinclair's Brass Check.

The function of such stipulations is not to communicate the various meanings popularly attached to a term or concept, but stipulated definitions attempt to replace those meanings by one single unambiguous meaning. Stipulative definitions are, therefore, not reports of facts and have no truth value. They are, rather, attempts to legislate with language. Because Sinclair often uses stipulated definitions, much of his language is highly propagandistic.[58]

After defining advertising as the legitimate graft of Big Business, Sinclair argues that, because newspapers and magazines depend upon advertising revenues for their existence, the advertisers have a direct influence upon the content of the newspaper or magazine and will not tolerate that which they consider inimical to their interests. By 1910, according to Sinclair, it was generally agreed that advertising revenues yielded an average of two thirds of a daily newspaper's total earnings and it was not at all unusual for a newspaper to be entirely supported by its advertisers.[59] Hence, the influence advertisers exercise, Sinclair argues, is an effective force in the operation of any newspaper.

[58] Richard Robinson, *Definition*, 1950, 59-92.
[59] Atlantic Monthly, March, 1910, quoted in Sinclair's, *The Brass Check: A Study of American Journalism*, 293.

Additionally, Sinclair contends, largely due to the influence of advertisers, not only has the content of newspapers and magazines changed, but the form as well. There was a time, Sinclair explains, when the advertisements appeared in the first and last quarters of a magazine edition. Now, he argues, when the reader of a modern magazine begins reading an article, he gets one or two clean pages to lull his suspicions. And "then, at the bottom of the page, Sinclair writes, "you read continued on page 93. You turn to page 93, and biff you are hit between the eyes by a powerful gentleman wearing a collar or a swat you are slapped on the cheek by a lady in a union suit."[60] Before the reader finishes the article, Sinclair asserts, he has been invited to spend more money than he will earn in his lifetime and been "tempted by every luxury from a diamond scarf pin to a private yacht..."[61] Thus, he maintains, the intellectual content of newspapers and magazines has been minimized by "the maniac shrieks of advertisers resounding in your brain…"[62]

In summary, Sinclair alleges that the American plutocracy owns and subverts the American press by owning the newspapers, owning the owners through subtle class understandings, and through the medium of advertising. Furthermore, Sinclair asserts that Big Business has often resorted to direct bribery. Big Business, he continues, is particularly prone to bribe a newspaper into supporting a particular political candidate. Sinclair relates, frequently using hearsay evidence, how the San Francisco Bulletin, the Boston Evening Transcript and the Kansas City Times accepted bribes from vested political interests.[63]

While many of Sinclair's claims are vociferous and exaggerated throughout The Brass Check, Sinclair implies that, at every turn, the Wall Street plutocrats are lurking together, conspiring to develop some new strategy for subverting honest news reporting Sinclair does, nonetheless, point up many glaring examples of irresponsible newspaper practices. Sinclair, for example, strongly objects to trial by newspaper innuendo and he

[60] Ibid, 295.
[61] Ibid, 296.
[62] Ibid, 298.
[63] Ibid, 300-309.

describes what it is like to be caught up in a set of circumstances which causes a newspaper editor, after five minutes' consideration, to decide on a guilty verdict. "Trial by city editor in five minutes," Sinclair calls it, "and execution in columns of illustrated slander that in our American system of jurisprudence."[64] Sinclair further argues that newspapers are particularly disposed to do this to American radicals.

Secondly, Sinclair found the near hysterical red-baiting and frequent, overheated propaganda during World War I most objectionable and irresponsible. When war came, Sinclair argues, the American press ceased to think rationally: criticism of the war effort was suppressed, leaders of the labor movement and the Socialist Party were jailed, radicals and reformers of every stripe (including Eugene V. Debs, the perennial Socialist Party candidate for president) were incarcerated not because of anything they did but because of who they were. And people like Sinclair were accused of advocating violence, anarchy and the overthrow of the United States government and indicted in the press without recompense.

Thirdly, Sinclair strongly objected to the newspaper's curious addition to character assassination. For example, Sinclair points up the fact that newspapers were free to lie in their headlines and then, next day, print a retraction of those headlines in an obscure corner. Sinclair advocates, as a remedy, that newspapers be required to print retractions in the same place and with the same prominence that had been given to the earlier, false statement.[65]

The last part of The Brass Check is called The Remedy. In this part, Sinclair is the most moderate and the least radical. Sinclair proposed five methods of correcting the malpractices of newspapers: (1) the enactment of new laws, (2) a return to the eighteenth-century practice of pamphleteering, (3) reconstructing news distribution as a public utility rather than a private enterprise, (4) unionization of newspaper workers, (5) establishing a new nationally circulating newspaper, to be called The National News.

[64] Ibid, 404.
[65] Ibid.

Sinclair first concludes that the law should be used to remedy unfair newspaper practices. “The first remedy to which any good American takes resort is the law,” Sinclair maintains.[66] One law Sinclair advocates is that newspapers should not be able to publish an interview without express permission of the interviewee. Sinclair argues that interviews are often slanted and distorted in the press because newspapers are free to do so.

There also ought to be a law, writes Sinclair, requiring newspapers which print false statements to give equal prominence to a correction. “The law should provide that upon publication of any false report, and failure to correct it immediately upon receipt of notice, the injured party should have the right to collect a fixed sum from the newspaper five or ten thousand dollars at least.”[67]

A third piece of legislation should be enacted, according to Sinclair, which would forbid a newspaper from falsifying cable or telegraph dispatches. Even the most respectable newspapers, Sinclair contends, often publish a rewritten item culled from some other paper but misrepresented as having come by telegraph from a special correspondent. “This is obvious fraud,” writes Sinclair, “and the law should bar it, precisely as it bars misbranded maple syrup and olive oil and strawberry jam.”[68]

Besides advocating specific legislation to curb the immoral activities of the press, Sinclair also advocates, as a further remedy, a return to the eighteenth-century custom of pamphleteering, a practice, Sinclair explains, he and the Socialist Party have been doing for many years in an effort to “counteract the knaveries of the capitalist press.”[69]

Sinclair lists other organizations which are pamphleteering against the subversive forces of a capitalist press: The People’s Council, the American Civil Liberties Union, the International Worker’s Defense League, the International Workers of the World, the

[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid, 405.
[68] Ibid, 407.
[69] Ibid, 403.

Rand School, the People's College, the Young People's Socialist League and the Intercollegiate Socialist Society.[70] However, Sinclair cautions, no matter how massively and determinedly such groups print and distribute leaflets and pamphlets, it is obvious to Sinclair that society cannot continue indefinitely to get the truth by such means. The journalistic dishonesty is so widespread in this country, Sinclair argues, that it is impossible for other organizations to refute all the falsehoods emanating from the capitalist press.

While the enactment of new laws and pamphleteering would help alleviate the more flagrant abuses inherent in the capitalist press, Sinclair asserts that neither would provide an ultimate solution to the problems. Because the press should serve public rather than private interests, Sinclair maintains that the distribution of news should be a public utility under public control. The most pernicious and powerful news service, the Associated Press, Sinclair singles out as the leading agency of capitalist oppression. There can be no journalistic freedom, he argues, until the "monopoly of the Associated Press is broken; until anyone who wishes to publish a newspaper in any American city or town may receive the Associated Press Service without any formality whatever, save the filing of an application and the payment of a fee to cover the cost of the service."[71]

As a fourth remedy that should be employed to neutralize the virulent effects of prostitute journalism, Sinclair suggests that newspaper employees form a union. Because workers are individually helpless to make demands of the newspaper owners, Sinclair explains that a united organization of workers would cease to be at the mercy of their unscrupulous plutocratic employers. Parroting orthodox socialism, Sinclair contends that if the workers united, they could take complete possession of the world:

> And this is the biggest thing about the whole labor movement and the fact that workers of hand and brain are uniting and preparing to take possession of the world. One purpose of this book is to urge a hand and brain union in the newspaper

[70] Ibid, 404.
[71] Ibid, 406.

> field to urge that the news writers shall combine with the pressmen and typesetters and the truck men one organization of all men and women who write, print and distribute news, to take control of their own labor and see to it that the newspapers serve public interest and not private interest.[72]

Sinclair refutes the argument that the taking of power by the workers is merely a substitution of one kind of tyranny for another by arguing that "there is no need of the capitalist class as a class and that the world will be a happier place for all men when the members of that class have become workers, either of hand or brain. When that has been done, there will be no classes, therefore no class tyranny and no incentive to class lying."[73] The power of the capitalist press will thus be crushed by shattering the power of capitalism.

Sinclair offers a fifth and final remedy designed to counter the forces of capitalist newspapers. He proposes to find a weekly publication to be known as The National News to ensure that this publication would always remain dedicated to truth telling, Sinclair explains, the new publication will carry no advertisements and no editorials. It will be a record of events, Sinclair continues, not a journal of opinions. In order to ensure the widest circulation possible, The National News "will be published on ordinary newsprint," Sinclair writes, "and in the cheapest possible form."[74]

The editor of the new publication, Sinclair prophesies, "will sit in a watchtower with the world spread before him; thousands of volunteers will act as his eyes, they will send him letters or telegrams with news. He and his staff will consider it all according to one criterion: is the truth being hidden here?"[75] Although Sinclair argues that control of The National News should be vested in a Board of Directors and even proposes candidates for that board, Sinclair altogether avoids the knottier problem of how a "criterion of truth" is to be established.

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[72] Ibid, 423.
[73] Ibid, 426.
[74] Ibid, 438.
[75] Ibid, 440.

Sinclair concludes The Brass Check with an appeal for funds with which he might endow The National News. "Here is something to be done," he writes, "something definite, practical, and immediate. Here is a challenge to every lover of truth and fair dealing in America to get busy and help create an open forum through which our people may get the truth about their affairs, and be able to settle their industrial problems without bloodshed and waste."[76]

This new industrial cooperative commonwealth "in which the rights of all men are recognized by law," lies just beyond the horizon, Sinclair maintains. "That world lies just before you, and the gates to it are barred only by ignorance and prejudice, deliberately created and maintained by prostitute journalism." The National News, he argues, will do its part in creating such a utopia. Although some interest in founding The National News was generated by The Brass Check, the newspaper itself was never started.

II. 3. The Goose-Step and The Goslings:

The Goose-Step (1923) and its companion volume, The Goslings (1924) were written to show how the invisible government of Big Business owns and operates American educational institutions. The Goose-Step is an examination of the colleges and universities, The Goslings examines the elementary and secondary schools. The thesis of both books is that the educational systems of this country are instruments of special privilege rather than instruments for public service. The purpose of present-day American education, according to Sinclair, is not to further the welfare of mankind by turning out learned and idealistic young people but, rather, education is a deliberate conspiracy to keep America capitalists.[77]

[76] Ibid, 443.
[77] Upton Sinclair, *The Goose-Step: A Study of American Education (Classic Reprint)* (Forgotten Books, 2017), 18.

Even though The Goose-Step did not become a bestseller as its predecessor, The Brass Check, had become, Sinclair sold over 20,000 copies of the book in less than a year. Though, The Goose-Step was a more successful undertaking than its sales record would indicate, it was listed third among nonfiction books most in demand in public libraries during the year 1923.[78]

Early in The Goose-Step, Sinclair explains the or gin of the title. During World War I, writes Sinclair, the American government spent billions of dollars and sacrificed a hundred thousand American lives to defeat the German autocracy. This autocracy, Sinclair continues, did not merely take the form of the aggrandizement of the military establishment but was "a spiritual thing, a regimen of autocratic despotism."[79] The best philosophic expression of the German autocracy, he further contends, can be found in the writings of Johan Gotleib Fichte, the Prussian philosopher. Sinclair quotes two sentences from a long discourse of Fichte's:

> to compel men to a state of right, to put them under the yoke of right by force, is not only right but the sacred duty of every man who has knowledge and power. He is the master, armed with compulsion and appointed by God. I ask you to read those sentences over, to bear them in mind as you follow chapter after chapter of this book, see if I am not right in my contention that what we did, when we thought we were banishing The Goose-Step from the world, was to bring it to our own land, and put ourselves under its sway our thinking and, more dreadful yet, the teaching of our younger generation.[80]

Sinclair then proceeds to indict every major college and university in this country for falling under the sway of the capitalist goosestep. Sinclair's method for indicting is to make extensive use of synecdoche, whereby a small part of the college or university (usually a prominent member of its board of trustees or the corporation of which the most

[78] Upton Sinclair, *The Goslings: A Study of the American Schools*, 2013, 417.
[79] Sinclair, *The Goose-Step: A Study of American Education (Classic Reprint)*, 18.
[80] Ibid.

prominent board member is associated) is used as a vivid suggestion of the whole. Columbia University, Sinclair's alma mater, he labels the University of the House of Morgan, the University of Chicago Sinclair describes as the University of Standard Oil because of the Rockefeller influences and endowments of that university. Northwestern University Sinclair calls the University of Judge Gary because Judge Gary was both the chairman of the board of Northwestern and chairman of the board of the United States Steel Corporation. Sinclair describes Gary as "that prince of open shoppers and potentates of reaction."[81]

By the use of such synecdoche, Sinclair alleges that every major college or university in this country is an extension of Wall Street plutocracy since the leaders of American capitalism have a direct influence upon the affairs of higher education. Furthermore, Sinclair contends that colleges and universities imbue students with a business ethic. "Men die," Sinclair writes, "but the plutocracy is immortal, and it is necessary that fresh generations should be trained to its service."[82]

The primary method the plutocracy uses to train new generations to its service, in Sinclair's opinion, is through the medium of what Sinclair calls the -interlocking directorates-. Sinclair defines the interlocking directorate as the network through which the great banks, with the great trust companies under their control, manage the financial affairs and direct the policies of the biggest corporations of the country.[83] Since the members of the intertwining corporations need trained people in order to perpetuate the plutocratic class and plutocratic control, he continues, the captains of industry need an educational system. By managing the affairs of the colleges and universities in much the same way as they manage the affairs of their respective corporations, Sinclair argues that the college and university provide that system completely. (Sinclair demonstrates that, indeed, all the major colleges and universities are managed by such interlocking directorates.) The lack of academic freedom and the lack of idealism are symptomatic of

[81] Ibid, 254.
[82] Ibid, 21.
[83] Ibid, 19.

the moribund conditions brought about by the merger of American business with. American education.

One of the devices the interlocking directorates most often use to control the college or university is to control who occupies the strategic management positions in all the major institutions of this country. Thereby, Sinclair explains, the interlocking directorate controls "that department of the plutocratic empire which calls itself American Education,"[84] because the educational institutions are operated by the same people who operate. American business and industry. Sinclair uses J.P. Morgan and his influence upon Columbia University as a striking example of how the interlocking directorate functions to transform education into the handmaiden of business:

> There is a great University of Columbia of which Mr. Morgan was all his active life as a trustee, also his son-in-law and one or two of his attorneys and several of his bankers. The president of the university Nicholas Murray Butler is a director in one of Mr. Morgan's life insurance companies, and is interlocked with Mr. Morgan's bishop, and Mr. Morgan's physician and Mr. Morgan's newspaper. If the president of the university writes a book, telling the American people to be good and humble servants of the plutocracy, this book may be published by a concern in which Mr. Morgan (or a partner) is a director, and the paper may be bought from the International Paper company, in which Mr. Morgan has a director through the Guaranty Trust Company and when the Republican Party, of which Mr. Morgan (or a partner) is a director, nominates the president of Mr. Morgan's university Butler for vice-president of the United States, Mr. Morgan's bishop will bless the proceedings, and Mr. Morgan's newspapers will report them, and Mr. Morgan's school superintendent will invite the children to a picnic to hear Mr. Morgan's candidates' campaign speeches on a phonograph, and to drink lemonade paid for by Mr. Morgan's campaign committee, out of the funds of the life insurance company of which Mr. Morgan's university president is director.[85]

[84] Ibid, 23.
[85] Ibid, 21-22.

Sinclair maintains that the directorates so constrain and attenuate the educational systems of this country that young people are systematically and purposely deceived. Because of the control exerted by the interlocking directorates over the operations of the institutions, Sinclair asserts that liberal teachers are intimidated, "dangerous" ideas are suppressed and truth is ignored. "The student comes to college full of eagerness and hope," Sinclair argues, "and he finds it dull. He has no idea why it should be so; it is incredible to him that men should be selected to teach because they were dull, and should be fired if they proved to be anything but dull. All he sees is dullness, and he hates it and cuts it as much as he can, and goes off to practice football or get drunk."[86]

While Sinclair's argument is surely does not exaggerate every teacher is the dullard, Sinclair makes him out to be Sinclair is not alone in arguing that colleges and universities are for the most part controlled by conservative forces. Paul M. Sweezy in Socialism in American Life argues that from the start, American education has been strongly influenced by the boards of trustees made up of businessmen, clergymen and lawyers, "That is to say," he contends, "of individuals representing the most conservative elements in the community. As a consequence, American colleges and universities have been consistently hostile to all forms of unorthodox thought or behavior."[87] The radically inclined social scientist, Sweezy continues, finds the road to an academic career virtually barred.[88]

Nevertheless, while Sinclair argues that the ideal college or university should be a place for those who wish to think and to create and should have but one rule of procedure, "that all ideas are given a hearing and tried out in the furnace of controversy,"[89] Sinclair explains that colleges and universities cannot become furnaces of controversy until the social revolution. While admitting that he is writing The Goose-Step in a time of reaction, Sinclair nevertheless maintains that the socialist revolution which will

[86] Ibid, 61.
[87] Paul M. Sweezy, "The Influence of Marxian Economics," in Hugh T. Lefler, "*Socialism and American Life* Ed. by Donald Drew Egbert, Stow Persons," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 52, no. 1 (January 1, 1953): 484, https://doi.org/10.1215/00382876-52-1-133.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Sinclair, *The Goose-Step: A Study of American Education (Classic Reprint)*, 475.

revitalize all of American life, including American education, is imminent and forthcoming. "We are soon to witness the social revolution in Western Europe," Sinclair predicts, and it will not be possible to keep these ideas from stirring the minds of young America. Our politics will change, and with that change will come freedom in our state universities, and the privately endowed institutions will be forced to come along.[90]

Throughout The Dead Hand series, Sinclair demonstrates his firm conviction that the socialist revolution is impending and inevitable. Sinclair concludes The Goose-Step with the happy forecast that American education "is in the hands of its last organized enemy, which is class greed and selfishness based upon economic privilege."[91] Although the present problems caused by capitalist infiltration into the citadels of education are manifest and odious, Sinclair nonetheless believes that such problems are destined to be transcended. The future, he implies, will vindicate his prophesies.

In the meantime, however, Sinclair offers some practical albeit temporary solutions to the problems of capitalist education. Professors, for example, should leave the academic dry rot of the university and try teaching at a worker's college. Operated largely by working; people, Sinclair asserts that such labor colleges offer the college professor, "a semi-respectable way to get into contact with the real world."[92]

As a second temporary cure to the virulence of capitalist-controlled education, Sinclair advocates unionization of college professors. Echoing the same argument, he used in The Brass Check, Sinclair argues that workers can best regain their rights through collective action. As a last resort, he contends, professors might consider the strike as a means of obtaining academic freedom.

[90] Ibid, 473.
[91] Ibid, 478.
[92] Ibid, 454.

Although The Goose-Step chronicles in detail the unhappy results and serious deficiencies inherent in American education because of capitalist control, Sinclair further maintain that the nefarious problems caused by Wall Street are not confined solely to the institutions of higher education. In his second treatise on American education, The Goslings, Sinclair argues that all educational systems have been infiltrated and subverted by the influences of mammon.

In The Goslings, Sinclair continues the charges he had first made in The Goose-Step, demonstrating how the government of the interlocking directorates own and operate the American elementary and secondary schools. Because of capitalist influence, Sinclair contends, "Schools are factories, and the children raw material, to be turned out thoroughly standardized, of the same size and shape, like biscuits or sausages."[93]

Sinclair begins The Goslings by examining the school system of Los Angeles. After indicting that particular school system, Sinclair travels the entire country, demonstrating how rightminded education has been perverted by the propertied classes. In every region of the country, Sinclair finds the interlocking directorate: the same plutocrats of business, finance and politics are on school boards, controlling and manipulating the public schools. Because of capitalist influences Sinclair maintains that the typical American school exhibits four interrelated phenomena: graft, favoritism, repression, and propaganda.[94]

Of the four interrelated phenomena endemic to capitalist-controlled education, Sinclair finds propaganda particularly visible and objectionable. Sinclair strongly objected to the type of -Americanization- and empty chauvinism he found flourishing in the American classroom:

> The schools of Los Angeles are starting in this fall with what they call -codified patriotism-; a whole outfit of flummery contrived by the American Legion and the

[93] Sinclair, *The Goslings: A Study of the American Schools*, 2013, 24.
[94] Ibid, 66.

> hundred professional presenters. The flag must be exactly at the top of the staff, and you must raise it briskly, and lower it slowly and reverently you must raise your hat with your right hand, and women must put their right hand over their heart. The legislature has passed a bill, requiring that American history shall be taught "from the American viewpoint," no longer is it to be taught from the viewpoint of truth! The children are to learn that Alexander Hamilton was a good American, but the soft pedal will be put on Thomas Jefferson. They will not be taught that the Mexican War was a disgraceful foray of greed, and that Abraham Lincoln denounced it in Congress. Instead, they will be taught all about. The -red-menace with the columns of the Los Angeles Times for source material.[95]

Because of such "codified patriotism," Sinclair asserts that radicals, reformers, socialists, and the labor movement are all distorted and lied about in the schools. It was during World War I, Sinclair contends, that the public school came to be recognized as a powerful means through which capitalist propaganda could be spread.

Sinclair predicts that one day it might be possible for a J.P. Morgan "to press a button at nine o'clock in the morning, and by twelve o'clock noon every child of our twenty-three million will be ready to go out and kill a Red!"[96]

In order to curtail the official tyrannies that serve to intensify and reinforce the occupational diseases of the teaching profession, Sinclair advocates a teachers' union. The teacher, like the reporter and the college professor, must "cease to be an individual, she must become part of a group, she must share the consciousness of an organized and disciplined body of workers, with a duty towards the future, and a means of carrying it out."[97]

[95] Ibid, 54.
[96] Ibid, 102.
[97] Ibid, 402.

Until unionization comes, he cautions, the status of the American school teacher is that of a wage slave and lackey of the school board, "not the status of a free citizen, nor of a professional."[98] In order to gain the rights of a free citizen and professional, however, Sinclair warns that there will be many martyrs along the way, and each can take to himself "such comfort as martyrs through all ages have had the knowledge that each one is adding to the sum total of human progress, and that without his heroism and unselfish idealism, there would have been no progress in the past, and will be none in the future."[99]

Sinclair concludes The Goslings with a vision of the imminent cooperative commonwealth in which educators, carpenters, journalists, clergymen, masons and all other "workers of hand or brain" work together to bring about social justice. "The educator is a worker," he writes, "a useful worker, and the educator's place is by the side of all his brothers of that class."[100] The future world of cooperation and brotherhood "is theirs to make, and all they need is ripened understanding and vision of the better life."[101]

II. 4. Mammonart:

To call Mammonart an essay on economic interpretation is accurate but inadequate. In Mammonart, published in 1925, Sinclair attempts to muckrake the artistic achievements of western civilization in one three hundred eighty-five-page volume. In one hundred eleven chapters (each chapter averages three pages), Sinclair surveys the relationship between the artist and society, arguing that successful artists have historically been those who aggrandize and extol the virtues of the ruling classes.

