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A Comparative Analysis of Upton Sinclair's The Jungle and Emile Zola's Germinal

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of English

East Tennessee State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in English

by

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May 2001

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Keywords: Naturalist Fiction

ABSTRACT

A Comparative Analysis of Upton Sinclair's The Jungle and Emile Zola's Germinal

by

Mouhamedoul A. Niang

This study attempts to demonstrate that Upton Sinclair's The Jungle was modeled upon Emile Zola's Germinal. A comparative analysis of their novels is the method by which the latter statement is substantiated. A close reading of these works unveils their overlappings in terms of characterization, theme and narrative. Following the introduction, the second chapter focuses on both authors' character constructions with the purpose of tracing the modeling process. The third chapter is a discussion of their similar thematic issues. The penultimate chapter deals with the identical formats of the writers' plots. Authorial differences are also considered in this work, but overall the main finding simply corroborates the validity of the aforementioned thesis. Its significance lies in the extent to which it sheds light on the close relationship between American and European literatures.

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DEDICATION

In Memoriam of my grandmothers Mariama Fofana and Sokhna Khadidiatou Sarr. Rest
in Peace.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A. Owen Aldridge once made an interesting reference to William Ellery Channing's wish to see America have a "literature of its own both to counteract and to appreciate imported ones" (7). In fact, the "reverse is just as applicable in the twentieth century— that students of American literature need a knowledge of relevant foreign works as an aid for the understanding of domestic ones"(7). This study of Emile Zola's Germinal and Upton Sinclair's The Jungle would provide a response to Aldridge's invitation by reflecting the long-standing connection between American and European literatures. American writers have for a long time been affected by the literary tendencies of the Old World. Upton Sinclair is no exception in this respect. In Upton Sinclair: American Rebel, for instance, Leon Harris draws attention to the influencing of the muckraker by the father of Naturalism (84). William A. Bloodworth, Jr. also points out Sinclair's looking up to Germinal as a model (53). Sir Arthur Conan Doyle goes a step further by simply "baptizing" Sinclair the "Zola of America" (quoted in Jon A. Yoder's Upton Sinclair, 2). Still in the same vein, "The New York Times," Harris reports, "devoted a long review to 'A dispassionate Examination of Upton Sinclair's application of Zola's Methods to a Chicago Environment'" (84). Notwithstanding the influence Zola had on Sinclair, the two writers' lifetime experiences not only governed their stylistic choices and agendas; they are filled with particulars that bring them even much closer to each other.

Born in Paris on April 2, 1840, as Emile-Edouard-Charles-Antoine, Zola died in 1902, four years before the publication of America's first proletarian novel, Sinclair's

The Jungle (1906). Zola's father's occupation as an engineer in Aix-en-Provence enabled him to enjoy a fairly comfortable living till age seven, when his social status started declining on account of his father's unexpected death—he died of pleurisy in Marseilles. Francois Zola did not secure a legacy for his wife and son. As their means of sustenance dwindled, Zola and his mother moved to Paris, but their situation there was no better; they were in constant search for cheaper lodgings and at times had to dispose of their belongings to survive. Ernest A. Vizetelly makes the following comment in this regard: “Bit by bit every superfluous article of furniture was sold; remnants of former finery were carried to the wardrobe dealers, to obtain the means of purchasing daily bread and paying Emile's college fees” (46).

Remarkably enough, Zola's mother, Emilie Aubert, insisted that her son get the education he deserved. Similarly, Sinclair's mother strove to nurture the aristocratic values inherent to the boy's father's lineage—the Sinclairs belonged to a class of long time Naval officers with Confederate loyalties of which the writer's father was very proud. A good schooling and an initiation in religious matters along with a strict middle-class clothing fashion were the main characteristics of Sinclair's early upbringing. In the case of the Sinclairs, it is not Upton father's death that excluded them from the high-class rank, but rather his drinking habits. As Morris Dickstein notes, the family “moved to New York when Upton was eight or nine and lived in a succession of cheap rooming houses, as his father slowly destroyed himself with drink and his mother, acutely feeling her decline in status, gave Upton heavy doses of religion and morality” (The Jungle, Introduction vi).