Because Sinclair examines artistic achievement from the perspective of the class struggle, he describes art works as being either "instruments of propaganda and repression employed by the ruling classes of the community; or as weapons of attack employed by

[98] Ibid, 405.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid, 444.
[101] Ibid.

new classes rising in power."[102] Sinclair suggests that Michelangelo, Homer, Shakespeare, Dryden, Balzac, Raphael, and Tennyson were all susceptible to the whims of the public who commissioned and financed their work since their art aimed to flatter and glorify the ruling class. Historically, Sinclair argues, art is usually a Mammonart.

However, he contends, all artists do not prostrate themselves before the altar of mammon. Although most artists are instruments of ruling class propaganda and repression, Sinclair asserts that there are also rebel artists who use their art to attack the ruling class and attempt to emancipate the working classes. Sinclair characterizes Shelley, Byron, and Jack London as rebel artists because, in his opinion, they had seen the class struggle and had used their art as weapons to fight for the freedom of the proletariat.

Early in Mammonart, Sinclair catalogues what he calls the "Six Great Lies" concerning what art is and what art should be: (1) that art exists for its own sake, (2) that art is esoteric and appeals to a limited audience, (3) that new artists must follow old traditions, (4) that art is escapist, (5) that art is immoral, and (6) that art excludes propaganda. Sinclair proposes that Mammonart refute all of these "great lies" no mean task!

In refuting the first lie, Sinclair explains that art, unless it is decadent, never exists for its own sake it rallies support for an idea of a course of action. The plays of Aristophanes and the works of Oscar Wilde. Sinclair calls decadent art indicative of social degeneracy, because they depict the follies and foibles of the leisure class and have no revolutionary message. The art which Sinclair praises are those works that are obviously propagandistic: Shelley's "The Necessity for Atheism" and Milton's "On the Late Massacre in Piedmont."

[102] Sinclair, *Mammonart: An Essay in Economic Interpretation*, 1925, 8.

In refuting the second great lie, Sinclair maintains that art is never elitist. Great art, he argues, has always been popular art. Because, however, the artists Sinclair castigates are often far more significant and critically acclaimed that those he praises, his refutation is weak.

Many of the popular writer's praises such as Emile Verhaeren and George Sterling are clearly second rate. The fallacy inherent in Sinclair's refutation is that while one can concede that great art is usually popular art, popularity is not a reliable criterion for evaluating great art.

Sinclair refutes the third great lie by alleging that rebel artists (that is, those concerned with the class struggle) forge their own techniques and do not rely on older artistic models or tradition. Furthermore, he contends, present-day techniques are "far and far superior to the techniques of any art period preceding."[103] Because Sinclair gives no examples of either old versus new techniques or radical versus traditional techniques, his refutation of the third lie is inadequate. In fact, throughout Mamrnonart, there is no discussion of artistic form or technique of any kind. Because Sinclair has little interest in the aesthetic dimensions of an art work, he usually rests his case on an explication of the life of the artist rather than on an evaluation of the artistic form the artist creates. Sinclair's discussion of Beethoven, for example, is almost solely concerned with Beethoven's life. Sinclair does not analyze Beethoven's music other than to call it "overwhelmingly ethical…"[104]

The fourth great lie, that art is escapist, Sinclair refutes by asserting that the function of any art is to alter reality, to disprove falsehoods, to help racial progress.[105] Art, to Sinclair, cannot be escapism because art by its nature interprets reality. Even what one might conceive of as escapist literature the novels by Richard Harding Davis, for example is not escapist at all but, for Sinclair, ruling class glorification because such

[103] Ibid, 9.
[104] Ibid, 154.
[105] Ibid, 71.

novels do not threaten the capitalist system but, rather, reinforce capitalist values and concepts. The poor but respectable hero of a typical Davis novel, Sinclair explains, solves his working-class problems not by rebelling against his plutocratic exploiters, but by marrying his boss's daughter. For Sinclair, such solutions are not solutions at all but are triumphs of capitalism. The solution to the problems of working-class people, he alleges, is not to transform themselves into capitalists.

Sinclair contradicts the fifth great lie by arguing that all art serves an essential moral function because all art strives to rally humanity to do what is just, humane and wise. To condense Sinclair's refutation further, Sinclair argues that all art deals with moral questions because, to Sinclair, there are no other questions.

Sinclair refutes the sixth great lie that art excludes propaganda by declaring that all art is universally and inescapably propaganda whether or not the artist is conscious of the propaganda he has created. All art, for Sinclair, systematically communicates an opinion, idea or emotion to an audience. Furthermore, he continues, this communication, "becomes the dominant motive in art, and is the determining factor in the greatness of art."[106]

Any distinction between art and propaganda, Sinclair explains, is "a purely class distinction and a class weapon, itself a piece of ruling class propaganda, a means of duping the minds of men, and keeping them enslaved to false standards both of art and life."[107] Sinclair defines great art as that which occurs "when propaganda of vitality and importance is put across with technical competence in terms of the art selected."[108] Sinclair does not prove these contentions; he assumes his stipulated definitions are self-evident and then proceeds to either praise or chastise Western art in terms of his definition.

[106] Ibid, 11.
[107] Ibid, 108.
[108] Ibid, 10.

In the concluding chapter of Mammonart, Sinclair defends the book as a textbook of culture to be used after the collapse of the capitalist system. Mammonart, he prophesies, will be used as a textbook in the high schools of Russia within six months and eventually in every country of Europe "as soon as the social revolution comes. The workers, taking power, bring a new psychology and a new ethic; naturally, they have to have a new art and new art standards."[109] Sinclair predicts Mammonart will help to provide both the new canons of art and the new canons of ethics.

Because Sinclair ignores artistic form, structure and aesthetic dimensions, one could easily argue that Mammonart, rather than serving as a textbook of culture is, in reality, a pretense of artistic criticism. Indeed, Sinclair concedes that many of his critics will judge it so because, to Sinclair, critics, like artists, are also part of the capitalist conspiracy and the class lie.[110] Sinclair explains that in any society dominated by systems of greed and commercial competition, literary criticism becomes a trade lie and "used as weapons in the war of the classes."[111]

Under a socialist form of government, on the other hand, the artist, according to Sinclair, would be able to not only make works of inspired art but would also be able at the same time to make a new world. Artists under socialism would be able to "make new souls moved by a new ideal of fellowship, a new impulse of love and faith not merely hope, but determination."[112] Believing himself to be living through the last days of the capitalist era, Sinclair argues that the present task to which artists should dedicate themselves is that of iconoclasts and prophets, purging the dying world of falsehoods while at the same time helping to ushering the new socialist world of sanity:

> Here lies your task, young comrade, here is your future and not the timid service or convention, the million times over repetition of ancient lies, the endless copying of copies of folly and cruelty and greed. The artists of our time are like men

[109] Ibid, 384.
[110] Ibid, 24 and, 190.
[111] Ibid, 24-25.
[112] Ibid, 386.

> hypnotized, repeating over and over a dreary formula of futility. And I say: Break this evil spell, young comrade, go out and meet the new dawning life, take your part in the battle, and put it into new art, do this service for a new public, which you yourselves will make. [113]

While Mammonart, like the other volumes of The Dead Hand series, is a swarm of controversies and uncorroborated proclamations, Sinclair is nonetheless to be credited with being one of the first to recognize the inherent communicative function of art. That is, Sinclair recognizes that art is value laden and to be an artist means to communicate values. Furthermore, Sinclair's Mammonart systematically documents the impact of economic and social conditions on artistic achievement. It was not until 1971, when Jonah Raskin's Mythology of Imperialism was published that a similar radical examination of the artist and his relationship to society would appear.[114]

II. 5. Money Writes!

Money Writes! published in 1927, is the concluding volume in The Dead Hand series. In this last volume of the series, Sinclair returns to the subject he was most familiar with, current American literature. Sinclair wrote Money Writes! "To show the forces which make present-day American literature the unwholesome thing it is, and these forces are political and economic."[115] Because of the environment brought about by political and economic forces, he argues, most contemporary American writers are pessimistic and degenerate. They live in a world, he continues, "from which truth telling and heroism have been banished by official decree, and there is nothing left but to jeer and die."[116]

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[113] Ibid.
[114] Jonah Raskin, *The Mythology of Imperialism: Rudyard Kipling, Joseph Conrad, E. M. Forster, D. H. Lawrence, and Joyce Cary* (New York: Random House, 1971).. Raksin's book, like Sinclair's *Mammonart*, attempts to describe the role of the artist in relation to social and economic forces. Raskin, however, confines his book to an analysis of the origins of the modern British literary tradition as seen through the works of Rudyard Kipling, Joseph Gohrad, E. M. Forster, D. H. Lawrence and Joyce Cary.
[115] Upton Sinclair, *Mammonart: An Essay in Economic Interpretation*, 1975, 28.
[116] Ibid.

Sinclair, however, chose to do neither. In two hundred twenty-three pages, Sinclair castigates the dryness and lifelessness of American literature caused by the fact that writers have to live in a world where artistic merit is measured in terms of commercial success. The present-day capitalist system, Sinclair contends, produces "a social environment in which the sensitive young writer finds a hundred good reasons for respecting the sanctity of privilege, and a thousand for looking down upon crude and noise malcontents those writers who acquire the leisure class manner are lifted up to prominence, while those who fail in the tests of gentility are put to selling insurance or digging the ground."[117] As is the case in the other volumes of The Dead Hand series, the great enemy is Wall Street capitalism.

Moreover, Sinclair further contends that because of the influence of Wall Street, no one is allowed to diagnose the evils of capitalism. "No one who understands economic inequality as a cause of social and individual degeneration," writes Sinclair, "is permitted to hold any responsible post in capitalist society, and so it comes about that muddlement is the ideal of our intellectuals."[118]

Sinclair allegorizes The System by recounting the fable of the little fishes who complained of the ravenous pike. The pike, according to Sinclair, held a conference and decided the little fishes were justified. Consequently, the pike declared that every year, two little fishes would be allowed to become pike. "That most charming fable," Sinclair writes, "tells me all I need to know about the moral code of my country."[119]

Like the other volumes of The Dead Hand series, Money Writes! contains many loose inferences and questionable analyses. It is difficult for the reader to believe that all the problems Sinclair cites are caused by the influences of Wall Street. Throughout The Dead Hand series, Sinclair alleges that capitalism causes not only drunkenness, prostitute journalism, debauchery of all descriptions but also, the uninspired products of the

[117] Ibid, 34.
[118] Ibid, 122.
[119] Ibid, 13.

Saturday Evening and the Cosmopolitan, the vagaries of Amy Lowell's poetry, the muddlement of Sherwood Anderson's novels, the lubricity of James Branch Cabell's novels, the banalities of Joseph Hergesheimer's novels, and H. L. Mencken's inordinate interest in alcohol. There are few contemporary writers Sinclair praises. Among them are Frank Norris, Theodore Dreiser, Jack London, David Graham Phillips and himself, such writers, he asserts, are commendable because they have a social conscience and determinedly work to undermine the strongholds of capitalism.

While Sinclair expends most of his energies chastising modern American novelists, poets fare no better than novelists. Modern American poetry, he explains, is a center of unintelligibility and confusion. Good poetry (that is, poetry that can serve as a weapon in the battle for social justice) is clear and readily understandable. Thus, Sinclair's principal criterion for judging poetry is "that it shall lie within the limits of my understanding, if it does not, I leave it form subtler critics."[120] This statement reveals Sinclair's honesty as well as his limits as a literary critic. His criticism is admittedly not subtle.

Amy Lowell was the object of a particularly vicious attack. Coming from a long line of Boston Brahmins, Sinclair explains, Amy Lowell had to find some vehicle for distinguishing herself. She was, in Sinclair's opinion, unattractive, stout and crippled. Consequently, Amy Lowell could not distinguish herself as a socialite and could only gain prominence by writing poetry. To Sinclair, there is little doubt that Amy Lowell bought her literary position. Had she not been a Lowell and, more important, had she not been wealthy, Sinclair asserts that her poetry would have been relegated to the dustbin. "Reading her stuff in the magazines," he writes, "I would find myself exclaiming. This woman must live in a junk shop! Chinese vases and Japanese prints, Arabian shawls and Persian carpets, pearls from Ceylon and ivory from Africa all these things are the regulation stuff of poets, but with Amy they became the whole of existence, her poetry is a jumble of metaphors and allusions to articles of merchandise."[121]

[120] Ibid, 197.
[121] Ibid, 144.

Though he had a low opinion of Amy Lowell's poetry, Sinclair praises his wife's poetical gifts. Mary Craig Sinclair's poetry, according to Sinclair, is easily intelligible, the meaning is clear and unequivocal and it has no obscure references or "intricacies to be disentangled."[122] Furthermore, Sinclair maintains that, like all great poetry, Mary Craig Sinclair's poetry deals with everyday realities. While the arcane Amy Lowells of the world are not acquainted with Mary Craig Sinclair's poetry, Sinclair explains that his wife's collection of poetry, Sonnets of M.C.S., published in a pamphlet and selling for twenty-five cents a copy, has been the comfort and consolation of workers in sweatshops and in jails all over the world.[123]

In Money Writes! however, the literary critic fares better than either the poet or the novelist. Although Sinclair believes that the literary critic has the potential armaments and antitoxins to counteract the forces of capitalist hypocrisy and greed, to do so means that the critic must develop a double standard of criticism. One standard is used when the critic is speaking to his peers, the other when the critic is earning a living and thus forced to write what his paymasters, the capitalists, require him to write.[124] Sinclair treats critics sympathetically. Sinclair further argues that, because of the existence of a double standard of criticism, many critics favorably disposed to his works must either ignore them or condemn them in public because they would lose their jobs if they did otherwise.

Sinclair concludes Money Writes! with an appeal to young writers to cast off the "old egocentric psychology of our predatory world" and identify themselves with "the real ideals of the awakening industrial democracy." Exhorting like a modern John the Baptist, Sinclair declares that the social revolution is upon us and cannot be ignored. "Look at the modern world for yourself," he advises the young writer, "study the class struggle, the key to the whole of our epoch and speak for humanity, and for the future, not for parasites and plunderers, however beautifully decked out in conventions and sentimentality of their own invention."[125]

[122] Ibid, 146-151.
[123] Ibid, 148.
[124] Ibid, 217.
[125] Ibid, 223.

No matter how dry the present artistic environment is, Sinclair explains, the forces of a new, vital art cannot be suppressed. Sinclair is fond of conjuring up a vision of the soon-to-be perceptible industrial democracy based on social justice:

> There is a happier day coming, when an enlightened community will foster vital art, and writer may speak the truth without fear of boycotts and extinction. I do not attempt to deal with that day, which seems so far off and dim to our clouded vision. Ours is the time of pain and sacrifice when the honest man's reward is the inner knowledge of a service rendered to the race. It is a time of knavery enthroned and buncombe and triviality set up in the seats of glory. But the movement for social justice is organizing itself and acquiring power, it has its champions in every civilized land including the greatest of artists, I think we shall not have to wait many decades in America for the coming of literature based upon social optimism and constructive social vision.[126]

Although The Dead Hand series contains many impressive generalizations, a frequent absence of critical analysis and often a refuge in the future tense, Sinclair nevertheless provides enough evidence that much needs to be done. Regardless of its shortcomings, the series vividly describes the impact of economic and social conditions upon American life.

The Dead Hand series further demonstrates Sinclair's faith that the future will not only vindicate his arguments but substantiate his prophecies. Because of this faith, Sinclair avoids the necessity of working out any expedient political strategies. Rather, Sinclair prefers to preserve the purity of his inspirations unsullied by practical matters. Sinclair strongly implies that prophets such as himself are usually scorned in their own land. They must content themselves with the "inner knowledge of a service rendered to the race." Sinclair is fond of Goethe's admonition: the heavenly powers are revealed only to those who have eaten their bread with tears.

[126] Ibid.

The Dead Hand series, above all else, demonstrates Sinclair's messianic impulses coupled with epic indignation. Always ready to assault the plutocracy, Sinclair's crusading fervor is never more apparent. To argue, as Sinclair does, that so many social and economic problems are due to one cause gives Sinclair the appearance of hopeless naive, the almost insurmountable problems enumerated by Sinclair are of such mag it de I that it is not realistic to expect them to be solved by the simplified solutions and nostrums Sinclair offers. As a consequence, Sinclair's arguments in The Dead Hand series are easily deflected, his topics are too broad, his scope so panoramic that often only a casual analysis, a fleeting vignette of the problem emerges. As one critic of the series observed, an indictment loses its force when it becomes indiscriminate and general.[127]

Furthermore, Sinclair's arguments are easily deflated. His febrile nature causes him to argue only in superlatives and facile generalities. Thus, capitalism for Sinclair is the worst possible economic system, socialism the best. organized religion, the press, education, art and artists all become extensions of capitalist influence and consequently social malignancies eating out the heart of American culture. In addition, the nature of the antagonists, "capitalism," "Wall Street," "plutocracy," versus "socialism," "workers," and "brotherhood" become amorphous abstractions. Clearly, as many critics of The Dead Hand series contend,[128] Sinclair lacks proportion, gradation and specificity. His tendency to view the world as a battleground of monumental forces causes him to create conflicts of Manichean proportions, of irreconcilable struggles between the forces of light and the forces of darkness, God and Satan, the spirit and mammon.

After reading The Dead Hand series, one is immediately struck with the absolute hopelessness of the struggle. According to Sinclair, American plutocratic forces had corrupted every major social institution. Elections were bought, legislatures were bribed, clergymen were robbers, children were consistently lied to, falsehoods were published,

[127] H.L. Stuart, review of "The Goose-step by Upton Sinclair", *The Freeman*, VII, June 13, 1923, 332.
[128] Most of Sinclair's critics viewed The Dead Hand series with at least some reservations. While most critics acknowledged that Sinclair was a sincere and often courageous writer, the most common criticism of the series was its unscholarly nature.

democratic laws and ideals were defied at every opportunity. If Sinclair's central preoccupation is correct that a vast, insidious, capitalist conspiracy exists in order to perpetrate such heinous acts one can only marvel at the fact that the excessively optimistic Sinclair could believe the masses of oppressed people could be capable of any action at all.

The Dead Hand series leads one to conclude, to restate Samuel Johnson, that the typical American in the 1920s was like a dog dancing on his hind legs: it is not that he does it badly but remarkable he can do it at all. The mystery, therefore, is not how democratic rights and principles have been subverted but how Sinclair, after so long an arraignment, can believe that remnants of them have managed to survive.

One would think that after so sustained an indictment of American institutions, Sinclair would have advocated rather drastic measures. However, because he believes in converting rather than subverting the capitalist enemy, Sinclair never advises the American worker to revolt against his capitalist oppressors. Though offering some practical advice such as unionization in the journalism and educational professions and the founding of a new newspaper, The National News (rather mild prescriptions considering the magnitude of the apparent disease), Sinclair substitutes faith and exhortations for direct action. While excoriating the plutocracy, Sinclair is convinced that, once the capitalists see the humaneness of socialism and the horrors created by capitalism, they would not only relinquish their political and economic control but help usher in the cooperative commonwealth. If the capitalist only saw the truth, Sinclair contends, he would repent and rebel against the very system that created him.

In addition, Sinclair is certain that, not only would the plutocratic capitalists allow regulations to be passed that threatened their superior position, but that the forces of capitalism and the forces of socialism are on a collision course, with socialism the ultimate victor. Like Henry George, Edward Bellamy and the leaders of nineteenth-century reform, Upton Sinclair carried what Howard Mumford Jones calls a utopia in his

head.[129] From 1900 onward, every protest Sinclair made was against the entire establishment and every prophecy predicted the collapse of capitalism followed by a communal utopia ultimately achieved by reform and evolution.

Socialism, for Sinclair, was a boundless dream in which capitalism and all its nefarious manifestations were temporary irritations soon to be transcended. According to Sinclair, the nightmare of capitalism will inevitably degenerate into senescence, impotence, and failure. Under a capitalist system, Sinclair argued, economic power is concentrated in fewer and fewer hands. Unlike socialism, capitalism depends on profits, so wage earners are denied the full benefit of their labor. Unable to purchase the products of their labor, Sinclair continued, wage earners inevitably overproduce.

Depressions and unemployment are inevitable, Sinclair asserts, and they create large, politically self-conscious working class. The working class, he assumed, would agitate for the socialist movement. Since the number of wage earners always capitalists, the politically active working class would usher in socialism by voting for the socialism by voting for the Socialist Party. Thus, he argued, capitalism could be brought to its knees by the moral fervor of socialism and voted out of office at the next election.

Sinclair's belief in the ultimate collapse of capitalism was indestructible. As late as 1939, Sinclair argued that "there is only one devil loose in the world today and that is the system of exploiting human labor, of producing the necessities of life for the profits of private owners. There is only one angel to proclaim peace on earth and good will to men, and that is the system of cooperation, of production for use."[130] In 1940, Sinclair still clung to his belief. The collapse of capitalism, Sinclair writes, "is the ripening of the fruit which drops from the tree."[131]

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[129] Howard Mumford Jones, *The Age of Energy: Varieties of American Experience, 1865-1915* (New York: Viking Press, 1971), xi.
[130] Upton Sinclair, Telling the World. (London: T. Werner Laurie, 1939), 43.
[131] Upton Sinclair, Is the American Form of Capitalism Essential to the American Form of Democracy? (A debate with George Sokolsky, January 15, 1940), (Girard, Kansas: Haldeman-Julius Publications, 1940), 43.

Partly because Sinclair perceived the conflict between socialism and capitalism as inevitable and irreconcilable, much of Sinclair's discourse is not amenable to traditional methods of rhetorical analysis. Traditional methods of rhetorical investigation presume that the subjects and premises of rhetorical discourse present audiences with alternatives and contingencies. Historically, rhetoric has been conceived of as an instrument by which a rhetor makes adjustments to a particular situation composed of himself, his audience, his subject and the occasion. Furthermore, as Thomson, Baird and Braden contend, rhetoric, "functions only where uncertainty prevails. If there were no doubt about the wisdom of certain courses of action or about the measurement of right and wrong if decisions could be arrived at with reasonable finality and certainty, there would be no need for an art of persuasion. It would serve no useful purpose. Demonstrations would suffice."[132]

Thonssen, Baird and Braden further argue that the rhetorical setting subsists on doubt and the unsure. Persuasion goes to work, they claim, "when man must make decisions on admittedly inadequate, imprecise data."[133] It is because Sinclair assumes that the conflict between socialism and capitalism is both inevitable as well as irreconcilable that much of his discourse defies traditional methods of rhetorical investigation.

Additionally, traditional methods of rhetorical analysis do not illuminate the discourse for several reasons: Sinclair's premises are stereotyped, his arguments not tightly constructed and often assumed to be self-evident, his evidence almost entirely ethical. Because Sinclair claims never to have told a lie and had never been convicted of libel, his readers have no other choice but to accept Sinclair at his word. In, The Brass Check, Sinclair writes, "I wish the reader to understand that the incidents happened as I say they happened, and that upon the truth of every statement I pledge my honor as a man and my reputation as a writer."[134]

[132] Lester Thonssen, Albert Craig Baird, and Waldo Warder Braden, *Speech Criticism*, 1981, 18.
[133] Ibid, 8.
[134] Sinclair, *The Brass Check: A Study of American Journalism*, 10.

Furthermore, it is not enough, as some critics have done, to criticize Sinclair as a great simplifier, a virulent propagandist, a naive eccentric.[135] One must admit, on the other hand, that it is far too easy to dismiss Sinclair as a lunatic. Such judgments neither illuminate nor explain the corpus of the discourse.

Given the nonconventional nature of Sinclair's writings, the filters of traditional rhetorical analysis are not illuminating. Their use as critical tools do not seem productive. As an alternative to traditional rhetorical criticism, this chapter is concerned with the analysis of the rhetorical characteristics of the discourse through the examination of the major of the discourse by examining the major devices Sinclair uses to connect the rhetor with the audience. In addition, this chapter argues that Sinclair's socialist philosophy grew out of and was reflected in the rhetorical strategies Sinclair used to find common ground with his audience.

Sinclair once claimed that the sole purpose of his intellectual life could be summed up in Virgil's dictum: "Happy is he who has learned the causes of things." Sinclair's analysis of the nature of things convinced him of three uncompromising philosophical premises, which he doggedly tenaciously defended. First, Sinclair was convinced that although the capitalist was vile, profligate, and reprehensible, he was nevertheless correctable that personal regeneration was always possible. Second, Sinclair firmly believed that exposing the iniquities of capitalism would hasten its demise. The American people, once informed of capitalism would immediately take up the crusade for reform. Such an outraged public, Sinclair believed, would immediately rebuild society on a more equitable basis. Third, Sinclair was convinced that he was living in the interregnum, the world, he believed, was hurtling toward economic and social Armageddon.

[135] Van Wyck Brooks, *Emerson and Others* (Octagon Press, Limited, 1973), 209-17., and Carl Van Doren, *Contemporary American Novelists 1900-1920 (Classic Reprint)* (Forgotten Books, 2018), 65-74.

Capitalism, because of its internal contradictions, historically destined to collapse, leaving behind, Sinclair predicted, a regenerated socialist millennium. These three philosophical premises were the source of both Sinclair's zeal and his zeal as well as the source of his frustration. Sinclair defended his premises while being imprisoned by them.

Sinclair's rhetorical strategies express these premises and are extensions of them. The Dead Hand series is Sinclair's verbal enactment of his philosophy. Because Sinclair would neither alter nor surrender his philosophical convictions, his rhetorical choices were inalterable and inescapable.

Because Sinclair believed that even the most reprobate captain of industry could be salvaged by the socialist homily, Sinclair's discourse is hortatory and contemplative rather than political or active. What gives the series its elan is Sinclair's moral indignation and his evangelical promise of a better world. In The Dead Hand series, Sinclair emerges as a preacher who, while hating the sin still loves the sinner.

Consequently, because of Sinclair's faith in regeneration, his rhetorical framework is theological and contemplative. Instead of urging the workers to rebel, Sinclair exhorts the capitalist to repent. "I do not hate one living being," Sinclair writes, "the people I have lashed... are to me not individuals but social forces."[136] All Sinclair asks of the rich is that "they turn traitor to their class and serve the general welfare. Not one in a hundred can conceive of doing this, and not one in a thousand has the courage to act on the idea; but at least I give them the chance."[137]

Not only did Sinclair believe that the ruthless capitalist could be purged of his ugliness, but second, Sinclair believed that an aroused American public would willingly and happily assume the withered mantle of the muckraker. Sinclair had an unshakable faith in the people's ability to diagnose and cure national ills. By 1918, it was obvious even to Sinclair that the impulse for popular reform had long since subsided had long

[136] Sinclair, *The Brass Check: A Study of American Journalism*, 10.
[137] Sinclair, *The Goslings: A Study of the American Schools*, 2013, 216.

since subsided. Nevertheless, Sinclair could not countenance the possibility that the American people, knowing the truth about capitalism, would not immediately agitate for reform.

He further asserted that the era of the muckrakers which brought about a tumultuous of reform was systematically and deliberately brought to a halt by the forces of capitalism. Sinclair recalls that as a young enthusiast of the muckraking period it seemed like the dragon of big business was going to devour itself. "But, alas," Sinclair relates, "a dragon does not swallow very much of his own tail before it begins to hurt. Big business rallied and organized itself, and the Wall Street Banks got to work… Suffice it to say that every magazine in the United States that was publishing any statements injurious to big business was either bought up, or driven into bankruptcy, and 'the muckraking era' passed into unwritten history."[138]

Thus, Sinclair argues, the interests attacked by the muckrakers were so powerful that they effectively silenced popular dissent. For Sinclair to argue otherwise would be to abandon his belief in the ability of the American people to effect social reform.

Faith in a dehumanized capitalist conspiracy against the truth not only reinforced Sinclair's philosophical convictions but it also insulated him from any critical or disturbing analysis. For example, while Sinclair incessantly indicts "Big Business," he never explains how "Big Business" could possibly control and manipulate such varied institutions as churches, newspapers, schools, colleges, universities, and artistic achievements. Nor does Sinclair differentiate giant corporations from small businesses: presumably, a small factory in Montana is not operated in the same way as a giant corporation in New York. Sinclair sees no differences: Wall Street capitalism is depicted as monolithic, uniform, rigidly controlled and international.

[138] Sinclair, Money Writes! 25. It should be noted that C.C. Regier, a critic of the muckraking movement, agrees with Sinclair that there is considerable evidence to show that financial interests did manage to suppress several of the muckraking magazines. See C.C. Regier, The Era of the Muckrakers. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1932), 194-214.

Sometimes Sinclair's conspiracy theory prompts him to defend some unusual hypotheses. For example, the election of Warren G. Harding, one of the most popular American presidents, Sinclair calls "a conspiracy to loot the oil reserves of the United States Navy, as carefully planned and as definitely criminal as any pirate raid."[139]

Sinclair could not admit that the American people freely chose Harding. Nor could Sinclair fail to find a sinister motive for collegiate athletics, calling them "a monstrous cancer, which is rapidly eating out the moral and intellectual life of our educational institutions,"[140] by deliberately diverting students' attention away from academic pursuits.

Sinclair not only believed in the regeneration of the plutocrat by sending him to the mourner's bench and in the ability of the American people to become agents for social change but, thirdly, Sinclair believed in the inevitable and imminent collapse of the capitalism system. Now, everywhere, Sinclair saw the social revolution coming. When the power of exploitation is broken, that is, when capitalism disintegrates, "we shall see The Dead Hand crumble into dust," he writes Edwin Markham, "as a mummy crumbles when it is exposed to the air."[141]

In refusing to change or abandon his philosophical convictions, Sinclair rejected traditional methods of political action. Historically, social reform has succeeded only when it has been combined with more moderate political forces. Because of his belief in the personal salvation of the enemy, his belief in the ability of the American people to rebuild a sane society once the evils of capitalism are explained to them, and his belief in the inevitable collapse of capitalism, Sinclair could deal in The Dead Hand series only with eminent historical forces operating on the planes of destiny, not with the mechanics and strategies of political activity.

[139] Upton Sinclair, *Money Writes!*, 2012, 62.
[140] Sinclair, *The Goose-Step: A Study of American Education (Classic Reprint)*, 370-71.
[141] Sinclair, *The Profits of Religion*, 295-96.

Upton Sinclair shares the fate of the majority of American socialists, who, as Daniel Bell argues, were incapable of action. Because most of them were prophets rather than politicians, Bell contends, they stood on the mountain like signposts, the socialist prophet "points out but cannot go, for if he did," Bell argues, "no longer would there be a sign. The politician, one might add, carries the sign into the valley with him."[142] Only the sure promise of victory held together the discordant elements of the Socialist Party, Bell continues. Without the victory, the party collapsed. Without the victory, Sinclair shared the same fate: political impotence and isolation.

[142] Daniel Bell, "The Background and Development of Marxian Socialism in the United States," in Hugh T. Lefler, "*Socialism and American Life* Ed. by Donald Drew Egbert, Stow Persons," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 52, no. 1 (January 1, 1953): 302, https://doi.org/10.1215/00382876-52-1-133.

CHAPTER THREE: SINCLAIR APPROACH TO LITERATURE

In an article, entitled "Our Bourgeois Literature - The Reason and the Remedy,"[1] Sinclair explained for the first time his theory of literature. He accused American literature of having no vitality because it was serving the interests of the ruling class. He pointed out:

> there can be no soul life for any man until it is for all ... there can be among us neither political virtue, nor social refinement, nor true religion, nor vital art, so long as men are chained up to toil for us in mines and factories and sweatshops, are penned up in filthy slums, and fed upon offal, and doomed to rot and perish in soul-sickening misery and horror.[2]

In his view there was a determinist relationship between literature and society: "The literature of any civilization is simply the index and mirror of that civilization."[3] In terms of the interrelationship between literature and society, the radical novelist, he believed, should be concerned with the class conflict which had become such a dominant issue of modern civilization. "To me," Sinclair wrote in his Autobiography, "literature was a weapon in the class struggle of the master class to hold its servants down, and of the working-class to break its bonds." [4]

What literature really needed to represent, Sinclair argues, is the hunger, misery, and squalor of working-class life upon which the heartless accumulation of capital rested. Art had to address itself to the material problems which men faced in their daily lives, not avoid them. To Sinclair, as Robert Morss Lovett in his article, "Upton Sinclair," points out, "fiction represents the greatest engine for social work."[5]

[1] Sinclair, "Our Bourgeois Literature: The Reason and the Remedy." Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Co. / Pocket Library of Socialism No 43, 1905.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Sinclair, *Autobiography*, 91.
[5] Robert Morss Lovett, "Upton Sinclair," *The English Journal* Vol. 17, No. 9 (November 1928), 708.

In Mammonart, Sinclair surveys the relationship between the artist and society, arguing that successful artists have historically been those who aggrandize and extol the virtues of the ruling classes.[6] He contends that "the psychology of the artist and his art are inevitably determined by the economic forces of his time and so established artists of any period are in sympathy with its ruling classes of that period, and voicing their interests and ideals".[7] In this contention, Sinclair overemphasizes the economic factor and understates the role of reciprocal interaction. A writer is not only influenced by society, he influences it.

There are so many cases of established writers who have rebelled against the ruling class. Many radical writers came from a bourgeois background and put themselves at the service of another class. Since Sinclair examines the artistic achievement from the perspective of the class struggle, he describes art works as being either "instruments of propaganda and repression employed by the ruling class of the community; or as weapons of attack, utilized by new classes rising in power."[8] But even these rebel artists engage in propaganda when they use art as "weapons of attack." The only difference is in the aim of the propaganda.

Early in Mammonart, Sinclair sets forth what he calls the "six great art lies" concerning what art is and what art should be: (1) that art exists for its own sake, (2) that art is esoteric and outside the grasp of the masses, (3) that new artists must follow old traditions, (4) that the purpose of art is entertainment and diversion, an escape from reality, (5) that art is amoral, and (6) that art excludes propaganda.[9]

In his refutation of these "great lies" Sinclair's revolutionary socialist criticism is obvious. In contradiction to what he believes constitutes in large measure a bourgeois conception of art, he expounds his own conception which is compatible with the doctrine of socialist realism. He shows himself interested primarily in the social role and obligations of literature. Hence, his definition of art as being "a representation of life,

[6] Sinclair, *Mammonart: An Essay in Economic Interpretation*, 1975, 7.
[7] Ibid, 21.
[8] Ibid, 8.
[9] Ibid, 9.

modified by the personality of the artist, for the purpose of modifying other personalities, inciting them to changes of feeling, belief and action."[10]

His definition of art is no doubt exemplified in the fictional and nonfictional works of Sinclair, the purpose of which is to expose the injustices of capitalism and to promote socialism. It is improbable that Sinclair would have been satisfied with this utilitarian definition of art in a nation where socialist goals have been fully realized or for inciting changes other than to socialist views.

In refuting the lie that art exists for its own sake, Sinclair explains that art, unless it is decadent, never exists for its own sake; it rallies support for an idea or a course of action.[11] This argument is, of course, not unique to socialists. Many western artists and critics share Sinclair's view that art does not exist for its own sake. However, that art should rally support for any specific, restricted doctrine or program, they will consider beyond the realm of art. The plays of Aristophanes and the works of Oscar Wilde Sinclair call decadent art symptomatic of social degeneracy, because they depict the follies and foibles of the leisure class and have no revolutionary message.

The art Sinclair praises are those works that are obviously propagandistic, such as Milton's "On the Late Massacre in Piedmont" and Shelley's "The Necessity for Atheism." This conception of the function of art with its emphasis on propaganda forms the raison d'être of practically all Sinclair's writing. With regard to this notion that art has an overt, social function, the comments of John M. Ellis are pertinent. "The central contrast of this dispute … that between art existing for its own sake, on the one hand, and having some useful relation to life on the other," he says, "is evidently misconceived".[12] In his opinion, the contrast between the two views:

> simply relate to two different levels of analysis… In maintaining that art should not have an overt, direct purpose, "aesthetes" have failed to think about

[10] Ibid, 10.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid, 240.

> the function of literature in our lives; it is indeed correct to reject any overt purpose for literature, but an error to think that, because of this, literature has no important social function. Meanwhile, the antiesthetic is right to insist on a social function for literature but quite wrong to deny that the experience of literature is for the reader its own immediate justification; this error leads him into the even greater error of conceiving the function of literature in terms of overt purpose.[13]

After his embrace of socialism, the romanticism and idealism of his previous writings, with their emphasis on personal reform, gave way to the more future-oriented socialist variant of realism with its emphasis on collective political action. No longer content to give a description of what is, his realism was extended to a prescription of what ought to be, it was realism unequivocally oriented towards socialism. In explaining the difference between the descriptive, classical concept of realism (in Marxist terminology "critical realism") that has traditionally been preferred by western writers and the concept of realism that is future-oriented and known as socialist realism, George Bisztray offers some illuminating comments. He says:

> a definition of realism which adopts this is perspective appears as relatively objective, and consequently free from programs, utopias, or personal biases. Ought to be, on the other hand, supposedly means an historical approach to things … extending to all three dimensions of time, and not simply the present. Also, moralism, program (if not a vision of the future), and subjectivity are inseparable from this criterion.[14]

Though the term socialist realism is a Soviet invention, it is not a completely new literary concept. According to Bisztray there are two theories of socialist realism: "the one is that socialist realism is a completely new phenomenon which came after the victory of the October Revolution; the other is that socialist realism is an organic offshoot of an

[13] Ibid.
[14] Bisztray, *Marxist Models of Literary Realism*, 51.

all-European intellectual development and, therefore, has precedents in the Western tradition."[15]

With reference to the second lie that art is esoteric, Sinclair argues that art is never elitist and that great art has always been popular art. The artists that Sinclair castigates are often far more significant and critically acclaimed than those whom he praises. The fallacy inherent in Sinclair's refutation is that while one can concede that great art is usually popular art, popularity is not always a reliable criterion for evaluating great art. In The Theory of Literary Criticism, John M. Ellis acknowledges that "probably no area of theory of literature has received more attention than that of evaluation of literary works. The search for criteria has been going on for a long time, but without any results that all sides agree to be successful."[16]

Regarding the third lie, that new artists must follow old models or traditions; Sinclair argues that rebel artists follow their own techniques. He contends that present-day techniques are "far and away superior to the techniques of any art period preceding."[17] In the absence of any examples of either old versus new techniques or radical versus traditional techniques, his refutation on this point seems to be inadequate.

Throughout Mammonart there is no discussion of artistic form or technique. Because he has little interest in the aesthetic dimensions of art work, he usually rests his case on an explication of the life of- the artist rather than on an evaluation of the artistic form the artist creates. This indifference to the aesthetic features of art, D. Brown points out, is consistent with the attitude of the Russians, who, in their adherence to socialist realism, have "been singularly unresponsive to the major trend of emphasis on the study of literary forms and close textual analysis."

[15] Ibid, 52.
[16] John Martin Ellis, *The Theory of Literary Criticism: A Logical Analysis* (Univ of California Press, 1974), 75.
[17] Sinclair, *Mammonart: An Essay in Economic Interpretation*, 1975, 9.

Far from being an escape from reality, the function of art, Sinclair argues, is to alter reality, to controvert falsehoods, to promote human progress. Art, to Sinclair, cannot be escapism because art by its nature interprets reality. Novels that one might consider as being escapist, such as those of Richard Harding Davis, Sinclair claims, are not escapist, at all. He describes such literature as ruling-class glorification because they do not threaten the capitalist system but, rather reinforce capitalist values and concepts.

The fifth "great lie" that Sinclair refutes is that art is amoral. All art, according to Sinclair, serves an essentially moral function because all art strives to rally humanity to what is just, human and wise. Sinclair argues that all art deals with moral questions because for him there are no other questions.[18] The statement that art is amoral does not mean, as Sinclair believes, that art may not have a moral function. The statement merely emphasizes the intermediate position literature holds with regard to moral options. Thus, for a work to qualify as literature, it need not offer any moral imperatives.

Sinclair refutes the sixth great lie "that art excludes propaganda," by simply asserting: "All art is propaganda; sometimes unconsciously, but often deliberately, propaganda."[19] All art, for Sinclair, communicates an opinion, idea or emotion to an audience. Furthermore, this communication, he says, "becomes the dominant motive in art, and is the determining factor in the greatness of art."[20] Any distinction between art and propaganda, Sinclair explains, is "purely a class distinction and a class weapon, itself a piece of ruling-class propaganda, a means of duping the minds of men, and keeping them enslaved to false standards both of art and life."[21] This conception and approach were fully consistent with the aim of Soviet literature as expressed by Andrei Zhdanov, the official Soviet spokesman at the 1934 Congress of the Union of Soviet Writers: "Yes, Soviet literature is tendentious, because our tendency consists in liberating the toilers, the whole of mankind from the yoke of capitalist slavery."[22]

[18] Sinclair, *Mammonart: An Essay in Economic Interpretation*, 1975, 9-10.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid, 11.
[22] Problems of Soviet Literature: Reports and Speeches at the First Soviet Writers' Congress. New York: International Publishers, 1935.

The "tendentiousness" of Soviet literature is, of course, not supported by events either inside or outside the Soviet Union. The notorious Stalinist era and the occupation of Afghanistan were sufficient to show how specious Zhdanov's claim is. The fact that the Kremlin has laid down a political line for the guidance of the national literature, and has even imprisoned writers who have refused to tow that line, expose the fraudulent character of the "tendentiousness" of Soviet literature. What Sinclair and adherents of socialist realism overlook is that granted that all art is propaganda, surely all propaganda is not art. In the sense that every artist has an attitude towards life, even if only a negative one, all art admittedly is propaganda.

The artist asks us to share his view of the world. As R. Wellek and A. Warren point out in the Theory of Literature:

> If, however, we stretch propaganda to mean effort whether conscious or not, to influence readers to share one's attitude toward life, then there is plausibility in the contention that all artists are propagandists or should be, … that all sincere, responsible artists are morally obligated to be propagandists.[23]

To Sinclair and other socialists, art only fulfills its function in terms of the doctrines of party propaganda. In their terms, art is merely a vehicle for social agitation. The literature produced by socialists is, therefore, generally little more than scarcely disguised political tracts in which the opinions of the author are substituted for the living actions of human beings. In such literature the author's views always tend to obtrude and the socialist message is preached. Rarely does the message arise from the circumstances and the characters themselves. Because the purpose of the literature is to propagate socialism the author feels he must offer a definitive solution to the social conflicts he portrays.

In the concluding chapter, Sinclair defends Mammonart as a textbook of culture which is to be used after a collapse of the capitalist system. Under a socialist form of government, the artist, Sinclair affirms, would be able to not only make works of inspired

[23] René Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature*, 1993, 35.

art but would also be able at the same time to make a new world. Artists under socialism would be able to "make new souls moved by a new ideal of fellowship, a new impulse of love and faith and not merely hope, but determination." Following Sinclair's argument, if the "souls" are already socialists, the aim to make "new souls" will become obsolete.

Believing himself to be living through the last days of the capitalist epoch, Sinclair argues that the present task to which artists should dedicate themselves is that of iconoclasts and prophets, purging the dying world of falsehoods while at the same time helping to usher in the new socialist world of truth and justice:

> Here lies your task, young comrade; here is your future and not the timid service of convention, the million-times-over repetition of ancient lies, the endless copying of copies of folly and cruelty and greed. The artists of our time are like men hypnotized, repeating over and over a dreamy formula of futility.[24]

At the heart of Sinclair's philosophy of art was social effect: art which was not directed towards social change was largely irrelevant. In his writings, this purpose is often so blatant that critics have generally and justifiably condemned his writing as only propaganda.

To Sinclair, however, art was always, and necessarily propaganda. Since no human art can exist that does not rest on some sort of assumption or attitude towards life on the part of the artist, Sinclair can make out a case. But where propaganda has to perform the function of a socialist tract as it does in virtually all his works, critics are bound to have a quarrel with him.

In his Mammonart, Sinclair defended the thesis that all art is propaganda, and analyzed the world's art in these terms. His defense reveals his moral and political prejudices, and his ineptness to the aesthetic dimensions of art. He ignores the fact that literature, which is ultimately a matter of taste, represents a pluralism of values. In his view, all great works of art have been the work of men passionately convinced of an ideal,

[24] Sinclair, *Mammonart: An Essay in Economic Interpretation*, 386.

anxious to impart it to others, and able to embody it in a competent and convincing artistic form: "Great art is produced. when propaganda of vitality and importance is put across with technical competence in terms of the art selected."[25]

Sinclair's extra-literary bias, of course, will not allow him to accept that great art can ever be produced by men convinced of a capitalist ideal. He asserts that "great art" is produced when propaganda is put across with "technical competence." But what precisely is "technical competence" or a competent artistic form, he does not tell us because, apparently, he does not know. By his attempt to justify his belief that all art is propaganda, Sinclair incurred the damnation of professional critics and academicians. Thus, Alfred Kazin's pertinent comment: "Few writers seemed to write less for the sake of literature, and no writer ever seemed to humiliate the vanity of literature so deeply by his many incursions around it".[26]

In his concern with the social effect of his writings, Sinclair was adopting an approach that finds expression in M. H. Abrams' theories of art. Any theory of art, Abrams maintains, has to deal with the relationship regarding the work itself (artifact), the artist, the audience, and the universe. "Although any reasonably adequate theory takes some account of all four elements," he points out, "almost all theories … exhibit a discernible orientation toward one only."[27] From his description, Sinclair falls into the category he calls "pragmatic." This means that as an artist, he "looks at the work chiefly as a means to an end. The central tendency is to derive the norms of the poetic art and canons of critical appraisal from the needs and legitimate demands of the audience."[28]

Because of his preoccupation with the political and moral effect of his writings upon his audience, Sinclair paid scant attention to the aesthetic dimensions of art. Thus, his reliance on a simple and direct style to communicate his message. He believed that the moral righteousness of his ends makes up for any aesthetic failure of his technique.

[25] Ibid, 10.
[26] Kazin, *On Native Grounds: An Interpretation of Modern American Prose Literature*, 10.
[27] Meyer Howard Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 15.
[28] Ibid.

In 1931, a petition signed by a long list of internationally renowned scholars, litterateurs, and statesmen was submitted to the Nobel Prize Committee, nominating Sinclair for the Nobel Prize of Literature. When American professors objected to this nomination, Bernard Shaw, the British playwright, severely assailed them on grounds that appropriately sum up Sinclair's conception of art. Shaw's defense was that the international honor should be awarded to:

> Writers whose positions are so far outstanding that they will be recognized internationally; such positions are not attained by pleasing the professors. They are not purely literary positions: writers who are great pets in literary circles, and perhaps do exquisite literary work, may have no influence on the thought of their time; while rougher talents, exercised forcibly by writers to whom literary graces are not ends in themselves but only bait to catch readers for their ideas, may have just that sort of importance.[29]

The problem of using art to serve ideological purposes has led Irving Howe, a judicious critic of the political novel, to observe:

> The novel deals with sentiments, with passions and emotions; it tries above all, to capture the quality of concrete experiences. Ideology, however, is abstract, as it must be, and therefore likely to be recalcitrant whenever an attempt is made to incorporate it into the novel is stream of sensuous impression. The conflict is inescapable: the novel tries to confront experience in its immediacy and closeness, while ideology is by nature general and inclusive.[30]

Since Sinclair was so determined on exposing the sinister implications of capitalism and motivating an ideological transformation, his writings assume the form of little more than political tracts. Frequently his indictment of the capitalist system is vitiated by his failure to assimilate the material he has accumulated, thereby fusing

[29] Dell, *Upton Sinclair: A Study in Social Protest*, 6.
[30] Irving Howe, *Politics and the Novel* (Ivan R. Dee Publisher, 2002), 20.

concrete experience and ideology. In most of his novels, ideology is artificially introduced, with the result that their artistic impact is lost.