In his autobiography, My Lifetime in Letters, Sinclair refers to how his mother's Victorian perception of sexuality induced his aversion for it. The early stages of these authors' lives elevate a strong mother figure who constantly saw to it that her child be provided with good virtues. Zola's mother also impressed such a Victorian understanding of physical sexuality upon her son. Sexual intercourse, they were told, had to be confined to the matrimonial framework and was to be understood as a "life-giving sacrament," to use Jean Albert Bédé's terms (19), rather than a pleasure-seeking activity. Surprisingly enough, both Sinclair and Zola sought refuge in hard work and intensive reading— while the former resorted to Hugo and other romantic poets, the latter devoured the bulk of Shakespeare's and Shelley's works— just to keep away from any sensual and physical contact with the opposite sex. Moreover, it is worth noting that the naturalist's temperament received a far more significant boost from his mother. As Angus Wilson observes, "Emile's ambition and will to power, almost the most important elements in his genius, would seem to have derived not from rivalry of his father's achievements but from determination to avoid his lack of success. This view of his father must presumably have come from his mother" (3). If ever sketched at all, the father figure simply appears not as a role model but as a symbol of failure. François Zola's career, for one, was first jeopardized by the Orleanists' fall, a disadvantage orchestrated by Louis Napoleon's military coup.

Although he ultimately secured an excellent contract with the Aix-en-Provence municipality, his untimely death ended the beginning of a successful career. Zola was deeply affected by his father's inability to rise to prominence (Wilson 3). Just as the Orleanists' downfall led to an impasse for the Zola family, so did the aftermath of the

American Civil War for the Sinclairs. These southerners had been prominent naval officers in the south for decades, a privilege shattered by the Union victory over the Confederates. Nostalgic and proud as he was, Sinclair's father could hardly support his wife and son from his liquor business. As a matter of fact, he excelled more as a drunkard than as a trader. Leon Harris's foray into this matter unveils a pathetic father/son interaction along the drudgeries and the feelings it brought about:

As the child repeatedly searched for and found his father and somehow got him home (except when delirium tremens made it necessary to take him for brutal treatment to a charity hospital), he must have had such mixed feelings of repugnance, loyalty, mortification, and love as he would be unable ever to express satisfactorily. (8)

Equally shocking was Sinclair's and Zola's seesawing between poverty and ease.

In the process of their maturations, both Sinclair and Zola had to contend with the reality of class dualism through their exposure to a double lifestyle and thereby to opposite social conditions. The French naturalist thus struck up a friendship with Paul Cézanne as he attended Aix's College Bourbon. At this time, the financial situation of the Zola family had gone from bad to worse, and the sense of one's class degeneracy was made acutest by the constant mingling with children from well-to-do families such as the Cézannes. The climax of this feeling was capped at the Lycée Saint-Louis, one of the top-ranking schools in Paris. Here Zola's accent caused him trouble, while his class inferiority evidently appeared through the contrast between his ragged attire and that of

his classmates. As for Sinclair, the following confession on his part suffices to buttress the argument here put across, viz., the novelists' immersion in two conflicting milieus.

Readers of my novels know that I have one favorite theme, the contrast between the social classes. There are characters from both worlds, the rich and the poor, and the plots are contrived to carry you from one to the other. The explanation is that as far back as I can remember, my life was a series of Cinderella transformations; one night I would be sleeping on a vermin-ridden sofa in a lodginghouse, and the next night under silken coverlets in a fashionable home. It all depended on whether my father had the money for the week's board... No Cephetua or Aladdin in fairy lore ever stepped back and forth between the hovel and the palace as frequently as I. (Autobiography 9)

As a matter of fact, their first attempts at fiction writing were carried out in a context of financial instability. Having failed his baccalaureate in Paris and Aix, Zola felt obliged to leave his mother—the latter was disappointed by her son's inability to become a lawyer—in order to fend for himself. The naturalist failed to secure a job at first, however. Influenced by certain romantic principles, Zola contented himself with the bohemian lifestyle then rampant in Paris. He lived from hand to mouth, but suffered a great deal during the cold season. Bétina L. Knapp makes a most detailed elaboration of these critical moments in Zola's life.

The winters of 1860-62 were particularly arduous for Zola. He sold few stories and still fewer poems. There were days when his room was so cold that he would have to remain in bed to keep warm. He pawned whatever he was able to spare. He ate bread

soaked in the oil sent him by his friends from Provence; when he could, he added a bit of cheese to his sparse regimen or a fruit of some sort. The summers were not so bad since the neighborhood parks offered him the greenery for which he so longed. By April 1861, Zola was unable to pay his rent. He moved to 11 rue Soufflot, a boarding house occupied by poor students and prostitutes. (9)

His situation was so desperate that he took to trapping and roasting sparrows for nourishment.