In Money Writes! Sinclair complements the thesis of Mammonart. He wrote Money Writes! "To show the forces which make present-day American literature the unwholesome thing it is; those forces are political and economic."[31] Throughout the book, Sinclair criticizes the lifelessness of American literature caused by the fact that writers have to live in a world where artistic merit is measured in terms of commercial success. The great enemy, according to Sinclair, is Wall Street capitalism.

One of Sinclair's main arguments in Money Writes! as in Mammonart, is that for literature to be great, it must be socialist in principle and deal with nothing much except the class struggle. The only touchstone to which the author brings the works of his fellows for evaluation is whether a writer advances the cause of socialism and the emancipation of the worker. American authors, he asserts, write not what they want or should, but what suits the direct or indirect controllers of the money bags; that is, editors and publishers in the first line, and financiers and industrialists in the second.[32]

The way out to free literature from the pernicious control of capitalism is to establish the cooperative state on the basis of brotherhood. Hence, he says, "fundamentally, the ideals of revolutionary labor are identical with those of the vital creative artists."[33] The only touchstone to which the author brings the works of his fellows for evaluation is: "Does this man or woman advance the cause of socialism and the emancipation of the worker? If not out with him." Sinclair concludes Money Writes! with an appeal to young writers to cast off the "old egocentric psychology of our predatory world" and identify themselves with "the real ideas of the awakening industrial democracy." He advises the young writer to "speak for humanity, and for the future, not for parasites and plunderers, however beautifully decked out in conventions and sentimentalities of their own invention."[34]

[31] Sinclair, *Money Writes!*, 3.
[32] Ibid, 20.
[33] Ibid, 222.
[34] Ibid.

Like Mammonart, Money Writes! contains many loose extrapolations, questionable analyses, and notions of art obviously in conflict with the western tradition. It is hard to believe that all the problems Sinclair cites are caused by the influences of Wall Street. In both works Sinclair shows his failure to recognize that any forces beyond economic are at work in society. As Leon Harris remarks, his "demagogic view on occasion led him to attribute solely to capitalism, as others did and do to the Communists, the Catholics, or an international Jewish conspiracy, some problems that are at least as firmly in the human itself as in any politico-economic system."[35] The problem of greed itself, Sinclair never considers. In neither of the two treatises does Sinclair give any attention to artistic form, structure and aesthetic dimensions. Because of their preoccupation with the moral and propagandistic aspects of art, the two treatises can easily be dismissed as being travesties of artistic criticism.

Essentially in all the books examined in this thesis, Sinclair is the skillful and comprehensive social historian that critics have recognized him to be. His prodigious capacity for assembling masses of factual detail and documentary evidence, and then graphically rendering them in his books, is.an achievement in itself. Whether it is about labor and the Socialist Party in Jimmie Higgins, the slaughtering and meat-packing industry in The Jungle, the petroleum industry in Oil! The Sacco-Vanzetti case in Boston, or the coal-mining industry in King Coal in all these, as in most other works, Sinclair exhibits his remarkable talent for facts. This fidelity to fact has led critics to judge his work simply as historical or social documents, with little or no artistic merit. For most critics, there is a distinction between fact and fiction, a distinction which Sinclair was never willing to observe. However, as Morris Dickstein points out, the situation has changed:

> The social and political ferment of the 1960s gave impetus to literary mutations in the form of the nonfiction novel, the novel as history, the documentary novel, the New Journalism (using fictional techniques), and finally the novels that introduced real historical personages, usually in an ironic vein. Rigid aesthetic demarcations, by which even Sinclair's best was judged impure as fiction, gave

[35] Harris, *Upton Sinclair, American Rebel*, 179.

way before a much greater willingness to mingle factual material and fictional inventions.[36]

These developments in aesthetics underscore the fact, as W.T. Fuller has properly observed, that "there can be no objective, precise, and fully dependable aesthetics; and judgments of art will continue to vary in accordance with the varying standards of the critics."[37] As an artist with a self-appointed mission, what mattered to Sinclair, above all, was the factual material and the message that his work contained. Whatever form was effective to communicate the facts and serve his didactic purpose, he was ready to employ.

By utilizing such forms that only came into fashion decades later, Upton Sinclair proved himself to be an innovator and creative artist. By combining documentary fact, frank opinion, and fiction, the novels of Sinclair affi1iate themselves to fictional forms that have presently acquired critical respect. However, the fact that ideo1ogical content dominates in Sinclair, separates him from those who have effectively executed these newer fictional forms.

In an essay, entitled "Documentary Narrative as Art: William Manchester and Truman Capote," Donald Pizer defines "documentary narrative" as "that kind of prose in which the author creates the impression that he has investigated the circumstances of the actual event and that he can prove the validity of his account of the event."[38] In several of Sinclair's novels, this method is employed to its ultimate. With reference to John Hersey's Hiroshima or Cornelius Ryan's The Longest Day, Pizer comments:

> the choice of documentary narrative as a form seems to reflect the author's belief that the event itself is of such importance that it requires a form which

[36] Upton Sinclair and Morris Dickstein, *The Jungle* (New York; Toronto: Bantam, 1981), XXVII.
[37] Walter Fuller Taylor, *The Economic Novel in America*, 2018.
[38] Pizer, Donald. "Documentary Narrative as Art: William Manchester and Truman Capote." *Journal of Modern Literature* 2, no. 1 (1971): 105-18. http://www.jstor.org/stable/30053177.

intrinsically and immediately demonstrates the authenticity of the writer's account of the event.[39]

This is the reason for Sinclair's reliance on "factual truth." In The Jungle, King Coal, The Coal War, and Boston, documentary fact is given supreme importance in order to demonstrate the authenticity of his account.

In terms of Pizer's definition of documentary narrative art, several of Sinclair's novels presaged this fictional form. Today "the rise of the documentary," as H. Corn observes, "simply reflects some of the developments in other contemporary arts … It is as though artists in all fields have decided that we need to be brought directly into contact with the unvarnished reality surrounding us."[40]

The other forms all bear an intimate relationship with documentary art, judging merely by the definition of the nonfiction novel by William Wiegand: "Non-fiction implies a willingness to be held responsible for the data included as literally factual. The story actually happened. Newspapermen could cover it."[41]

In his books, Sinclair's fidelity to the factual record is clearly evident. By matching the events, people, and places described with selected and colored facts of history, Sinclair's goal is to convince his readers that his interpretation is correct. He believed that this approach would produce what he considered to be great art. In addition to incidents and characters, many scenes and physical backgrounds are created from materials provided by contemporary industrial life. For Sinclair, the novel is to be measured more by its accuracy of observation than by its imaginative grasp of character or motivation. Imaginative effect is sacrificed to historical accuracy and didactic purpose. The main concern of his writing is the external side of society, economics and politics.

[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Wiegand, William. "The Non-fiction Novel." *New Mexico Quarterly* 37, 3 (1967).

Sinclair's unfamiliarity with the aesthetic dimensions of art is evident in the books examined in the following chapters. Sinclair's preoccupation with historical fact affects the texture and tone of his fiction in significant ways. At times, Sinclair can write with great descriptive power and dramatic intensity. In general, however, his style tends to be pedestrian and crude. He seems to be a writer in a hurry. As a result, his writing lacks polish and subtlety. The accurate description of the concrete social milieu takes precedence over the inner definition, so that the characterization tends to be superficial. The characters are not so much created as taken from life or his research. With an emphasis on class analysis, Sinclair's characters are largely determined by social and economic conditions. The primacy of historical fact over art inhibits the free play of the imagination, so that didacticism and moralism take precedence.

The writings of Upton Sinclair examined in the next chapters are held together by a common theme: the injustice of capitalism and the espousal of socialism: in his treatment of this theme, Sinclair shows himself to be less than a doctrinaire socialist and more a person imbued with the ideal of restoring American democracy as it was conceived by its founders. In moral terms, the ideal, for Sinclair, embodies "justice, brotherhood, wisdom." In Mammonart, Sinclair says: "The only permanent factors are the permanent needs of humanity, for justice, brotherhood, wisdom; and the arts stand a chance for immortality, to the extent that they serve such ideals."[42] In Sinclair's view, capitalism constituted a violation of American values, had destroyed political democracy, and was responsible for the misery of the working-class. In calling himself a socialist, Sinclair, paradoxically, was merely reaffirming his faith in the democratic tradition upon which the United States was founded.

Sinclair's obsession with the class struggle reflects his concern with the preservation of the moral health and stability of society. In his view, the relentless drive for profits creates excessive wealth for a few while it brings misery to the many. This in turn leads to the moral decay of society. In all his writings, Sinclair depicts the interrelationship between poverty and immorality. To alleviate the fatigue from overwork and the emotional strain of poverty, traffic in liquor and prostitution occurs. The

[42] Sinclair, *Mammonart: An Essay in Economic Interpretation*, 18.

demoralizing effects of excessive wealth are evident in the depraved and parasitic lives of the rich. Virtually all Sinclair's books illustrate this theme.

In Sinclair's writing, political ideas, events, and discussions are included with the intent to persuade, to change in some way the political views and convictions of the reader. In all his novels examined here, Sinclair is totally committed to a political judgment; a commitment that brings with it the didacticism or dogmatism that is to be expected in a pamphlet or tract. From this perspective, Sinclair's novels may be considered as "hard-core" political literature in which content influences form, style, texture and technique so that they are inseparable from what they are communicating. Hence, the charge that Sinclair's work is propaganda rather than literature is always possible.

Very often in Sinclair's books, ideology takes over; the reader is constantly aware of Sinclair's views. The views of the protagonists are never separated from Sinclair himself. To attack shams, to reveal injustice, to strike at the sanctities of the American bourgeoisie, these are the motive forces behind Sinclair's novels. As a result, the total imaginative effect of the novels is unconvincing. His novels give the sense that they do not fully encompass the complexities and richness of life. Although his novels offer the reader many insights into the abuses in American society, they are seen with a certain flatness. In other words, they cannot be regarded as artistic expression of life.

His criticism is often dulled by his simplistic view of human nature. This weakness is reflected in his presentation of characters that fail to grip the imagination. Although he does not exclude the subjective, he stops short of what Paul West refers to as "the universally mythical as distinct from the socially mythical."[43] "After all," West adds, "the human condition is man's place in Nature, and man's place is to be defined as much in spiritual as in social terms"[44]. Since literature properly makes its appeal to the sensibility, political content should not be isolated from the rest of experience but must be merged

[43] Paul West, *The Modern Novel* (Hutchinson & Co., 1967), 51.
[44] Ibid.

into the creation of complete personalities and the perception of human relations in their physical and sensual immediacy.

Since Sinclair's purpose is to persuade the reader what to think, narrows the novel. His novels, therefore, turn out to be a brief for the working class. As such, his novels very often reveal an irritating simplicity in the characterization. The utter goodness and selflessness of his working or middle-class characters and the baseness and insensitivity of his bourgeois characters reflect a bias more typical of an ideological writer than of a novelist of any great stature, Paul West points out that "the class-conscious person of whatever stratum regards people not as individuals but as types; and his response to individuals outside his own class is inadequate, impaired by shyness or disdain."[45] Too often Sinclair obtrudes too obviously the sharp elbow of ideology by expressing hatred of anything bourgeois.

In virtually all Sinclair's novels, the historical milieu and events are fairly elaborately developed, and important to the central narrative. Several of Sinclair's characters are taken from history. It is this concern to render "factual" truth in his novels that constitutes one of the important merits of his writings. As George Bernard Shaw observed, "offers a comprehensive chronicle of the seminal events of the age."

Because of his concern with history and the use of art more as a means than the end, the greater part of Sinclair's writing is of more interest now to the historian than to the critic. Here the interest is considerable, for however inept his writings may be from an artistic perspective, they reveal a writer who faced up to the very real economic, social, and political problems of his time. As a result of devotion to socialist theories, his novels often show one-sidedness. Yet Sinclair has tried to portray these problems honestly, not through the eyes of the many whose needs and desires the socioeconomic system partially or wholly satisfied, but through the eyes of the many more on whose failure the success and wellbeing of the others rested.

[45] Ibid, 151

The intensity of the effort to record is one of the really impressive features about the books by Sinclair. His use of documentary techniques is part of his attempt to give a detailed and factual picture of working-class life. The detail is used to reveal definite facts about working-class conditions and also to give some indication of working-class values. The documentary technique is by its detail, seemingly comprehensive, yet in reality it is, of course, selective. This technique of collecting and recording information about the conditions and problems of working-class life, is very close to their solution. It reflects Sinclair's reformist aims in his writings.

Though Sinclair's sympathy with the working-class is clearly genuine, it is the middle-class who are the point of reference for all his material. His attempt to impress upon them the nature of working-class life implies that the remedy must lie with the middle-class, that with them is rightfully the power for change.

Except for Jimmie Higgins, the protagonists of all Sinclair's writings are from the middle or upper class and are opposed to the revolutionary struggle. In their commitment to the struggle of the workers, they seek merely an amelioration of the harsh aspects of capitalism. Their address is directed more to the capitalists than to the workers. Their aim is to convert members from their class rather than to prosecute the struggle on a class basis. Thus, the spirit of socialism that Sinclair's books reflect is more reformist than revolutionary. Their conversion to the cause of the workers becomes, in a sense, an example for others from a similar background as theirs. However, their failure to influence a change of heart in any member of their class may be interpreted as Sinclair's way of expressing the hopelessness of a peaceful social change. The bourgeois background of the protagonists compromises their opposition to the capitalist system.

As bourgeois heroes they are somewhat incompatible with the revolutionary thrust of the narrative. Psychologically they continue to identify with the upper class and reflect their author's belief in the democratic electoral process as the proper means of bringing about social reform. Though they empathize with the workers and support them in their struggle, they always have the moral assurance of being able to find refuge in their class.

The standpoint from which they view the predicament of the workers does not derive from the embrace of any revolutionary ideology.

In his writings, Sinclair shows that he was heavily influenced by economic determinism. He sees environment as the primary force in shaping character. However, economic determinism is never absolute. He allows his characters some scope for moral decision. For a time, at least, free-will continues to operate. The pessimism and despair of the miners reflect the influence of environment. Because of Sinclair's general emphasis on economic determinism, his characters are often no more than puppets.

All Sinclair's novels examined in this thesis, form part of a chronicle of contemporary history. By his overriding interest in facts, Sinclair apparently hoped that his readers would accept the narration of events as evidence to support his arguments that America was a long way off from making the American dream a reality. But frequently the material Sinclair has so diligently accumulated is not imaginatively fused with his fictional structure. The nicer shades of characterization and psychological probing are utterly disregarded which explains the absence of emotionally rich and verisimilar characters.

Often Sinclair's views interfere and act as substitutes for the living actions of his characters. Instead of the individual, it is the capitalist institutions and forces, social groupings and trends that form the focus of attention. The social significance of the incidents is far more impressive than the dramatic invention; hence, Sinclair's use of a realistic, factual technique to reinforce his ideological purpose.

In directing his writing toward the regeneration of a social order, Sinclair was clearly radical. But his confidence in American political democracy, his strong religious feeling, his less than rigid adherence to Marxist theory, his reformism, and his hope for a peaceful solution to the class struggle were elements that were incompatible with the dogmatic demands of doctrinaire socialism. These elements in Sinclair's socialism emphasize his pragmatic approach and the indigenous roots of his radicalism.

In his passionate and humanitarian concern for the less privileged member of society and his resolve to use his pen as a means of removing any deficiencies from the social body, this study finds Upton Sinclair not only an eminent critic of American society but an outstanding advocate of values cherished by those committed to social justice and human brotherhood.

As a critic of American society, Upton Sinclair has a significance beyond his artistic weaknesses. In his examination of society, he has singled out the corrupting influences of commercialism and vividly exposed the process of dehumanizing in modern industry that has led to the alienation of the individual from a realistic commitment to his work or his fellow-men. The cry for social justice echoes from the pages of his writings which, far from making him a parochial writer or merely a socialist one, actually gives them a universal appeal.

The Dead Hand series has many flaws, but it remains important reading over time. Current criticism is both glowing and negative. Here are a few prevalent attitudes toward the books and their accuracy. Many purported utopian ideas are impractical simply because they do not take into account the evil component of human nature. Says Leon Harris, "Some problems… are at least as firmly based in the human condition itself as in any politico-economic system"[46] It is true that Sinclair greatly overestimates human nature, believing most people are victims rather than creators of misery. Sinclair shows his failure to recognize that any forces other than the political and economic are at work in society. Sinclair does not believe greed is inevitable which is touching but does make many of his arguments lose ground.

Many have said that the series is marred by excessive propaganda. One of Sinclair's main ideas is that we are surrounded by propaganda which has been condoned by the rulers of industry; it is simply not called propaganda because the word has negative connotations. Soap advertisements, articles in the New York Times and political speeches are propaganda, but one would not dare call them this. Only prohibited information earns the title. In Mammonart, Sinclair says that all art is propaganda; therefore, he admits his

[46] Leon A. Harris, *Upton Sinclair, American Rebel*, 1975, 179.

books are also. One realizes, however, that critics who complain of excessive propaganda are referring to literary aesthetics, which Sinclair admittedly lacks in the series. When attempting non-fiction, Sinclair made the conscious decision not to focus on his style but on his substance. His writing suffers, but the emotional impact of much of it cannot be denied.

Paranoia is another weakness. Surely Sinclair does not believe that such a conscious, widespread conspiracy is possible, one hopes. To his credit, Sinclair does say that much oppression is unconscious on the part of the oppressor. A critic's comment is amusing:

> With his constituency, a pan from a capitalist source was in fact a boost; and other [writers for conventional papers] made fun of the muckraker: "Having just returned from the office of J.P. Morgan with a certified check. .and explicit directions… I fall upon Sinclair's Mammonart and denounce it."[47]

The Dead Hand Series is also accused of being fraught with sloppy research and one-sided arguments. The Profits of Religion is conspicuously lacking in citations. Says one, "In none of these six books did Sinclair document the countless indictments of capitalist culture. The reader simply has to (believe) that he has never knowingly published a falsehood".

Critics object to having to trust Sinclair at his word. Some modern readers, however, may credit Sinclair's lack of citations to an old-fashioned method of scholarly writing. The book does contain an index and many of his citations can be checked. One-sided arguments are rampant, for Sinclair is loath to credit the rich with any social improvements. He says at one point that naturally there are many nice rich people who are involved in charity, but this is his only concession.

[47] Ibid, 200.

Sinclair has been misunderstood as a "harsh economic determinist."[48] His interest in economics has been interpreted as an attempt to make his utopian socialism an essentially spiritual belief appear scientific. This thesis intends to place Sinclair's mystic belief in a utopian world commonwealth first and foremost, his methods for the achievement of the venture second. To dismiss Sinclair as an economic determinist is to overlook the dream which fueled his work. True, Sinclair used an economic approach to justify his spiritual outlook. Says Richard Fisher, "his interpretation was always dominated by moralistic and absolutist judgements of right and wrong rather than by and 'scientific' study of social phenomena."[49]

Many see Sinclair as a great American, one who founded a movement in literature and was simply continuing the American quest for an improved political system. This is plausible until one remembers that Sinclair stressed global cooperation and not American patriotism; he scorned the classic American symbols as frauds. Critic believe that Sinclair's socialism was half-hearted, for he was an American Democrat at his core, although Sinclair treats his themes from a socialist perspective, and employs motifs typical of the radical novel, he paradoxically merely reaffirms his faith in the democratic tradition.

It is true that Sinclair was not the classic socialist, for he saw a spiritual goal more clearly than the route, socialism, taken. Christine Brendel Scriabine calls this a "unifying democratic idealism"[50] She says, "The creation of perfection was closely related to the protection and extension of democracy."[51] It is difficult to find a phrase which suits Sinclair's peculiar and vaguely Christian ideology. Some believe his is a tradition of American writers seeking the perfect society, reaching back to Hawthorne's Brook Farm experience and to Melville, who saw "the crucial opposition of the 'Natural state' to 'industrial, civil,' replete with vice"[52] and that Sinclair influenced American writers of the

[48] Bloodworth, *Upton Sinclair*, 125.
[49] Richard B. Fisher, *The Last Muckraker: The Social Orientation of the Thought of Upton Sinclair*, 1983, 250.
[50] Christine Brendel Scriabine, *Upton Sinclair: Witness to History*, 1995, 66.
[51] Ibid, 67
[52] Boris Gilenson, *20th Century American Literature: A Soviet View*, 1976, 203.

1930's. His Americanism is perceived abroad in a "realism akin to sociology"[53] influencing "American writers of a publicistic bent Truman Capote, Norman Mailer, James Baldwin and others."[54]

Whether Sinclair was actually a moderate is difficult to say, since many of his books contain statements which appear to be outrightly anarchic. Says Granville Hicks, "[Sinclair] never eradicated the effects of his bourgeois upbringing"[55] for his books speak to the middle class. One cannot fault Sinclair for this; his intentions were to be accessible to all, even if he did not achieve that aim. It is interesting to note that some see the series primarily as a collection of "satirical pamphlets."[56]

Only Money Writes! Because of much of its dated subject matter, can be perceived as a pamphlet in the old- fashioned meaning. There is a bit of satire in Sinclair, such as his reference to the wealthy Helen Gould and her companions as "The Helen Gould." Such plays with words make the books entertaining and allow them to retain their contemporary feel, but Sinclair's mysticism is his primary characteristic, and to call the books satires is to misinterpret their style.

A quality which some greatly admire and others despise is Sinclair's "old maid puritanism."[57] This tendency on Sinclair's part should rightly be perceived as giving his best and expecting the best from others. Sinclair feared society would ultimately be degraded, as he repeatedly states, by bootleg whiskey and petting parties. We can adapt this phrase today to represent a condemnation of modern morality. Sinclair had great hope for mankind and did not wish to see its intellectual potential wasted. His position as a champion of monogamy and sobriety is to be admired during such reckless times in which many radicals in particular were experimenting with free love.

[53] Ibid, 221.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Hicks, "The Survival of Upton Sinclair," 62.
[56] Gilenson, *20th Century American Literature: A Soviet View*, 213.
[57] Harris, *Upton Sinclair, American Rebel*, 208.

Thus, much criticism misinterprets Sinclair, continuing to dismiss him as a crank. It is preferred here to remember him as an inspirational figure responsible for inspiring many people. One of Sinclair's main tenets is that regardless of the mess which we find society to be, we must take an active position as reformers. narrator discusses Jurgis' plight: In The Jungle: "That he should have suffered such oppressions … was bad enough; but that he should have been crushed and beaten by them. ah, truly that was a thing not to be borne by a human creature." [58]

Sinclair remained "idealistic and romantic"[59] in the face of neglect and scorn and insurmountable muckraking challenges. He was "perennially optimistic" about the socialist cause even after the movement had shrunk to a fraction of its initial size. Some saw him as living in a deluded world of escape. Perhaps Sinclair knew he was one of the last remaining socialists, contrary to the tone of his books. In that case he was actively optimistic, and found greater strength in this approach than in resignation to capitalism and its weaknesses.

Sinclair's influence can be seen in Schooling in a Corporate Society: The Political Economy of Education in America. Quotations from this book could have been taken from either The Goose-Step or The Goslings. (Providing quotes and having readers guess their surprising origins is one-of Sinclair's favorite games in the series.) Quotations such as "Inequalities in education are part of the web of capitalist society, and are likely to persist as long as capitalism survives"[60] and "Unequal schooling reproduces the social division of labor"[61] could have been taken from Sinclair. Socialist ideas persist in American universities.

Socialism is no longer the threat it was at the beginning of this century. Therefore, much of what Sinclair wrote is dated. He at first expected a U.S. revolution within a decade and was proved painfully wrong. Yet instead of finding The Dead Hand Series

[58] Sinclair, *The Jungle*, 367.
[59] Fisher, *The Last Muckraker: The Social Orientation of the Thought of Upton Sinclair*, 250.
[60] Samuel Bowles, *Schooling in a Corporate Society: The Political Economy of Education in America* (New York: McKay, 1975), 39.
[61] Ibid, 48.

obsolete because of its proud references to allies compliant with the writer's goals, we can read it today with the wisdom of time passed and still get great inspiration from it.

The Brass Check may seem dated because of the present existence of reporters' unions, but we must be sure that such travesties of justice never happen again. (Reading The Brass Check, the reader may suspect that much corruption probably still occurs.) Instead of being falsely proud of the early history of institutions we now rightly respect, we should admire those who sought the truth and described things as they were.

One of Sinclair's primary objectives seems to have been the demystification of bourgeois icons protected by the shield of their distant existence. Readers of the series may feel as though they understand history more acutely. Less reverence is attached unnecessarily, while more is granted to certain movements and persons. The Dead Hand Series is relevant today because we must continue to look with a reformer's attitude to the future. America is still an amazing country, and its people must do all they can to preserve her physical beauty and her ideological belief in justice for all.

CHAPTER FOUR:
THE DEAD HAND SERIES: A STRATEGIC INVESTIGATION

IV. 1. The Strategies

Long before he started writing The Dead Hand series, Sinclair had lost the audience that The Jungle had created in 1906. Sinclair's reputation had been seriously questioned because of the many bizarre causes he had defended. Furthermore, most of the important commercial publishing houses of this country had rejected Sinclair's writings during the period in which he wrote The Dead Hand series. As Biella points out, The Reader's Guide Periodical Literature does not list any of Sinclair's writings during the period 1915-1918.[1] Sinclair had to be contented with publishing his writings in obscure or insignificant magazines and newspapers.

In The Brass Check, published in 1920, Sinclair acknowledges his political and social obscurity and isolation. For twenty years, he writes, he had been a voice "crying in the wilderness of industrial America, pleading for kindness to our laboring classes, so that we might choose our path wisely, and move by peaceful steps into the new industrial order. I have seen my pleas ignored and my influence destroyed, and now I see the stubborn pride and insane. Avarice of our money masters driving us straight to the precipice of revolution."[2] "What shall I do? What can I do," he writes, "save to cry out one last warning in this last fateful hour?"[3]

In the fateful hours of the 1920s, the rhetorical situation that confronted the reformer was, to say the least, unpromising and inhibiting. The Socialist Party as well as the remnants of the Roosevelt Progressives had been shattered by the effects of World War I. The America of 1920 was a triumph of conservatism: business and America had made a profitable combination. The wizened forces of American reform were destined to remain undernourished until the economic holocaust of 1929 and the depression of the 1930s.

[1] Biella, *Upton Sinclair, Crusader*, 137.
[2] Sinclair, *The Brass Check: A Study of American Journalism*, 414.
[3] Ibid.

The Dead Hand series is thus a product of political isolation. By the end of World War I, disillusioned by Wilson and the war to end all wars, upbraided by his former comrades in the Socialist Party, Sinclair wrote The Dead Hand series as an attempt to make a public commitment, a reaffirmation of idealism, a revitalization of the Progressive zeal Sinclair had earlier exhibited. By 1918, however, the Progressive fires seemed to have been permanently extinguished: muckraking was no longer popular and Sinclair's audience had vanished.

By 1918, the world that had thrilled and trembled at The Jungle's disclosures had slipped away from Sinclair's influence. One could therefore argue that the major rhetorical flaw in The Dead Hand series is that Sinclair could not create a viable strategy. Be, like the other socialists and reformers, never bridged the gap separating himself from American society. However, although the rhetorical climate between the carnage of World War I and the Hooverville of the 1930s did not nurture reformist impulses, Upton Sinclair's failure to attract a mass audience for The Dead Hand series was not, however, due to lack of trying.

In the series, Sinclair built two interrelated rhetorical strategies in an effort to reach common consensus with his audience. These rhetorical strategies the strategy of definition and the strategy of the conspiracy emanates from and are extensions of Sinclair's philosophical convictions.

The strategy of definition is characterized by Sinclair's elevation of political, social and economic conflicts into metaphysical and theological crusades. Believing that the only devil loose in the world is the devil of capitalism, Sinclair views the coming irrepressible battle between socialism and capitalism in Manichean proportions of absolute good versus absolute evil. His strategy of definition is, consequently, made up of four elements: (1) Sinclair defines the two antagonistic motor forces of history as the forces of vested interests and the forces of the working classes, (2) Sinclair then defines everything of human value as part of this antagonism, (3) Sinclair then demonstrates the inherent virtuousness and moral rectitude of the working-class forces and the inherent

profligacy of the forces of vested interests, (4) the symbols of vested interests are either dismissed as temporary manifestations of evil soon to be overcome or else are criticized cruelly.

In The Dead Hand series, Sinclair defines literally every social institution with either the evil, predatory forces of vested interests or with the benevolent nascent forces of the proletariat. Churches are thus defined as henchmen and servants of big business, newspapers and schools mere hirelings of corrupt self-serving capitalists; law courts, legislatures, novels, poetry and artistic achievements are defined by Sinclair as camouflages for capitalist evils. Behind every social institution, Sinclair argues, one finds the Machiavellian specter of capitalism calmly and deliberately at work:

> The living fist of big business, collecting from a pious and diligent working class the heaviest tribute that has ever been taken in any part of the earth at any period of history. This fist is armored with the clubs of policemen and the rifles of the militia, with the latest devices in armored cars and machine guns and poison bombs. Behind the fundamentalist cassock, you find the strangling power of ostracism plus the blacksnake and the lynching noose.[4]

Sinclair's discussion of Boccaccio's "art of beauty" versus Dante's "art of power" in Mammonart is a clear example of Sinclair's use of the strategy of definition. In Mammonart, Sinclair argues that all artistic achievements are produced by one of two types of human temperament. One type Sinclair defines as the art of beauty; the other type is defined as the art of power.

The art of beauty, Sinclair argues, is produced by and for the leisure classes. It functions, he asserts, as class embellishment that set the leisure class apart from the common masses of people and as an escape from boredom. The characteristics of the art of beauty, Sinclair contends, are "those of rest and serenity, pleasure in things as they

[4] Sinclair, *Money Writes! (A Study of American Literature from the Economic Point of View.)*., 32.

actually exist; also, clarity of form because the leisure class has time to study technique..."[5] Further, Sinclair argues that the art of beauty is effete, elitist, decorative and by and large designed to exalt leisure class values and mores.

On the other hand, the art of power, Sinclair explains, is produced by and for the working classes. It is characterized by crudeness, half expressed and half-realized emotions. The art of power, he argues, "lays stress upon substance rather than form, it aims, or at any rate tends to arouse to action..."[6]

There is no question which art Sinclair prefers. The art of beauty Sinclair castigates as "the gas barrage of the haves and the essence of its deadliness lies in the fact that it looks so little like a weapon."[7] To me, Sinclair writes, "it seems clear enough that when a leisure class artist portrays the graces and refinements of the civilization which maintains him, when he paints the noble features, and quotes the imaginary golden words of ruling class ladies and gentlemen, he is doing the best he knows how to protect those who give him a living but even when the artist is instinctive and naive, the class which employs him knows what he is doing; it knows what is safe and sane, and of sound tendencies; it approves of such art, and pays its money to maintain such art."[8] After defining the terms "art of beauty" and "art of power," Sinclair proceeds to ascribe the term "art of beauty" to the works of Boccaccio and the "art of power" to the works of Dante.

Sinclair calls Giovanni Boccaccio the favorite ruling class poet and novelist of medieval Italy, the darling of the leisure class:

> He learned to write beautiful Italian prose, a great service to his country. He used skill to compose a collection of short stories dealing with a sojourn in a country

[5] Sinclair, *Mammonart: An Essay in Economic Interpretation*, 72.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.

villa of a number of Italian ladies and gentlemen of wealth and charm, the occasion being an outbreak of the plague in Florence.[9]

Boccaccio lived to a very old age. His Decameron, Sinclair argues, remains one of the most popular works of leisure-class propaganda "which every dirty old boy keeps hidden in his trunk and every dirty young boy reads under his desk while the professor of moral philosophy is lecturing on the social responsibilities of great wealth."[10]

The works of Dante, on the other hand, represent Sinclair's definition of the art of power. "We only have to look at the picture of this man," Sinclair writes, "to see that he is a crusader, a lean hawk-like face, stern, bitter, lined with suffering…"[11] I to Sinclair, there has never been a poet so ethically motivated, so "preoccupied with moral problems, and using his art as a means of teaching mankind what he believed to be sound ideas about conduct."[12]

Sinclair argues further that, although Dante was born to comfortable circumstances and was highly educated, "he chose to take part in the tumultuous and dangerous politics of Florence, becoming one of the leaders of the republican party."[13] Although Dante was a political leader of Florence, Sinclair asserts, his overriding concern was always with ethic moral problems and not with leisure class ingratiation. Because his writings tended to arouse his readers to moral behavior, Sinclair contends that Dante represents the art of power.

Dante, Sinclair continues, especially loathed greed and raged at the Christian Church because it "had accepted the fatal gift from the Emperor Constantine the temporal possessions which made the popes into worldly potentates, intriguers and heads of armies. The two popes of his own time Dante flung into hell, and portrayed heaven itself as

[9] Ibid, 75.
[10] Ibid, 76.
[11] Ibid, 77.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.

reddening with anger at their deeds. (Dante has St. Peter declare that each of them 'has of my cemetery made a sewer of blood and filth.' This is plain muckraking; and how undignified and unliterary it must have seemed to the cultured prelates of the fourteenth-century."[14]

Because of Dante's revolutionary impulses, Sinclair maintains, it was inevitable that the cultural critics of Renaissance Italy would regard Dante as crude and vulgar. "If space permitted," Sinclair writes, "I could show you that every truly vital artist who has ever lived has been thus dealt with by the academic critics of his own time."[15]

In this example of the strategy of definition, the four elements of the strategy are clearly evident: (1) Sinclair defines all of artistic achievement as being part of either the leisure class art of beauty or else of the working-class art of power, (2) Sinclair then defines how the art of Boccaccio is part of the leisure class obliquity while the art of Dante is an example of working-class moral rectitude, (3) Sinclair demonstrates that Boccaccio's art of beauty is ending and part of the "gas barrage of the haves," while Dante's art of power functions to teach ethic moral behavior (4) the art of beauty is anathematized.

Van Wyck Brooks, an early critic of Sinclair, perceives essentially the same strategy in Sinclair's works and, he severely criticizes Sinclair's. tendency to deify the working classes while excoriating the wealthy. In a typical Sinclair novel, Brooks argues, "all the workers wear halos of pure sunlight and all the capitalists have horns and tails, socialists with fashionable English wives invariably turn yellow at the appropriate moment and rich men's sons are humbled in the dust, and all the patriots are vile."[16]

[14] Ibid, 78.
[15] Ibid, 80.
[16] Brooks, *Emerson and Others*, 212-13.

Brooks goes so far as to argue that the works of Upton Sinclair hinder rather than help the plight of the American worker because Sinclair's books stir the proletariat to hate rather than to understand their situation, rather than offering real solutions to the problems of working-class people, Brooks contends that Sinclair merely offers the working-class false simplifications that only serve to martyrize the working classes.

After reading all six volumes of The Dead Hand series, it becomes obvious that the strategy of definition used by Sinclair involves the use of stipulated rather than the definitions. That is, Sinclair's strategy of definition is not a report of historical fact. In the case of Mammonart, Sinclair is not reporting how other critics may have used the terms "art of beauty" and "art of power." Rather, Sinclair's strategy of definition is a self-conscious explicit assignment of meaning to a term or concept. Whatever else the terms "art of beauty" and "art of power" may mean in other contexts, such meanings are annulled by Sinclair's stipulation.

The function of Sinclair's strategy of definition is therefore not to communicate any of the various meanings attached to a concept but an attempt to replace those meanings with one single unambiguous usage. The element of deliberate and explicit assigning of meaning is an essential component of the strategy of definition. Sinclair, by using stipulated definitions, attempts to legislate with language. Thus, whatever else a historian or literary critic might say about Boccaccio or Dante, in Sinclair's Mammonart, Boccaccio is a libertine sycophant of leisure class decadence and Dante is a moralizing muckraker, railing against the cultural decadence of the Renaissance. Because Sinclair's definitions are stipulated rather than lexical, Sinclair becomes not a historian but a remaker of history.

Because Sinclair incredibly relies on stipulated definitions, his arguments are often obscure and mysterious. Stipulative definitions, unlike other forms of definitions, necessitate abandoning the ease and intelligibility of customary usage and require the reader to learn and remember new significance to conventional concepts. Often, Sinclair's definitions are conspicuous and unmistakable departures from familiar and traditional

definitions. To define Sophocles, Balzac, Virgil, Spenser, Racine and Tennyson as predatory artists who created effete art of beauty that served to extol ruling class propaganda ignores the complexities of their artistic achievements. In sum Sinclair's use of stipulated definitions are often reductive because they induce the reader to overlook complexities.

In The Dead Hand series, the cosmology Sinclair creates, and the discourse generated from such a world view allow the nature of the enemy's operation to be alarming and pervasive. Sinclair's obsession with the grandeur and the scope of capitalist evil demonstrates his almost pathological determination to purge the capitalist enemy of any admirable quality.

This obsession of Sinclair creates the opportunity for him to partake in a grand apocalyptical crusade, to confront visible demons. Rather than surrender his belief that the American people would reconstruct society if only the people knew the truth about capitalism, Sinclair reasons that a capitalist conspiracy against the truth existed.

Because of his belief in a gigantic capitalist conspiracy, Sinclair's rhetoric is uncommonly angry; churches are sepulchers of corruption; newspapers are munition factories designed to ensure the survival of capitalism, schools are insidious devices inculcating a "business ethic" in the minds of students, school athletics, and social events are instruments of repression, diverting the student's attention from the realities of the class struggle; literature and artistic achievements are all propaganda functioning whether to attack or defend ruling class ethics.

Sinclair's use of the second major rhetorical strategy in The Dead Hand series, the strategy of the conspiracy, can be outlined as follows. (1) Sinclair identifies himself with the forces of justice, (2) he then demonstrates how the forces of justice are threatened by the malevolent conspiratorial forces of Wall Street capitalism, (3) Sinclair excoriates the forces and manifestations of capitalism.

A typical example of Sinclair's use of the strategy of the conspiracy can be found in The Brass Check. In this volume of the series, Sinclair dedicates more than one third of the book to a defense of his many fights and causes. As a writer and as a man, Sinclair pledges to the reader of The Brass Check that he is a man of the highest integrity and probity. Taking the witness stand in what he calls "the case of the American public versus Journalism," Sinclair writes, "I tell you only what I have personally seen and experienced. I take the oath of a witness: the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me God. After this pledge, earnestly given and earnestly meant, the reader must either believe me, or he must exclude me from the company of civilized men."[17]

After establishing his probity, Sinclair then proceeds to demonstrate how the forces of probity and integrity are constantly threatened by the nefarious forces of capitalism. The American press, Sinclair argues, has been deliberately and systematically infiltrated by vested interests to such a degree that honesty and truth telling have almost vanished. Moreover, Sinclair argues, the reader will miss the entire thesis of The Brass Check if he fails

> to get clear that the perversion of news and the betrayal of public opinion is no haphazard and accidental thing for twenty-five years that is, since the day of Mark Hanna it has been a thing deliberately planned and systematically carried out, a science and a technique. High-priced experts devote their lives to it, they sit in council with the masters of industry and report on the condition of the public mind, and determine precisely how this shall be presented and how that shall be suppressed. They create a public psychology, a force in the grip of which you, their victim, are as helpless as a moth in the glare of an arc light. And what is the purpose of it all? One thing and one thing only that the wage slaves of America shall continue to believe in and support the system whereby their bones are picked bare and thrown upon the scrapheap of the profit system.[18]

[17] Sinclair, *The Brass Check: A Study of American Journalism*, 9.
[18] Ibid, 262.

Day by day, writes Sinclair, the money masters of this country draw together, become more aggressive, more class-conscious. The world has taught the money masters the possibilities of propaganda and are thereby able to "sway the minds of millions and make them more pliable to any purpose."[19]

After making a sustained indictment of the capitalist conspiracy, The Brass Check, like the other volumes of The Dead Hand series, ends on a buoyant note of sunny optimism. After chronicling the malfeasance of capitalism, demonstrating the enormous inroads the forces of vested interests have made into American life, Sinclair still believes that the American people are capable of freeing themselves from the bondage of wage slavery. Since the American people had freed themselves from the chains of hereditary monarchy and made of themselves citizens of a republic, Sinclair is more than confident that the people can resolve the present crisis:

> …only this time it is in the world of industry that we have to abolish hereditary rule, and to build an industrial commonwealth in which equal rights of all men are recognized by law. Such is the task before us, go to it with joy and certainty, playing your part in the making of a new world in which there shall be neither slavery nor poverty, in which the natural sources of wealth belong to all men alike, and no one lives in idleness upon the labor of his fellows. That world lies just before you, and the gates to it are barred only by ignorance and prejudice, deliberately created and maintained by prostitute journalism.[20]

A critical reader of The Dead Hand series inescapably questions whether or not Sinclair's conspiracy appeals are a valid explanation for the almost insurmountable problems he perceives. In other words, the rhetorical critic must be able to distinguish whether Sinclair is citing actual or imagined conspiracies. Donovan Ochs, in a paper

[19] Ibid, 309.
[20] Ibid, 428.

entitled "Social Movements: A Place for Conspiracy,"[21] offers the following criteria to help the critic:

> 1. if the alleged conspirators have an amorphous rather than a specific identity, it is likely that the conspiracy is imagined.
> 2. if the alleged conspirators do not have the opportunity to conspire; obviously a conspiracy cannot exist.
> 3. if the intended victims of the conspiracy do not agree that there is sufficient evidence to verify the existence of a conspiracy, it is likely that the conspiracy appeals are unwarranted.
> 4. if the alleged conspirators destroy or conceal evidence, that would indicate the probability of an actual conspiracy.
> s. if all the alleged conspirators not secured equal gains from successfully executing the conspiracy or would not suffer equal losses if the conspiracy failed, it is likely that the conspiracy is imagined.
> 6. if the alleged conspiracy is used to explain a vast array of past events, the existence of an actual conspiracy is unlikely. Actual conspiracies usually have a single objective.[22]

Och's criteria, by his own admission, are not reliable nor comprehensive. But they do provide the rhetorical critic some criteria upon which judgments can be made.

Using Och's. criteria, one would conclude that Sinclair's use of the strategy of the conspiracy is unjustifiable. For example, although Sinclair often indicts specific people using specific evidence, all too often he unfortunately uses not only gossip and hearsay evidence but vague, amorphous designations of the enemy, i.e., "the interlocking directorate," "Wall Street," "big business," "the plutocracy." Nor does Sinclair explain how the American plutocracy could be so unified, so effectively controlled throughout

[21] Donovan Ochs, "Social Movements: A Place for Conspiracy," delivered at the Speech Communication Association National Convention, Chicago, December, 1972.
[22] Ochs, "Social Movements; A Place for Conspiracy," 8-9.

the country, so monolithic. He never explains how Wall Street controls Main Street. Furthermore, Sinclair, by his own admission was a voice "crying in the wilderness of industrial America." During most of the period in which he was writing The Dead Hand series. If the capitalist conspiracy Sinclair cites was actual, one would think that other alleged victims of that conspiracy would agree with Sinclair's interpretation.

Finally, Sinclair uses conspiracy appeals to explain a vast array of social phenomena, corrupted Churches, schools, law courts, newspapers, literature and art works. As Ochs suggests, actual conspiracies usually have a single specific objective: imagined conspiracies tend to explain a vast number of historical events.

Although Sinclair describes the potency and the pervasiveness of the capitalist enemy, Sinclair offers himself as living proof that triumph over the enemy is possible. As a former member of the plutocracy, Sinclair never tires of telling the reader of his illustrious ancestors and of the opportunities for economic advancement he refused. Sinclair thus presents himself as the renegade from Wall Street, embodying the possibility of victory and redemption. "I myself had been brought up in what is called society," Sinclair writes, "at least on the edge of it, with the right to enter whenever I chose... I cannot remember the time that I was too young to abhor society, its crass materialism, its blindness to everything serious and truly sacred in life."[23] Sinclair is thus a Socialist by choice, having been motivated by the purity and promise of spiritual fulfillment that the socialist movement offered, he did not become a Socialist because he had failed in his efforts to become a capitalist.

Sinclair's belief in a vast, dehumanized, insidious capitalist conspiracy had long been one of Sinclair's central preoccupations. (He first expressed his conspiracy theory in The Money Changers,[24] a novel published in 1908.) Behind Sinclair's preoccupation is a style of mind, a way Sinclair views the world and expressing himself. The model

[23] Sinclair, *The Brass Check: A Study of American Journalism*, 76.
[24] Upton Sinclair, *The Moneychangers* (Sagwan Press, 2015). Sinclair claimed that the forces of J.P. Morgan conspired to bring about the panic of 1907.

Sinclair uses to view the world is religiously derived and contains the inscrutable presumption that all social malaise can be traced to a single source and hence can be eliminated by some ultimate act of victory. Because he regards the enemy as evil and unappeasable, what is needed is not a political strategy for negotiating with that evil but, rather a crusade.

Such a presumption enables Sinclair to suspect deliberate malice where he might have suspected stupidity incompetence, misfortune or fate. The corrupting influence of capitalism, Sinclair asserts, is deliberate and systematic. Because Sinclair allows for no mistakes, ambiguities, guesses or failures on the part of the capitalist enemy, Sinclair in fact creates a world far more coherent and sensible than the real-world Sinclair's demon was as in fallible as he was evil.

Proponents who believe in vast, grandiose conspiracies set in motion by demonic forces of near transcendent power exhibit the central preoccupation of what Richard Hofstadter calls the paranoid style.[25] In the paranoid style, as Hofstadter conceives it, the feeling of persecution is central and systematized into grand theories of conspiracy. What differentiates the clinical paranoid from the politically paranoid, Hofstadter argues, is that though "both tend to be overheated, over suspicious, overaggressive, grandiose, and apocalyptic in expression, the clinical paranoid sees the hostile and conspiratorial world in which he feels himself to be living as directed specifically against him whereas the spokesman of the paranoid style in politics finds it directed against a nation, a culture, a way of life whose fate affects not himself alone but millions of others."[26]

Moreover, Hofstadter continues, to the paranoid spokesman, history itself is often viewed as a conspiracy,

> set in motion by demonic forces of almost transcendent power, and what is felt to be needed to defeat it is not the usual methods of political give and take, but an

[25] Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics, and Other Essays*, 1979.
[26] Ibid, 4.

> all-out crusade. The paranoid spokesman sees the fate of this conspiracy in apocalyptical terms he traffics in the birth and death of whole worlds, whole political orders, whole systems of human value. He is always manning the barricades of civilization. He constantly lives at a turning point; it is now or never in organizing resistance to the conspiracy. Time is forever running out. Like religious millenarians, he expresses the anxiety of the who are living through the last days...[27]

In The Dead Hand series, Sinclair views history as a conspiracy to thwart human freedom by extending the influence of vested wealth. But Sinclair insistently argues that the nightmares created by vested wealth are almost over. No matter how bleak, how oppressive the present situation might be, the socialist millennium is coming.

After so sustained an indictment of the ill effects caused by capitalist conspiracies, it is difficult for the reader to understand how Sinclair could believe that a millennium of social justice is fast approaching. Sinclair's sunny optimism to the contrary, the reader of the series is left not only unconvinced but profoundly cognizant of the disparity between Sinclair's cheery predictions and the unqualified pessimism which the series chronicles. The incidents Sinclair narrates, which demonstrate the evils caused by Wall Street infiltration into American life, only indicate the inevitability of continued class exploitation. Sinclair's optimistic expectations of a future cooperative commonwealth in which all men's rights are considered equal, where slavery and poverty are excluded by official decree, where idleness and class warfare are banished, are irrelevant to the situation Sinclair describes in the series.

In the series, Sinclair did, however, perform an invaluable service in documenting many of the flagrant abuses of power and irresponsibility of the capitalist ruling class. Sinclair relentlessly documents many of the problems of organized labor, the harassment of radicals and the aridity and emptiness of much of American life. The amount of research that went into the series is truly staggering. Sinclair painstakingly and

[27] Ibid, 28-38.

laboriously accumulated damaging evidence. What Sinclair lacked was not information but understanding.

As was argued earlier in this study, Sinclair's rhetorical strategies in The Dead Hand series originate from and reflect Sinclair's philosophical convictions. Because Sinclair refused to alter his philosophy, his strategies became inescapable: because he refused to modify his faith in the American people's ability to reform society, he had to believe that a conspiracy against the truth existed. How else, Sinclair implies, could such heinous acts be perpetrated against the American public unless that public has been systematically denied the truth?

Because Sinclair believed that the socialist millennium was inevitable, he felt no need to develop any political strategies to counteract the forces of capitalism. Because that millennium, he argues, needs a new ethic, a new morality, Sinclair felt compelled to fill that need by redefining history, by becoming a reproducer of history. Hence, Sinclair's strategy of definition became an unavoidable choice: how else can the American people, victimized by conspiracy, understand and make sense out of the coming epoch unless the present era of capitalism is explained to them?

Because Sinclair never questions the validity of his own convictions, his arguments in the series leap from the indisputable to the incredible. It is an indisputable fact, for example, that higher education has been strongly influenced by conservative forces, to argue, however, that truth is suppressed and all high-principled professors are systematically intimidated because of such forces is clearly untrue. The imaginative leap Sinclair's argument takes not only effectively distorts Sinclair's sensitivity but, equally important, serves to preserve Sinclair's philosophical convictions by insulating him from conflicting or disturbing analysis.[28] "We are all sufferers of history," Hofstadter advises,

[28] Ibid, 38.

"but the paranoid is a double sufferer, since he is afflicted not only with the real world, with the rest of us, but by his fancies as well."[29]

In order for Sinclair to adopt new modes of persuasion different from the strategies he employed in The Dead Hand series, he had to modify his philosophical convictions. When Sinclair in 1933 finally discarded his socialist evangelism and developed a more pragmatic socialism that emphasized the formation of alliances with progressive middle-class political elements, the rhetorical effect was astounding.

Joining the Democratic Party in 1933, Sinclair proposed a simple plan for alleviating the unemployment problems of depression ridden California. Sinclair's reform program, called "production for use," advocated the formation of cooperative self-help units. What was remarkable about Sinclair's program was the fact that it contained so little of the socialist evangelism so prominent in The Dead Hand series. "Let us drop utopias from our program, he wrote. "No more ideal commonwealths, no perfect societies. Let us start from where we are."[30]

Within six months, Upton Sinclair shorn of his visionary socialist utopianism was the Democratic nominee for governor of California and garnered 879,000 votes in the November, 1934 election, narrowly missing his only political opportunity to put his new form of modest socialism into practice. As one critic observed, the socialism Sinclair contracted in 1902

> persisted through the New Deal and it prevented him from making the sort of compromise with the existing system that the New Deal represented. "End Poverty in California" Sinclair's campaign program; Actually, marked the closest thing to accommodation between Sinclair and Roosevelt, and after that narrow defeat in the autumn of 1934, Sinclair moved back to his demand for a collectivist

[29] Ibid, 40.
[30] Upton Sinclair, *I, Candidate for Governor: And How I Got Licked* (Univ of California Press, 1994), 8.

> national solution (and back into the Socialist Party from the Democratic Party). He was really no more interested than Russell or Dewey or Steffens or Nearing in the realities of power, and when the governorship slipped from him, he turned with relief back to writing and lecturing.[31]

To further illuminate the effects the predominant rhetorical situation and the rhetor's philosophical convictions have on rhetorical discourse, the next chapter of this study compares the rhetorical strategies of Sinclair's The Dead Hand series against the rhetorical environment of the earlier muckraking movement. Such a comparison illuminates the synergetic relationship between the rhetorical scene and the rhetorical act. This study now turns to that inquiry.

[31] Otis L. Graham, *An Encore for Reform: The Old Progressives and the New Deal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 139.

CHAPTER FIVE:
UPTON SINCLAIR AND COMPANY

The America of the mauve generation and the big barbecue was long overdue for a thorough political and social housecleaning as the nineteenth century drew to a close. During the administrations of Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft, there arose what one critic aptly calls the "preachers of social discontent,"[1] more commonly referred to as the "muckrakers".

The performance of the muckrakers was frightening. For a brief period roughly from 1902 to the election of Woodrow Wilson in 1912 "An extraordinarily keen group of editors and publishers made common cause with some of the nation's outstanding novelists, poets, historians, lawyers, economists and researchers," writes Harvey Swados in Years of Conscience: the muckrakers.[2] "The cause, which changed the course of history, was the exposure of the underside of American capitalism."[3]

The muckrakers examined this underside and found a variety of social malaise: corrupt practices in business, finance, and government, the venality of the trusts, the horrors of working conditions, and a plenty of other abuses. The corruption the muckrakers so dramatically found was laid squarely at the doorstep of big business, in Parrington's phrase, like a mischief at the doorstep of the father:

> There was a great fluttering and clamor amongst the bats and owls, an ominous creaking of the machine as the wrenches were thrown into the well-oiled wheels, and a fierce and sullen anger at the hue and cry set up. To many honest Americans, the years between 1903 and 1910 were abusive and scurrilous beyond decency, years when no man and no business, however honorable, was safe from the pillory: when wholesale exposure had grown profitable to sensation mongers, and great reputations were lynched by vigilantes and reputable corporations laid under indictment at the bar of public opinion.[4]

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[1] Lynda Ann Beltz, "Preachers of Social Discontent" (PhD Dissertation, Indiana University, 1968).
[2] Harvey Swados, ed., Years of Conscience: The Muckrakers (New York: World Publishing Company, 1962), 9.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Vernon Louis Parrington, *The Beginnings of Critical Realism in America, 1860-1920, Completed to 1900 Only*, 1987, 406-7.

"An' there ye ar-re, Hinnissy," wrote Finley Peter Dunne during the apex of the muckraking movement, "The noise ye hear is not the first gun iv a revolution. It's only the people iv the United States batin' a carpt."[5] The muckrakers were indeed beating on many carpets, scattering the dust from many long held romantic notions about American politics and American business. Whatever else they might have achieved, the muckrakers destroyed much of the awe, empty respectability and reverence that wealth had earlier commanded.

Although some who wore the sobriquet of muckrakers were sensation mongers and even character assassins,[6] many needed reforms were brought about directly by the more responsible muckrakers: prison reforms, child labor laws, the creation of the Department of the Interior, workmen's compensation, the progressive income tax, the initiative, referendum and recall and the direct election of senators. Ida Tarbell's The History of the Standard Oil Company, for example, was instrumental in dissolving the Standard Oil trust in 1911. Perhaps the most striking reform brought about by the muckrakers was the passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act passed as a consequence of Upton Sinclair's The Jungle in 1906.

The most important contribution made by the muckrakers was, however, the fact that the prevailing assumption of the function of government was radically modified. Gradually, through the efforts of the muckrakers, the American people came to view government as a protector and defender of the rights of people. While the actions of the muckrakers did not destroy or even thoroughly regulate the American corporate structure, their stirring pronouncements aroused the social conscience of the nation, reaffirming the long-neglected ideals of American democracy.

Despite their differences, the muckrakers were all writing the same indictment, placing the blame on the evils of society on the rise of new economic conditions. In one way or another, all of them argued that the specific agent of corruption was the American

[5] Finley Peter Dunne, *Dissertations by Mr. Dooley (1906)*, 2008, 259.
[6] David Graham Phillips, *The Treason of the Senate* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1964), 216-25.

corporation that reaped enormous profits without disturbing its moral complacency. Thanks largely to the muckrakers, Louis Filler argues, the American people gained a new sense of national purpose.[7]

With the publication of The Jungle in 1906, Upton Sinclair emerged as one of the significant leaders of the muckraking era. Whatever else Sinclair was to become, the most popular (and perhaps most fitting) sobriquet one could attach to him is "muckraker."

Book reviews, dissertations, studies of all sorts refer to Sinclair's singular and periodic occupation as a raker of muck. Newsweek magazine, for example, in its obituary of Upton Sinclair, summed up Sinclair's life and career by describing him as the "King of the Muckrakers."[8]

Because Upton Sinclair is both popularly and critically regarded as an inveterate muckraker, projecting the rhetorical characteristics of The Dead Hand series against the backdrop of the muckraking era reveals the intimate, symbiotic relationship between the rhetorical scene and the rhetorical act. For example, in contrast to the rhetorical strategies of The Dead Hand series, one of the curious rhetorical dimensions of the earlier muckraking was that, although the muckrakers' analyses of American society were often far-reaching and radical, the muckrakers themselves offered no radical proposals. With few exceptions, the muckrakers were middle-class reformers who, unlike Sinclair, advocated only an adjustment of the capitalist system.

With few exceptions, the muckrakers believed in saving democracy, not installing socialism. American political structures, they argued, were fundamentally sound. There are flaws, the muckrakers argued, but what is needed is not a redesign but a reaffirmation and a renewal. Thus, a comparison of Sinclair's strategies with those of the leading

[7] Louis Filler, "The Muckrakers: in Flower and Failure," in *Essays in American Historiography*, edited by Donald Sheehan and Harold C. Syett, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), 251-268.
[8] "King of the Muckrakers," *Newsweek*, 72, December 9, 1968, 34-39. See also Henry Lee, "Upton Sinclair, America's Mightiest Muckraker." Coronet. 6, May 1968, 120-125.

muckrakers reveals Sinclair's serious misconceptions about the entire muckraking movement.

Even Sinclair's most successful muckraking tract, The Jungle, was an example of muckraking by accident. The public that read The Jungle ignored the tragedies of the immigrant workers toiling in "Packingtown" and was unmoved by Sinclair's socialist propaganda. Sinclair bitterly learned that what the public eagerly and avidly embraced were Sinclair's allusions to the foods the public bought and ate. These allusions Sinclair meant only as local color; and as a backdrop to the central concern of the novel, the inferno of exploitation wrought by capitalism. Sinclair himself stated that he had intended to appeal to the minds and hearts of the people, but had succeeded only in reaching their stomachs.

The most discursive comparison of such muckrakers as Ida Tarbell, Ray Stannard Baker and Lincoln Steffens with Upton Sinclair, lead one to further conclude that Upton Sinclair in The Dead Hand series was a biased researcher. Whereas Tarbell, Baker and Steffens the most respected writers of the movement made every attempt to secure incontestable evidence, Upton Sinclair did not. Tarbell, Baker and Steffens spent months of investigation before publishing even a brief article. Moreover, their editor, S.S. McClure, went to great lengths to ensure the accuracy of the charges made by his staff.

Moreover, unlike the leading muckrakers, Sinclair consistently claimed that socialism was the solution to all the problems he exposed. This regrettable simplification seriously undermined Sinclair's credibility as a rhetorician: few people could believe that the problems Sinclair identified were so similar that one solution could solve them all.

The remainder of this chapter proposes to isolate the rhetorical strategies used by Ida Tarbell, Ray Stannard Baker and Lincoln Steffens and compare their principal strategies with the strategies used by Upton Sinclair in The Dead Hand series. Ostensibly, Tarbell, Baker, Steffens and Sinclair share many common traits: all four mounted comprehensive campaigns of exposure and drew up many similar indictments all four argued that the institutions that regulated and controlled American economic and political

systems were not to be trusted: all four were consummate social critics. Upon careful examination, however, several important differences emerge.

Tarbell, Baker and Steffens, due largely to the intuitive genius of their editor, S.S. McClure, more accurately reflected the values and attitudes of American society. Unlike the more radical charges made by Sinclair, the proposals advocated by the McClure's muckrakers were middle-class appeals effectively attuned to their rhetorical climate.

V. 1. S. S. McClure and his Magazine

Any analysis of the muckraking movement must appraise the unique contribution made by the foremost vehicle of the muckrakers' campaign, McClure's, and its editor, S. S. McClure. By far the most important and respected vehicle, McClure's magazine has been described as a "pervasive organ with universal appeal and a direct reflection of the mood and interests of the American people."[9]

One critic of the muckraking movement, Lynda Beltz, credits the entire organized movement to the genius and energy of S.S. McClure. McClure's purpose in editing and publishing a magazine, Beltz argues, was always

> to publish a stimulating, influential journal and he equated his success with rising circulation figures ... Had he been less concerned with offering the public a provocative magazine that accurately reflected the times, less concerned with editing a journal that aided good causes and hindered evil causes, there would have been no organized muckraking movement.[10]

While not diminishing the rhetorical gifts of the three leading muckrakers on the McClure's staff, the success of the movement depended on the combination of able writers and brilliant editing. If indeed the muckrakers were preachers of social discontent,

[9] Beltz, "Preachers of Social Discontent," 70.
[10] Ibid, 80-81. For a more complete analysis of McClure's contribution to the muckraking movement, 69-105.

as Beltz persuasively argues, there can be no doubt that their principal pulpit was McClure's magazine.

As editor-in-chief McClure insisted on two unshakable tenets that every member of his writing staff had to follow: secure irrefutable evidence and write with human interest. McClure's assumption was that factual yet interesting articles would sell magazines. The undeniable success of his magazine confirmed that premise.

Furthermore, McClure not only insisted that his writers get the facts and write stimulating articles, but he was willing to adequately subsidize his staff members throughout the entire course of their research. Ida Tarbell, for example, spent five years studying all the material necessary for her famous history of the Standard Oil Company and put in three years of research before the first chapter appeared in McClure's in November, 1902.[11] Nor was McClure penurious: Miss Tarbell was paid approximately $4,000 per chapter. The entire history cost McClure almost $70,000.[12]

Unlike The Dead Hand series, which Sinclair wrote, edited and published himself, McClure's had not only a national character but a national circulation running into the hundreds of thousands. McClure could thus afford to appropriate huge financial resources to the literature of exposure.

Additionally, as Richard Hofstadter argues in The Age of Reform, because of McClure's and other large-circulation magazines, it became possible for any literate citizen to know what "barkeepers, district attorneys, ward heelers, prostitutes, police court magistrates, reporters and corporation lawyers had always come to know in the course of their business."[13] Consequently, because of such magazines, the American public at large was made more aware not only of the malpractices of American politics and business but the male practitioners as well. By tracing the complicated relationships between the courts, the political parties, the underworld and the new corporations, the muckraker presented to the American public an entirely new cast of characters for the drama of human life.[14]

[11] Ibid, 113.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F. D. R*, 188.
[14] Robert Cantwell, "Journalism - The Magazines," in Harold E. Stearns, ed., *America Now* (Hew York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1938). 347.

In contrast, Sinclair's The Dead Hand series had a relatively small print run, Sinclair himself had very few financial resources. By 1918, moreover, the rhetorical climate of the muckrakers had almost evaporated. By 1918, when he published The Profits of Religion, the first volume of the series, the alone and remote Sinclair preached a sermon few people paid much attention to: S.S. McClure and the muckraking preachers had by then been long evicted from their stands.[15]

V. 2. Ida Tarbell

Of Ida Tarbell, one critic wrote: "Unmindful of the furor she had authored, the middle-aged spinster from Titusville, Pennsylvania, moved serenely in the eye of her own personal hurricane, taking calm and deliberate aim at John D. Rockefeller and his Standard Oil Company."[16] Her exposé, entitled The History of Standard Oil Company, published in McClure's magazine in seventeen installments, was the first and one of the most important influences that led, in 1911, to the final dissolution of the Standard Oil trust. Ida Tarbell's history, Beltz maintains, remains a hallmark to "the pervading effect of a persuasive message."[17]

She was born in the oil regions and knew, first-hand, what the Standard had done to independent oil producers. In fact, in 1893, the Standard had driven Miss Tarbell's father out of business as an independent oil producer. Miss Tarbell was, thus, intimately acquainted with the operations of Rockefeller and his company her history, much to her credit, is not a personal retaliation or motivated by revenge.

Nor was her indictment based upon the size of the Standard or the fact that the trust violated the principles of laissez-faire capitalism. "I was willing that they should combine and grow as big and as rich as they could," Miss Tarbell wrote in 1939, "but only by legitimate means."[18]

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[15] Walter Lippmann, "Upton Sinclair," *Saturday Review of Literature*, IV (March 3, 1928), 643.
[16] Beltz, 106-107.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ida Minerva Tarbell, *All in the Day's Work: An Autobiography* (G. K. Hall, 1985), 258.

Miss Tarbell chose the Standard Oil Trust because she felt that it was not only a typical trust but, in fact, the mother of all the trusts. Furthermore, she repeatedly argued in her history that the standard had a pervasive economic and moral impact no one in America was exempted from its influence. Throughout her history, Miss Tarbell took great pains to remind her readers of their palpable connection with the standard:

> John D. Rockefeller had completed one of the most perfect business organizations the world had ever seen, an organization which handled practically all of a great natural product. His factories were models of their kind, managed with the strictest economy. He owned outright the pipelines which transported the crude oil. His knowledge of the consuming power of the world was accurate and he kept his output strictly within its limits. At the same time the great marketing machinery, he had put together carried on an aggressive campaign for new markets. There was not a lazy bone in the organization, nor an incompetent hand, nor a stupid heart. It was a machine where everybody was kept on his mettle by an extraordinary system of competition, where success met immediate recognition, where opportunity was wide as the world's craving for a good light to cheer its hours of darkness.[19]

Unlike Upton Sinclair in The Dead Hand series, Ida Tarbell neither overwhelms the reader with an excess of evidence and detail, nor fails to connect the chicanery of Rockefeller with the personal experiences of her readers. She often demonstrates the relationship between the corrupt practices of the standard and the "world's craving for a good light to cheer its hours of darkness."

If it can be maintained that Miss Tarbell took great pains to demonstrate the typicality and pervasive influence of the standard, it can also be asserted that she took even greater pains to ensure the irreproachability and authenticity of her evidence.

[19] These characteristics of Miss Tarbell's rhetoric were first presented in Dr. Beltz' book.

Following S.S. McClure's advice be accurate as well as interesting Miss Tarbell studied the Standard from every imaginable angle. Although much of the material, she used in her history was in the public domain (such as newspaper accounts, House of Representative reports, Interstate Commerce Commission reports, state records, and so forth), Miss Tarbell was greatly assisted by Henry M. Rogers, a vice-president of the Standard Oil Company. Mr. Rogers gave Miss Tarbell any assistance she required. She fully discussed every important detail of her history with him as well as with other company officials.

In addition to demonstrating the typicality of the Standard Oil trust, the pervasiveness of its influence and the authenticity of her evidence, Ida Tarbell's history is characterized by a strong narrative quality, a balanced perspective and a careful presentation of charges.[20]

Because her history was written chronologically, exploring in great detail the various dimensions of the standard, her history has a strong narrative quality. This narrative quality enabled Tarbell to denounce Rockefeller throughout the series rather than in one or another of its chapters. The first chapter of her history, entitled "The Birth of an Industry" thoroughly demonstrates the strong narrative quality apparent throughout the history. "One of the busiest corners of the globe at the opening of the year 1872," writes Tarbell,

> was a strip of Northwestern Pennsylvania, not over fifty miles long, known the world over as the Oil Regions. Twelve years before, this strip of land had been but a little better than a wilderness its only inhabitants the lumbermen who every season cut great swaths of primeval pine and hemlock from its hills, and in the spring floated them down the Allegheny River to Pittsburgh. The great tides of Western immigration had shunned the spot for years as too rugged and unfriendly for settlement, and yet in twelve years this region, avoided by such men, and been transformed into a bustling trade center, where towns elbowed each other for a

[20] Steve Weinberg, *Taking on the Trust: The Epic Battle of Ida Tarbell and John D. Rockefeller* (W. W. Norton & Company, 2008), 204.

> place, into which the three great trunk railroads had built branches, and every foot of whose soil was fought for by capitalists.[21]

The discovery and refining of a new raw product, petroleum, was responsible for this transformation from the wilderness to the marketplace. "This product," Miss Tarbell continues, "in twelve years had revolutionized the world's method of illumination and added millions upon millions of dollars to the wealth of the United States."[22] And, she later notes, petroleum added millions and millions of dollars to the coffers of John D. Rockefeller.

Along with a strong narrative flavor, Miss Tarbell's history demonstrates a balanced perspective. Her ninth chapter, for example, is titled "The Real Greatness of the Standard,"[23] and in it, Miss Tarbell gives Rockefeller and the Standard Oil Company credit for intelligence, cunning and tremendous energy. In Sinclair's Dead Hand series, on the other hand, very little admirable qualities are assigned to the capitalists he excoriates. In Tarbell's history, Rockefeller emerges, not only as a cruel tyrant, but a man of great intelligence and business acumen:

> He had the powerful imagination to see what might be done with the oil business if it could be centered in his hands the intelligence to analyze the problem into its elements and to find the key to control it. He had the essential elements to win great achievement, steadfastness to a purpose once conceived which nothing can crush. The oil regions might rave, call him a conspirator and those who sold him oil traitors the railroads might withdraw their contracts and the legislature annul his charter: undisturbed and unresting, he kept at his great purpose. Rockefeller had a mind, she argues, which, if stopped by a wall, burrowed under it or around it.[24]

[21] Ida Tarbell, *The History of the Standard Oil Company*, 2018, 20.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid, 68.
[24] Ibid.

Besides its narrative quality and its balanced perspective, Miss Tarbell's history is characterized by a careful compilation of damaging evidence: perjury, extortion, deception and hosts of other impostures. Amazingly, Ida Tarbell, never allows her touch to become too heavy and always turns to wit and satire to brighten her discourse. For example, Miss Tarbell argues that, in studying Rockefeller's career, she is frequently reminded of Tom Sawyer's great resolution to never sully piracy by dishonesty.

Unlike Sinclair's Dead Hand series, Miss Tarbell does not present a two-dimensional world of irreconcilable forces of evil opposed to spiritual and redemptive forces of good. In fact, Miss Tarbell argues, one of the most depressing effects of her history is that, instead of the unethical practices of the standard arousing contempt from the business community and the public at large, the history is studied as a "practical lesson in moneymaking. More than once the writer of these articles, in talking with business men, has had the uncomfortable feeling that the chief result of her work as far as these persons were concerned, was to give them pointers!"[25] Therefore, Miss Tarbell implies, the American business community is ethically no better than the Standard Oil magnates and probably would have done just what Rockefeller had done if given the opportunity.

Although Miss Tarbell states that Rockefeller "systematically played with loaded dice, and it is doubtful if there has ever been a time since 1872 when he has run a race with a competitor and started fair,"[26] Rockefeller emerges from her history not as an alien, satanic influence but as a man who saw his opportunities and was clever and ruthless enough to use them to his advantage. Unlike Upton Sinclair, Ida Tarbell does not define any conspiratorial motive forces in history: she does not define the standard as an evil capitalist force exploiting a hapless proletarian American public.

[25] Ibid, 277.
[26] Ibid.

While excoriating the Standard Oil Company for its ruthless disregard for fairness, Miss Tarbell argues that the practices of the standard are prevalent. “Were it alone in these methods,” she continues, “public scorn would long ago have made short work of the Standard Oil Company, but it is simply the most conspicuous type of what can be done by these practices. The methods it employs with such acumen, persistency, and secrecy are employed by all sorts of business men, from corner grocers up to bankers.”[27]

Although Ida Tarbell, like Upton Sinclair, makes extensive use of conspiracy appeals, she never uses amorphous definitions of conspirators and verifies the specific objectives of the conspiracy by using extensive evidence. For example, while Miss Tarbell maintains that Rockefeller ruthlessly conspired to control the oil markets of the world, her conspiracy appeals are specific and moderate:

> To know every detail of the oil trade, to be able to reach at any moment to its remotest point, to control even its weakest factor this was Mr. John D. Rockefeller’s ideal of doing business. It seemed to be an intellectual necessity for him to be able to direct the course of any particular gallon of oil from the moment it gushed from the earth until it went into the lamp of a housewife. There must be nothing in his great machine he did not know to be working right. It was to complete this ideal, to satisfy this necessity, that he undertook sometime in the late seventies, to organize the oil markets of the world, as he had already organized oil refining and oil transporting.
>
> Mr. Rockefeller was driven to this new task of organization not only by his own curious intellect he was driven to it by that thing so abhorrent to his mind competition. If, as he claimed, the oil business belonged to him, and if, as he had announced, he was prepared to refine all the oil that men could consume, it followed as a corollary that the markets of the world belonged to him.[28]

[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.

Thus, a rhetorical critic of Miss Tarbell's history is likely to conclude that her use of conspiracy appeals is warranted and used with restraint. Unlike Sinclair in The Dead Hand series, she specifically labels the conspirators, demonstrates how they had the opportunity to conspire, the gains that would accumulate if the conspiracy was successful and the specific objectives that motivated the conspiracy. At no time does she attempt to explain a vast array of past events by citing evidence of a conspiracy (as Sinclair repeatedly does throughout The Dead Hand series). In fact, Miss Tarbell argues that the magnates of the Standard Oil Company "as a body have nothing to do with public affairs, except as it is necessary to manipulate them for the 'good of the oil business'."[29]

Miss Tarbell's history, called the structural masterpiece of the muckraking period, demonstrates the length the standard went to insure the good of their oil business. In addition, her history gives the reader a concrete example of how a trust monopoly is made and sustained. In offering a solution to the trust question, Miss Tarbell includes her history with a personal admonishment to her readers: "We, the people of the United States, and nobody else must, cure whatever is wrong in the industrial situation, typified by this narrative of the growth of the Standard Oil Company."[30] Her conclusion was to pass legislation making such trusts illegal. At no time did Miss Tarbell even suggest that the establishment of a socialist form of government would help alleviate the problems caused by the trusts. The fact that the Standard Oil Trust was dissolved in 19 attests to the far-reaching influence of Miss Tarbell's message.

V. 3. Ray Stannard Baker

Ray Stannard Baker, called the greatest reporter of his time by Louis Filler,[31] was considered to be the most puritanical of the leading McClure's muckrakers. His rhetoric is couched with appeals to middle-class pieties and prejudices. Baker's puritanism is, however, understandable. Born in Michigan in 1870 and raised in the wilderness of northern Wisconsin, Baker learned the virtues of self-reliance and social independence at

[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid, 280.
[31] Louis Filler, *Crusaders for American Liberalism*, 1939, 87.

an early age. Even when he lived in New York, Baker would often take long solitary walks to refresh his spirit and reconstitute his energies. Like Upton Sinclair, Baker felt it his duty to remind the American people of their social, political and moral responsibilities. Like the American Puritans of the late seventeenth-century, Baker's essays are highly charged and very didactic.

As a rhetor, Ray Stannard Baker's muckraking journalism reveals a clearly discernible argumentative pattern. In all of his muckraking essays, Baker begins with an explanation of the history and importance of the problem and relates the problem to the experiences of his readers. He then, like Miss Tarbell, bases his conclusions and arguments upon irrefutable evidence. Thirdly, Baker stresses the typicality of his subject and, finally, he concludes his essays with a call for renewed civic responsibility on the part of his readers.

In "Capital and Labor Hunt Together,"[32] a typical example of Baker's muckraking journalism, Baker begins the article with an explanation of how the city of Chicago had fallen victim to a new industrial crisis trade unionism that crushes out competition and monopolizes an entire industry.

His thesis is that a union of workers and an alliance of employers' act as an "alliance against the unorganized public."[33] With the growth of such alliances, Baker continues, "the warfare of labor upon capital ceases the day comes when all the workmen of any trade will have their knives out for the workmen of every other trade, each industry against the world, labor against labor."[34]

Furthermore, like Miss Tarbell, Baker emphasizes the high credibility of his arguments by stressing the fact that his evidence is first-hand. It is a hallmark of the McClure's authors that none of them present arguments that are not based on thorough research, first-hand observations, and impeccable sources.

[32] Ray Stannard Baker, "Capital and Labor Hunt Together," *McClure's*, September 1903, 451-63.
[33] Ibid, 453.
[34] Ibid, 458.

Baker further demonstrates how the problem of trade unionism in Chicago is typical of the problems of capital and labor throughout the country. Such problems, Baker explains, are endemic to our democratic system of government. Consequently, he continues, the blame for such conditions rests not with politicians, the capitalists or the labor bosses but with the American citizen who remains indifferent and indolent "while the scalawag runs his organization."[35]

This allegation, Lynda Beltz argues, "was bound to apply to the vast majority of McClure's readers and indeed to most Americans."[36] In "Capital and Labor Hunt Together" as well as in his other muckraking essays, Baker attempts to persuade the great middle class that, because of its indifference and apathy, it was forced to subsidize the scalawag. What the country needs, Baker argues, is a new affirmation of civic responsibility. Baker's solution is, thus, but a restatement of Edmund Burke's dictum that the only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.

In "The Trust's New Tool the Labor Boss,"[37] Baker elaborates the argument he presented in "Capital and Labor Hunt Together," published two months earlier. Baker begins "The Trust's New Tool the Labor Boss" with a typical example of a corrupt labor boss, Sam Parks of New York. Baker then proceeds to give.... an historical account of "Boss" Parks' rise to power and influence. How did a man so corrupt by the trusts' rise to such prominence? "Oh, it is the old familiar American story," Baker contends, "bragging that we can govern ourselves and then not governing."[38] If the American people did not want such bosses, Baker asserts, such a boss could not exist. Corruption is thus an effect, not a cause, a reflection of the sordidness and moral bankruptcy of everyday American life.

[35] Ibid, 462.
[36] Beltz, "Preachers of Social Discontent," 141.
[37] Ray Stannard Baker, "The Trust's New Tool - The Labor Boss," *McClure's*, November 1903, 30-43.
[38] Ibid, 33.

After demonstrating both the venality as well as the typicality of "Boss" Sam Parks, Baker then relates the influence people such as Parks have over the lives of Baker's readers. Men such as Parks demoralize not only the moral health of the country but its financial resources as well. Corrupt union bosses foist their corruption upon the indifferent American citizen. "And does anyone suppose that all builders want honest delegates?" Baker writes. "Does anyone suppose that our street railway owners, our gas concessioners, our owners of dock privileges really want honest aldermen, honest city officials? No sir, they do not. If the delegates and officials were honest, profits would be decreased, the builder would not be able to beat his competitor, and the streetcar capitalist to rob the public franchises."[39]

Moreover, Baker continues, men such as Sam Parks are not only corrupt in themselves but are agents of the corrupt trusts. Baker goes so far as to argue that the trust owners regard graft and corruption as good investments. "A General strike," he continues, "where enormous capital is involved is a very serious matter, not only for the employer and employee but for the public."[40] Since the trust owners, in Baker's view, are only concerned with making profits, the trust owners foster graft as long as the end result is a dividend.

Baker ends "The Trust's New Tool - the Labor Boss," with the rhetorical question, who is responsible for the Sam Parks of the country? Who is to blame for the deplorable labor trust problems? Unlike Upton Sinclair, the answer to such questions is not the capitalist system or the evil influences of Wall Street. The time must come, Baker writes,

> when the responsibility for these dangerous conditions will be placed where it belongs upon the stay-at-home, conservative voter who regards politics as beneath his honorable attention, upon the stay-at-homes, conservative union man who does not wish to disturb his ease, to take part in the turmoil of the union meeting, upon the millionaire stockholder in the corporation who sits at home and draws

[39] Ibid, 36.
[40] Ibid, 43.

> dividends without knowing or wanting to know by what trail of blood and dishonesty they have been earned.[41]

If we, the American people, want self-government, Baker argues, we have got to work at it ourselves. "President Roosevelt is right when he preaches broad morality," Baker continues,

> the necessity of each man getting down and doing something himself. We are willing to swallow any sort of patent nostrum for our disease municipal socialism, the single tax, the referendum, cooperation instead of getting down and doing personal work. These remedies may be good enough in their way, but we shall have no need of them if we obey the laws we already have. "And men still call for special revolutions," says Henrik Ibsen, "for revolution in politics, in externals. But all, that sort of thing is trumpery. It is the human soul that must revolt."[42]

In "The Lone Fighter,"[43] published in the December 1903 issue of McClure's, Baker describes the causes and motivations of the progressive reformer. What motivates the reformer is the fact that, "brag as we will, we Americans are not a free people and this is not a free country."[44] As a consequence, Baker continues, this country is "strong in democratic ideals but mighty weak in practice."[45] Like Upton Sinclair, Baker argues that it is the reformer's duty to provide the antidote to these sordid conditions by arousing a complacent country. Unlike Sinclair, however, Baker maintains that the causes of the problems the reformer uncovers are not economic but personal. If you want to rid the boss from your city, Baker cautions, "you have got to go to the primaries and the election booth and protest and vote and protest again. If you, as a workingman, want honest and efficient unionism, you have got to go to the union meetings and make things right, and if you, as a stockholder, want to see common business honesty in your trusts and in your

[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Baker, *The Lone Fighter,* 194-97.
[44] Ibid, 195.
[45] Ibid.

corporations, you have got to look after the things yourself. No one says it is easy: good things never do come easily."[46]

Luckily, Baker continues, this republic does produce hundreds of honest, conscientious reformers who Baker describes as a leaven of fighters. "Almost everything worth doing in this world," he argues, "has been done by the man who believed something strongly enough to fight for it alone."[47] Baker further describes two lone fighters he greatly admires: Robert Neidig who fought "Boss" Sam Parks; and John D. Huffman, Democratic legislators in the Illinois House of Representatives.

Baker describes Robert Neidig as an intense outraged reformer who, even when threatened with violence, "never lost his patience, never stopped fighting, doing his best to curb the progress of sure ruin which Parks was bringing upon the union."[48] Brave fighters like Neidig, Baker explains, are protected by their own bravery. If failure stalks men like Neidig, Baker is reminded of Thoreau's dictum that if our failures are made tragic by courage, they are not different from success.

Another example of a lone fighter that Baker admires is John D. Huffman of Illinois. As a politician in the Illinois House of Representatives, Huffman, according to Baker, "seemed out of place there, he was not well dressed his hands were hard and rough with work: he couldn't make a speech to save his life."[49] Additionally, because Huffman refused a bribe and was an outcast who took no part in the political rowdiness that surrounded him, Baker describes him as a "monument of decency and dignity of character, winning the respect of the corrupt men around him, even coming to prominence in the Chicago newspaper dispatches for the miracle of his honesty."[50]

[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid, 196.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.

Were it not for hundreds of quiet reformers like Neidig and Huffman, Baker argues that "we might just as well go out of business as a republic."[51] One lone fighter, no matter how obscure, "can get results amazing in their importance: one such man is worth about four thousand so-called respectable citizens who stay at home and talk about the shame of boss rule."[52] Unlike Sinclair, nevertheless, Baker on no occasion asserts that the American public is in the hands of an angry capitalist conspiracy. Baker's solution to the problems caused by corruption is not socialism but a renewed civic and personal responsibility. Baker consistently reminds the American people that the moral corruption of American life is symptomatic of the moral corruption of the American people themselves.

Because Ray Stannard Baker, as a muckraker, regarded lawlessness and corruption as an ever-present situation caused by public apathy, he viewed his role as a preacher and minister of public morality. The journalists of the progressive era, Baker argues, were the vehicle through which God spoke to man. "The journalist," Baker wrote in his notebook, "is a true servant of democracy. The best journalist of today occupies the exact place of the prophets of old, he cries out the truth and calls for reform. The news is the way God speaks to man."[53] To Baker, his crusade against special privilege, was a real war. When he is wounded, he once wrote to his father, he bleeds nothing but ink. "But," he wrote, "ink may serve the purpose. If it doesn't, I pity the country."[54]

In summary, the arguments used by Ida Tarbell and Ray Stannard Baker, in sharp contrast to the arguments used by Upton Sinclair in The Dead Hand series, were not only restrained and moderate, but they clearly reflected the middle-class ethics and values of their readers. Their proposals for solutions to the problems were always modest. What the country needed, Tarbell and Baker argued, was a renewal of personal morality and a reaffirmation of democratic principles. Instituting socialism would not solve the country's problems. Society, Tarbell and Baker argued, needed only adjustments, not major surgery.

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[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid, 197.
[53] Harold S. Wilson, *McClure's Magazine and the Muckrakers*, 2015, 208.
[54] Ibid, 314.

Moreover, the issues raised by Tarbell and Baker were always specific and tangible, rarely vague and abstract. Tarbell, for example, demonstrated the direct relationship between the evils of the standard and the price of the man on the street paid for heating oil. Baker showed the price of the man in the street paid to subsidize corrupt labor bosses. By contrast, because Upton Sinclair believed that socialism was inevitable, he rarely related the problems caused by capitalism to the solutions offered by socialism. Even in The Jungle, Sinclair's most successful novel, Sinclair never relates the problems of the meatpacking industry to the solutions that socialism would bring.

Lastly, the accuracy of S.S. McClure as an acute barometer of public opinion greatly assisted the writers on his staff. His genius as editor coupled with the influence and financial resources his magazine offered, contributed substantially to the success and prestige of Ida Tarbell and Ray Stannard Baker.[55]

V. 4. Lincoln Steffens

Lincoln Steffens was the third member of the McClure's triad. He was born in San Francisco in 1866 and grew to adulthood relatively unaware of the political turbulence of the late nineteenth century. Because of a somewhat euphoric account Steffens wrote of his friend, Theodore Roosevelt, then governor of New York, Lincoln Steffens attracted the attention of S.S. McClure. Steffens joined the McClure's staff in 1901.[56]

Lincoln Steffens was regarded as something of an eccentric on the McClure's staff. The atmosphere at McClure's has been described as one of Victorian civility. Steffens, however, was not one to observe such social amenities. Harold S. Wilson, a critic of the muckraking movement, describes Steffens to the staid members of the magazine staff: "His self-sufficiency, hostility to criticism, and irritating skepticism of people's motives disguised a brilliant analytical mind that often burdened the staff's tolerance. The Steffens at McClure's does not appear to be the Steffens of the

[55] Ibid, 192.
[56] Ibid, 89-93.

Autobiography. He was at McClure's the bantam sophisticate with the pince-nez who asked his political informants what the hell was really going on in municipal politics."[57]

Steffens became famous as a muckraker of municipal politics. In the fall of 1902, he commenced writing his muckraking series, collectively titled "The Shame of the Cities." The series is made up of seven articles, all appearing in McClure's: "Tweed Days in St. Louis"; "The Shame of Minneapolis"; "The Shamelessness of St. Louis"; "Pittsburgh, a City Ashamed"; "Philadelphia: Corrupt and Content" "Chicago: Half Free and Fighting on": and "New York: Good Government in Danger." In 1904, Steffens collected the seven articles and published them in book form, called "The Shame of the Cities."[58]

Steffens, in an introductory statement to, in The Shame of the Cities, explains why he chose to muckrake these six American cities. He chose them because, he writes, each one of them strikingly typifies some particular facet of municipal corruption. Saint-Louis, he argues, "exemplified boodle Minneapolis, police graft; Pittsburgh, a political and industrial machine, and Philadelphia, general civic corruption so Chicago was an illustration of reform, and New York of good government."[59]

Steffens' purpose in exposing the shame of these cities was to bring out "what light each one had for the instruction of the others,"[60] to see if "the shameful facts, spread out in all their shame, would not burn through our civic shamelessness and set fire to American pride."[61] Thus, Steffens' purpose was overtly rhetorical:

> I wanted to move and convince. That is why I was not interested in all the facts, sought none that was new and rejected half those that were old. I was often asked to expose something suspected. I couldn't and why should I? Exposure of the unknown was not my purpose. The people: what they will put up with, how they

[57] Ibid, 96.
[58] Lincoln Steffens, *The Shame of the Cities*, 1989.
[59] Ibid, 12-13.
[60] Ibid, 12.
[61] Ibid, 13.

> are fooled, how cheaply they are bought, how dearly sold, how easily intimidated, and how led, for good or evil that was the inquiry, and so the significant facts were those only which everybody in each city knew, and of these, only those which everybody in every other town would recognize, from their common knowledge of such things, to be probable.[62]

Thus, rather than ferreting out obscure evidences of municipal corruption, Steffens preferred to demonstrate the venality of some person, political institution or social force of which the public was already predisposed to believe the worst.

"Tweed Days in St. Louis," the first of the series, established the argumentative pattern Steffens generally followed in subsequent articles. Consequently, by a careful examination of it, Steffens' rhetorical strategies can be discovered. Steffens begins "Tweed Days in St. Louis" with a description of St. Louis's lone fighter of municipal corruption, Joseph. W. Folk, the Circuit Attorney:

> He is a thin-lipped, firm-mouthed, dark, little man, who never raises his voice, but goes ahead doing, with a smiling eye and a set jaw, the simple thing he said he would do. The politicians and reputable citizens who asked him to run urged him when he declined. When he said that if elected, he would have to do his duty, they said, "Of course." Now some of these politicians are sentenced to the penitentiary, some are in Mexico. The Circuit Attorney, finding that his "duty" was to catch and convict criminals, and that the biggest criminals were some of these same politicians and leading citizens, went after them. It is magnificent, but the politicians declare it isn't politics.[63]

Even though corruption in St. Louis is now omnipresent, at one time, Steffens argues, St. Louis, "excelled in a sense of civic beauty and good government. However, he explains, a change occurred. Public enterprise, Steffens explains, became private

[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid, 18.

greed. It is not surprising, he continues, that when the leading citizens of St. Louis began to plunder their own city, the herd rushed into the trough and fed also."[64]

From the streets of St. Louis to the Municipal Assembly, corruption spread to all departments of the city like a virus. "Men empowered to issue peddlers licenses and permits to citizens who wished to erect awnings or use a portion of the sidewalk for storage purposes charged an amount in excess of the prices stipulated by law, and pocketed the difference," Steffens writes.[65] "The city's money was loaned at interest, and the interest was converted into private bank accounts. City carriages were used by wives and children of city officials. Supplies for public institutions found their way to private tables: one itemized account of food furnished the poorhouse included California jellies, imported cheeses, and French Wine!"[66]

In the midst of all this political corruption, Steffens contends, the unexpected happened. By accident, the Democrats nominated and elected Joseph W. Folk for Circuit Attorney. The leaders of the Democratic Party, Steffens argues, were not really interested in reform. "There was little difference between the two parties in the city; but the rascals that were in had been getting the greater share of the spoils and the outs the Democrats wanted more than was given them. 'Boodle was not the issue, no exposures were made or threatened, and the bosses expected to control their men if elected."[67]

Three weeks after Folk's election, however, it was quite evident that the political bosses of St. Louis did not control him, according to Steffens. In short order, Folk brought indictments against the leading citizens of the city, charging them with bribery, perjury and vote fraud. As a consequence, Steffens explains, "consternation spread among the boodle gang."[68] The wealthy boodlers of St. Louis, Steffens continues, were all aligned against this one brave man. It was not until many indictments were returned that even a

[64] Ibid, 19.
[65] Ibid, 21.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid, 22.
[68] Ibid, 28.

citizens' committee was formed to furnish Folk with the necessary support he needed. From the onset and for most of the battle, Steffens argues, Folk was indeed a lone fighter.

In "Tweed Days in St. Louis," Lincoln Steffens repetitively demonstrates the indefatigability and determination of Folk to root deeper and deeper into the sources of municipal corruption. Though Folk's life was threatened, Steffens attests to his relentless pursuit of justice. "At last," Steffens writes, "the ax struck the greatest oak of the forest, Colonel Butler, the boss who had controlled elections in St. Louis for many years. The millionaire who had risen from bellows boy on a blacksmiths' shop to be the maker and guide of the governors of Missouri, one of the men who helped nominate and elect folk he also was indicted on two counts charging attempted bribery."[69] Thus, in "Tweed Days in St. Louis," the first in Steffens' Shame of Cities series, Steffens describes the dramatic effect of one honest man on a city sweltering in corruption.

Steffens concludes "Tweed Days in St. Louis" by arguing that the political conditions of St. Louis are typical of the political conditions everywhere. "Other cities are today in the same conditions of St. Louis before Mr. Folk were invited to see its rottenness. Chicago is cleaning itself up just now, Minneapolis and Pittsburgh recently had a bribery scandal: Boston is at peace, Cincinnati and St. Paul are satisfied, while Philadelphia is happy with the worst government in the world. As for the small towns and the villages, many of these are busy as bees at the loot."[70] For Steffens, however, St. Louis has one advantage: its citizens are not resigned to the omnipresence of corruption. Best of all, the citizens of St. Louis have Folk as an example.

The corrupt businessmen whom Steffens considers the prime sources of municipal corruption, have rarely been pursued and prosecuted as often or as well as in St. Louis. As a result, the city might learn from its shame and restore good government. If not, the exposures of folk will result only in the perfection of a corrupt system. "For the corrupt can learn a lesson when the good citizens cannot," Steffens warns.[71]

[69] Ibid, 33.
[70] Ibid, 34.
[71] Ibid.

Like the Tweed ring in New York, which taught Tam many Halls how to organize its boodle business, Steffens argues that the rascals of St. Louis will learn the same thing "they will concentrate the control of their bribery system, excluding from the profit sharing the great mass of weak rascals, and carrying on the business as a business in the interests of a trustworthy few."[72] Thus, municipal corruption can be transformed into a profit-making business. The problems of municipal government, according to Steffens, are not solved once and for all. "The people may get tired of it," writes Steffens, "but they cannot give it up -- not yet."[73]

The rhetorical strategies used by Lincoln Steffens strongly resemble the major strategies used by Ida Tarbell and Ray Stannard Baker. All three writers emphasize the typicality of the problems they cite, the direct relevance of their arguments to the experiences of their readers and the extensive use of personal appeals.

All three writers repeatedly demonstrate the broad applicability of the problems they analyzed. Ida Tarbell, for example, argues that the Standard Oil Trust is both a typical trust as well as the prototype of all subsequent trusts. Baker argues that the problems of labor and capital are symptomatic of the widespread problems of American life. Steffens argues that the corruption he uncovered was representative of the corruption legion in hosts of American cities.

Furthermore, Ida Tarbell, Ray Stannard Baker and Lincoln Steffens frequently pointed out the relevance of their arguments to the daily lives of their readers. All three writers made concerted efforts to demonstrate how the problems they uncovered personally touched the lives of their readers. Their enemy was always visible and palpable: John D. Rockefeller, Sam Parks, Colonel Butler of St. Louis. Unlike Upton Sinclair, Ida Tarbell, Ray Stannard Baker and Lincoln Steffens rarely used vague descriptions.

[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid.

Moreover, not only were the problems uncovered by the McClure's muckrakers eminently visible and solvable but the remedies were equally visible and directly applicable. All three writers rely heavily on personal appeals to the reader. Baker and Steffens in particular appeal to their reader's sense of patriotism, civic pride and personal responsibility. Thus, the reader is made the agent for solving social and political problems. "All we have to do," writes Steffens, "is to establish a steady demand for good government." Baker and Miss Tarbell would concur with Steffens' dictum. Thus, the three leading muckrakers advocated only adjustments rather than a rejection of the capitalist system. The establishment of a socialist form of government the solution most often advocated by Upton Sinclair was never seriously advocated, by the leaders of the muckraking movement.[74]

Moreover, none of McClure's staff members sensationalized their messages, created scapegoats, relied on hearsay, or advocated doctrinaire or partisan causes, largely due to the direct influence of S.S. McClure. Accuracy, relevance, and restraint were McClure's demands. In addition, McClure was willing to provide his staff with the financial resources necessary for their research. Ida Tarbell, Ray Stannard Baker, and Lincoln Steffens owed much to their editor's skill and generosity.

V. 5. Upton Sinclair: The Muckraker's Progress?

An analysis of the major rhetorical strategies of the leading muckrakers contrasted with the strategies used by Upton Sinclair in The Dead Hand series reveals that Sinclair was indeed an intemperate researcher. To continually argue that the establishment of a socialist form of government would be the solution to all human problems not only strains the reader's credibility but was a far more radical solution than any advocated by the McClure's muckrakers. Ray Stannard Baker, among others, rejected socialism as too extreme a solution. Socialism, if it should come, writes Baker, "must be accompanied by a sterner sort of moral individualism that is commonly exhibited in this country today. If

[74] Muckrakers such as Gustavus Myers, Charles Russell and Upton Sinclair, however, did advocate the replacement of the capitalist system with socialism. However, none of these writers reached the eminence or the influence of the writers on the McClure's staff.

this republic is to be saved, it must be saved by individual effort."[75] What was needed, all three writers agreed, was an extension and renewal of capitalistic rather than socialistic principles. The gulf separating Upton Sinclair's rhetorical strategies from those used by the leading muckrakers can be demonstrated by comparing Sinclair's essay, "The Muckrake Man" with Ray Stannard Baker's essay, "The Lone Fighter."

In "The Muckrake Man," published in September 1908 in The Independent,[76] Sinclair offers his description of the function and purpose of the man with the muckrake. The muckrake man, according to Sinclair, is a noxious weed possessing some mystical conviction enabling him to withstand the most persistent vilification. "What is it," writes Sinclair, "which gives this unpleasant weed its extraordinary vitality?"[77] Arguing that he is speaking for nearly every man then currently raking muck in America and not for himself alone, Sinclair explains that the muckraker draws his vitality from the fact that the muckrake man takes himself and his reforming impulses seriously, that he is, in fact, the con science of his society. "He is the particular nerve cell in the burned child who cries out to the child, do not put your finger into the fire again! "He represents," Sinclair continues, "the effort of the race to profit by experience, and to do otherwise than repeat indefinitely the blunders which have proved fatal in the past."[78]

Sinclair's muckrake man, because of his high-mindedness, his aggrieved social conscience, is a man to whom saving civilization has become an obsession. The muckrake man, Sinclair declares, "sees a beautiful world about him, with stars and flowers and all sorts of things which interest him. He knows of many things he would like to do and to be, many ways in which he could amuse himself."[79]

And yet, because of his noble, compulsive preoccupation to rid the world of blunders, the muckrake man instead goes about the world, Sinclair asserts, pointing up disagreeable truths to people. In spite of an indifferent public. Sinclair's muckrake man

[75] Baker, "The Lone Fighter," 197.
[76] Upton Sinclair, "The Muckrake Man," *The Independent*, September 1908.
[77] Ibid, 517.
[78] Ibid, 518.
[79] Ibid.

says to himself, "This is a serious matter. It cannot be neglected. The people will not believe it but I will prove it to them."[80]

And so, Sinclair continues, the muckrake man begins to gather evidence. Because of the serious nature of his work, Sinclair contends, one would think the muckrake man would instantaneously win acclaim of the public in whose behalf he so strenuously labors. Unfortunately, Sinclair maintains, this is not the case. Because the American people take its opinions from American newspapers, Sinclair asserts, the indictments made by the muckrake man are suppressed or distorted because "the newspapers are owned by men who profit from corruption. Hence, it is that the muckrake man and his work are regarded with aversion."[81] This particular argument that a newspaper conspiracy exists in order to keep the truth from the American people is the central thesis of The Brass Check, published twelve years later.

Sinclair concludes his essay with a refutation of the allegations most often cast upon the muckrake man: that he has an evil imagination, a penchant for corruption, an addiction for notoriety and money, and a hater of humanity. All of these allegations are untrue, Sinclair asserts. All the muckrake men Sinclair is acquainted with are

> all men of personally clean lives and generous hearts: there is not one of them who would not have been something noble, if he had felt free to choose. Of those who come immediately to my mind, one would have been a metaphysician, another would have been a professor of ethics, three at least would have been poets, and one would have founded a new religion. Instead of that they are Muckrake Men. But they are Muckrake Men, not because they love corruption, but simply because they hate it with an intensity which forbids them to think about anything else while corruption sits enthroned.[82]

[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid, 519.
[82] Ibid.

Because of their intense hatred of corruption Sinclair explains that the man with the muckrake is a man of compulsion, working incessantly. He is, writes Sinclair, a man of extraordinary power: and if instead of indicting rich capitalists he were defending them, he would be wealthy and a welcome guest among the four hundred. As things are, Sinclair contends, the muckrake man usually lives alone in a quiet hotel, labors for several months over an article and sells it for nothing.

Ray Stannard Baker in "The Lone Fighter" constructs a significantly different portrait of the muckrake man. The muckrake man that emerges from Baker's essay is not a high-minded idealist, is not obsessed with saving civilization and is not conspired against. Rather, Baker's muckrake man is a middle-class fighter, indignant at the debasement of the American promise.

More importantly, however, Baker, Tarbell and Steffens were repeatedly urged to suppress any messianic zeal. Their editor, S.S. McClure felt that any crusading on their part would create a self-consciousness in their writing which would damage their efforts. "Let other people mention it!" was his recommendation, which his closely watched staff followed and, as Beltz argues, "not coincidentally won reputation as authoritative journalists."[83] That Sinclair could believe that the muckrake man typically publishes his articles out of compulsive messianic impulses and sells his article for a few dollars seems rather puzzling and quixotic, especially in light of the public acclaim and financial rewards Ida Tarbell, Ray Stannard Baker and Lincoln Steffens had received.

Sinclair's essay, "The Muckrake Man," however, demonstrates other dissimilarities with the McClure's writers. For example, Sinclair argues that the muckraker started his career with no theories, as a simple observer of phenomena who followed the facts which, to Sinclair, inevitably led the muckrake man to the conclusion that he was actively enlisted in a revolt against capitalism. This argument is not only untenable, especially since Sinclair claims that he is speaking for nearly every muckraker in the country, but it also demonstrates the inaccuracy of Sinclair's analysis of the essential muckraking character. "What you report," Sinclair said to Lincoln Steffens in

[83] Beltz, "Preachers of Social Discontent," 262.

the early years of muckraking, "is enough to make a complete picture of the system, but you seem not to see it. Don't you see it? Don't you see what you are showing?"[84] Evidentially, Lincoln Steffens did not.

In spite of their differences, Ida Tarbell, Ray Stannard Baker, Lincoln Steffens and Upton Sinclair shared many similarities. All four shared a concern for the moral, economic and physical wellbeing of the country and felt an urgent need to alert the American people to what had gone wrong and what might be necessary to put things right again. Unlike Sinclair, however, few of the other muckrakers ever threat ended the basic foundations of the American capitalist system. Although American socialists such as Gustavus Myers, Charles Edward Russell and Upton Sinclair gravitated towards the muckraking movement, the most persuasive and respected members were middle-class reformers defending traditional American ideals and the essential soundness of the American character.

Ida Tarbell, Ray Stannard Baker and Lincoln Steffens, called the greatest journalist trio in the muckraking movement, were far from radical. Their analysis, so vigorously presented in McClure's magazine, did indeed disturb the character of a contented nation. Their faith and optimism, Lynda Beltz argues, "made them unwilling to admit that the evil they uncovered in the social order meant that democracy was a failure or that radical changes in the status quo were called for."[85]

In April 1906, in a speech dedicating the House Office Building, President Theodore Roosevelt coined the term "muckraker." Roosevelt feared that the muckraker, the man who could look no way but downward, who stressed the negative aspects of American life, might encourage the radicals who sought to basically reconstruct the American social order. Soon after Roosevelt's speech, the muckraking movement declined so that by the middle of Woodrow Wilson's first term in office, the muckrakers' influence, for a variety of reasons, was thoroughly exhausted.

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[84] Rideout, *The Radical Novel in the United States, 1900-1954: Some Interrelations of Literature and Society*, 30.
[85] Beltz, "Preachers of Social Discontent," 262.

There are several reasons why the muckraking movement came to an end. Publishing houses became cautious about publishing literature of exposure. Worse still, many of the large circulation muckraking magazines ceased publication. Hampton's, Arena, Success, and Twentieth Century all ceased publication by the beginning of the world war. McClure's and those that survived the muckraking era, transformed themselves into whisperers of popular fiction.

In addition, muckraking ceased as an active force in American life as a result of public indifference. Having been a potent force for over a decade, by 1914, the excitement had worn off. Furthermore, the world war delivered the fatal blow to the muckraking movement by diverting the attention of the American people away from the literature of exposure.

Those who, like Sinclair, succeeded the muckraking movement were unproductive and ineffective. The large-circulation magazine media had been denied them. They thus no longer had a means of influencing or controlling popular opinion. Often, like Sinclair, they fell victim to doctrinaire causes. Sinclair in particular was so inextricably wedded to the socialist gospel that he shared the fate of the socialist cause.

The harshest but perhaps truest thing that can be said of the latter-day muckrakers like Sinclair and others is, in Louis Filler's phrase, that "they were insects of the great wheel of events who persuaded themselves that they were turning it."[86] Thus, Sinclair's Dead Hand series, emerging on the American scene when the forces of socialism and the forces of progressive reform were but trailing penumbras, was a rhetorical act ill-fitting the rhetorical scene. As Kenneth Burke observes, "you can't get a fully socialist act unless you have a fully socialist scene."[87]

[86] Louis Filler, "The Muckrakers: In Flower and Failure," in Herbert Shapiro, ed., *The Muckrakers and American Society* (Boston: D.C. Heath and Company, 1968), 91. Filler was specifically referring to Herbert Croly and the writers of the New Republic.
[87] Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* (Univ of California Press, 1969), 14.

CONCLUSION

Throughout his lifetime, Upton Sinclair had been making tests of the big business practices in America. In every case, Sinclair found the combined forces of capitalism on the side of privilege and exploitation, almost nowhere were they on the side of democratic principles. "I had made notes and had envelopes full of clippings, and a head full of rage,"[1] he wrote. Sinclair put all of that rage into a remarkable series of books called, collectively, The Dead Hand series. Although the series was the first comprehensive indictment of capitalism, it failed to rally a mass audience. Several reasons can be offered accounting for this initial failure.

First, Sinclair's early experiences with "ecstasy" had convinced him in his early twenties that his life had a quasi-divine sanction. As a consequence, he never learned to doubt for a moment the rightness of his mission, the soundness of his philosophical convictions or the validity of the subjective evidence his own experiences provided. His ecstasies, moreover, served to preclude the need for self-criticism, the need for a searching inquiry and the need for audience analysis. Consequently, when Sinclair came to write The Dead Hand series in 1917, he never labored to create convincing situations or arguments.

Sinclair painstakingly gathered documentary evidence of the evil effects caused by Wall Street capitalism, his principal criterion for evaluating his evidence was whether or not it corresponded with the "truths" his ecstasies had revealed to him. The fact that publishers had often rejected his manuscripts and many literary authorities had ridiculed him only provided Sinclair with further evidence that a conspiracy against the "truth" existed.

Furthermore, Sinclair's reliance upon inner revelation as a principal generating source for his arguments often insulated Sinclair from the very audience for whom he was writing. Sinclair even disregarded the friendly criticism made by some of his most sympathetic critics. For example, Will Durant, in a letter to Sinclair, exclaimed, "One Jungle is worth so many arguments!" A. W. Ricker of Pearson's Magazine, in a letter of February 15, 1918, cautioned Sinclair about the probable failure of Profits of Religion. "Careful statisticians have declared that 85% of our people are religiously inclined," he

[1] Sinclair, *Autobiography*, 235.

wrote, "and resent an attack on religion." Sinclair, however, because of his inner revelations, felt himself and The Dead Hand series rewarded not by critical or popular acclaim but by what he called the "inner knowledge of a service rendered to the race."[2]

A second reason for the limited success of the series stems from Sinclair's family background. Born into a once powerful southern family ruined by the Civil War, Sinclair embraced socialism as a vehicle for regaining a rightful social position. Socialism not only gave him the key to all his problems but provided him with the opportunity of participating in an epic, ennobling struggle. Because his socialism was not a political theory, Sinclair in the series never created an appealing political strategy. His urge to rebel was satiated by literary as opposed to political activity.

Thirdly, The Dead Hand series was unsuccessful in attracting a mass audience for philosophical reasons. His utopian socialism coupled with his philosophical convictions caused him to create rhetorical strategies which dissociated him from the very audience he might have addressed. Unlike the leading muckrakers of the progressive era, Sinclair's absolutist view of the world, his elevation of what was essentially a political theory into a theological crusade compelled him to view possible conflicts between capital and labor as irreconcilable. The rhetorical strategies he created, as a result, rarely reached common accord with his audience because the philosophical convictions out of which he generated his rhetorical strategies were unyielding and doctrinaire. In the series, Sinclair was so inflexibly attached to his own brand of socialism that he almost entirely disregarded the problem of its practicality and applicability.

In addition, the most conspicuous rhetorical strategies Sinclair employed in the series the strategy of definition and the strategy of conspiracy spared Sinclair any painful or disturbing analysis while they ensured the survival of Sinclair's philosophical convictions. The strategy of conspiracy enabled Sinclair to vastly simplify the issues he confronted while the strategy of definition induced Sinclair to renounce the ease and intelligibility of customary usages and commonly held attitudes.

[2] Upton Sinclair, Money Writes! A Study of American Literature (Long Beach, California: Published by the Author, 1927), p. 223.

Moreover, Sinclair ignored the paradox caused by the strategies he employed. After so long an indictment of the capitalist system, after exposing the capitalists as brutal and base, Sinclair leaves the reader of The Dead Hand series deeply conscious of the disparity between his cheery, resilient optimism and the unqualified pessimism chronicled in the series.

If Sinclair's central thesis is correct that a vast, unbridled thoroughly organized and malevolent capitalist conspiracy existed the reader of the series can only marvel at the fact that Sinclair could still believe, in light of the overwhelming evidence to the contrary, that the masses of oppressed wage earners could be capable of any counteraction to such oppression. V.F. Calverton, in an essay entitled "Upton Sinclair an American Don Quixote," offers his explanation for Sinclair's immoderate optimism. Sinclair, he writes, was inspired by the highest motives but, with "the balmy credulity of a child, he has fallen in. A love with a myth and has endeavored to infuse it with the life breath of reality."[3] Because Sinclair was so ethereally self-consecrated to his charismatic mission of saving the world, his very lack of success fully confirmed, to himself anyway, the evidence of a conspiracy.

The failure of the series to influence a wide audience, however, was caused by more than psychological, structural and philosophical defects. Even though the series held historical significance and even though Sinclair was virtually alone in the 1920s preserving the muckraking tradition in America, the series had little social or political influence. Part of the failure was due to the rhetorical situation. It can be argued that after World War I, radical criticism, appeals to class consciousness and socialist homilies were not fitting responses to that rhetorical situation. Moreover, the lack of socialist influence in the period 1917-1927, and the demise of the Socialist Party contributed substantially to frustrating the creation of a rhetorical situation to which The Dead Hand series might have responded. When that situation changed as a result of the Great Depression, Sinclair and his series was looked upon more favorably. When Sinclair abandoned the extremist rhetoric of The Dead Hand series in 1933, joined the Democratic Party and outlined a

[3] V. F. Calverton, "Upton Sinclair - An American Don Quixote," *Haldeman-Julius Monthly*, Ill, April, 1926, 535.

simple program for ending unemployment in California, his program was so appealing that within six months, Sinclair was the Democratic candidate for Governor of California.

Thus, when economic forces dramatically changed the rhetorical situation and Sinclair modified his socialist ideas and merged with the Democratic Party, he almost immediately attracted the mass audience that had earlier been indifferent to The Dead Hand series. The failure of The Dead Hand series during the period 1917-1927 demonstrates Lloyd Bitzer's contention that a particular rhetorical climate must exist as a prerequisite for effective rhetorical discourse.

The Dead Hand series, in summary, was not directly influential in American life for many reasons. Instead of emulating the muckrakers who consistently sought practical solutions to social problems, Sinclair instead sought to discover the nirvana promised by socialism, the utopian cooperative commonwealth eternally imminent but just beyond intellectual apprehension. Sinclair as a consequence was not an effective social reformer because his peculiar Christian and mystical interpretation of socialism insulated him from any contact with evidence that might upset or unsettle his convictions. Unlike the muckrakers who were far more eager to understand phenomena than to dream socialist utopias, Sinclair's socialist theories fascinated him so much that any threatening argument never became visible to him.

Sinclair's socialist theories, besides serving as insulation, exorcised him from any responsibilities of the present condition. The evils of capitalism, he often argued, were but transient actualities, powerful though fading penumbras, destined soon to pass away, leaving a regenerated socialist society as its legacy. Consequently, because Sinclair believed that capitalism was historically destined to be transcended, he never offers the reader a specific political program.

While success often eluded him, Sinclair, by the fury of his ardor and the sheer volume of his writings, often managed to disturb the complacency of many. Sinclair, most notably in The Dead Hand series, sang the glad tidings of the millennium and the surety of his mission matched the clarity of his nostrums. Often brave, always humane, rarely ill-tempered, Sinclair was the knight-errant of utopian socialism. Like Don Quixote,

whom he much admired, facts were often the enemies of Sinclair's "truths." Why endure the Aldonzas of experience, Sinclair implies, when one can be transfixed by the Dulcina as of one's inner visions?

Out of his passion and compassion, Sinclair was' always eager for an answer, a Grand Solution. His pursuit of The Answer often exposed him to ridicule and his eccentric reputation made it easy for the American people to dismiss him as a serious critic. His mission in life he declared in The Book of Life was to "dedicate my energies to the extermination of poverty, war, parasitism and all forms of exploitation of man by his fellows."[4] Such a mission is as old as man himself, a preoccupation of the human race since Moses delivered the tablets and Jesus died on the cross.

Fighting so many causes with so few victories, Sinclair has to be admired at least for his steadfastness, having survived so many failures and drawing new hope from defeat as most other men do from victory. Few men in history have been more actively optimistic in the pursuit of their goals ironically, while his visions and optimism were the source of his zeal, they were at the same time the cause of his frustration. They blinded and imprisoned him in a doctrinaire philosophy.

The Dead Hand series was only a part of Sinclair's long and significant personal odyssey. His impulse to muckrake grew out of a deep religious, philosophical and psychological need to cast out wherever possible the corruption that prevented mankind from donning the celestial crown. In a modern Pilgrim's Progress, Sinclair found his redemption in socialism.

In 1933, Sinclair partly explained the motivating source of his messianic fanaticism: "Setting aside questions of fact, and considering merely those of psychology, it is obvious that a man who goes out to do battle in the world, convinced that he has God behind him, guiding his destiny such a man will be a more formidable adversary than one

[4] Upton Sinclair, The Book of Life, 4th ed. (1921; rpt. Long Beach California: Published by the Author, 1926), p. 30.

who relies upon his strength alone”[5]. If such a faith were enough, Sinclair would indeed have been a formidable adversary. Unfortunately, faith was not enough.

[5] Upton Sinclair, Upton Sinclair Presents William Fox (Los Angeles: Published by the Author, 1933), p. 11.

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Abstract

Upton Sinclair's Dead Hand series books are filled with wonderful insights and are frequently entertaining and instructive. His point of view as a utopian socialist is increasingly out of fashion at the beginning of the twenty-first century. However, it is still a valid and important point of view if we want to continue to act as reformers. If we believe that social improvement is possible. Because the series covers so many components of society, religion, education, journalism, and literature, it provides many ideas and reminds us of the power an idealist can exert. As nihilism continues to be the dominant philosophy in the late twentieth century, it may be wise to look back to a time when the muckraker was dominant in journalism. The Dead Hand series might be useful reading today for young people who believe there is little hope for solutions to modern problems. For his tireless and selfless efforts to uphold the values of the country he loved, Sinclair deserves to be remembered.

Keywords: Engaged literature, Social protest, Social criticism, Political activism, Reform, Idealism.

Résumé

Les livres de la série « Dead Hand » de Sinclair sont remplis d'idées merveilleuses et sont souvent divertissants et instructifs. Son point de vue de socialiste utopique est de plus en plus démodé en ce début du vingt-et-unième siècle. Cependant, ce point de vue reste valable et important si nous voulons continuer à agir en tant que réformateurs. Si nous croyons que l'amélioration sociale est possible. Parce que la série couvre tant de composantes de la société, la religion, l'éducation, le journalisme et la littérature, elle fournit de nombreuses idées et nous rappelle le pouvoir qu'un idéaliste peut exercer. Alors que le nihilisme continue d'être la philosophie dominante de la fin du vingtième siècle, il peut être judicieux de se tourner vers une époque où le « muckraking » dominait le journalisme. La série « Dead Hand » pourrait être une lecture utile aujourd'hui pour les jeunes qui pensent qu'il y a peu d'espoir de trouver des solutions aux problèmes modernes. Pour ses efforts inlassables et désintéressés en vue de défendre les valeurs du pays qu'il aimait, Sinclair mérite que l'on se souvienne de lui.

Mots-clés : Littérature engagée, protestation sociale, critique sociale, activisme politique, réforme, idéalisme.

ملخص

يتناول هذا البحث دراسة تصوير المجتمع والسياسة الأمريكية في سلسلة "اليد الميتة" للكاتب والسياسي أبتون سينكلير. أراد الكاتب الشهير والناشط الاجتماعي بإيصال فكرة الاشتراكية، وتوجيه انتقاداته إلى الرأسمالية. يهدف هذا البحث إلى تحليل أعماله من منظور اجتماعي وسياسي، حيث يعرض البحث الموضوعات المتعلقة بالفساد والظلم والاستغلال التي يراها متشابكة في نسيج المجتمع الأمريكي. كما يستعرض هذا البحث أسلوب الكاتب الأدبي واستخدامه للرمزية والمجاز للتعبير عن أفكاره. ومن خلال قراءة دقيقة لسلسلة "اليد الميتة"، يستنتج البحث الدور الهام الذي تلعبه أعمال سينكلير في التعليق على المسائل المعاصرة مثل عدم المساواة في الدخل وجشع الشركات وتآكل الحريات المدنية. وعلاوة على ذلك، يسلط هذا البحث الضوء على السياق التاريخي الذي كتبت فيه هذه الروايات، وكيف تتماشى موضوعاتها ورسائلها مع الواقع الحالي. يختتم البحث بتأكيد أن إسهام سينكلير في الأدب والحوار السياسي الأمريكي ما زال يعتبر ذا أهمية ومغزى، ويستمر في إثارة تفاعل القراء.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأدب المنخرط، الاحتجاج المجتمعي، النقد المجتمعي، النشاط السياسي، الإصلاح، المثالية.