Zola was not solitary at all in experiencing the pangs of hunger, for his lover and ultimate wife shared in his sufferings. Their economic situation somewhat improved as he successively found positions at the docks in Paris and at Charpentier, a publishing company. With regards to Sinclair, completion of a degree at New York's City College did not open any job opportunity for the muckraker. Although his potboilers sometimes provided him with money enough to support his mother, it was not uncommon at all that he found himself in a dire need. As a matter of fact, Sinclair wished Andrew Carnegie would grant him a scholarship so that he could excel as "a creator and not as a scholar" (Harris 48). Sinclair vividly recounts his hard times in Springtime and Harvest, an autobiography in which Corydon and Thyrsis, or simply Meta and her husband, along with their son David suffered from wintry weathers and malnutrition. It is actually by dint of self-deprivation that Sinclair turned into an ascetic who believed in the curing powers of fasting. His infatuation with farming and the countryside—Sinclair tended a farm in New Jersey—accounted for his reliance on gardening as a way to cater to his family's needs. His refusal to seek a regular and a normal occupation, his obsession with writing,

which he thought to be the only way out, alongside the many publication obstacles he encountered—as did Zola—just made matters worse. At one point, Mrs. Sinclair and her son David, upon her father’s insistence, left her husband to escape from starvation. In spite of it all, it should be noted that neither Zola nor Sinclair lost faith in his abilities as writers. In his retracing of Zola’s life, Elliott M. Grant alludes to a discussion between the naturalist and Jules Vallés:

Jules recalled his first meeting with Zola in 1864 at Hachette’s. They talked, among other things, of the future, and Zola asked him bluntly: “Do you feel yourself to be a power?” Whatever Vallés may have replied is not recorded, but Zola then said: “Speaking for myself, I feel I am one.” (41)

The confidence Zola evinced is no happenstance; it is actually the aftereffect of his mother’s insistence on achievement and success, and Zola’s understanding of the term “power” is closely tied to these factors. His famous open letter, “J’accuse,” to Félix Faure, President of the French Republic, not only spoke out against the anti-Semitism rampant in the French army, but also championed the cause of one Jewish officer wrongly accused of high treason. Zola’s contribution in this affair eventually led to Captain Dreyfus’s liberation. This latter instance reflects the extent to which Zola rated himself. It is then not surprising that he thought himself invested with the role of revolutionizing French literature. He achieved such a task by seeking inspiration from Claude Bernard’s Introduction à l’étude de la médecine expérimentale, a work that “proposes that the experimental method used in physics and chemistry be applied to medicine” (Diane M. Smith 158). Zola took it upon himself to apply this same method to literature. He dissociated himself from Hugo, his former guru, to pioneer a genre known

as Scientific Naturalism. Zola's famous reputation was built on this latter literary innovation.

In a like manner, Sinclair gained fame as the author of America's first proletarian literary novel. He accordingly appeared as a reformer in a genuine zolaesque fashion. Moreover, Sinclair's involvement in the Sacco-Vanzetti case and his picketing of the Carnegie headquarters in denunciation of the Ludlow massacre also evince a similar mindset. They believed they had to make themselves heard not for the sake of publicity, but simply because they knew their voices would have a powerful impact on the masses and on decision-makers as well. The Jungle and Germinal accurately exemplify this investment. Yet, influential and able though they were, each one of them hit at one point against a wall of utter disdain and aloofness or spite. True, Zola and Sinclair respectively earned the Medallion of the Legion of Honor and the Pulitzer Prize, but they certainly would have felt more satisfaction had they been chosen to membership in the French Academy or to receive the Nobel Prize for literature, especially.

In addition, their attempts as playwrights completely went awry. It is worth pointing out that both Zola and Sinclair were deeply interested in play composition, but they owe their success to the novel as a genre as opposed to play-writing. Thus Harris remarks in this respect that "Upton's plays were quite as unsuccessful in published form as they were on the stage, but for him the theater was El Dorado" (114). Sinclair may not have been very successful as a playwright, but his efforts were not altogether vain. As a matter of fact, Theodore Dreiser once congratulated the muckraker in a letter dated December 18, 1924, for his play Singing Jailbirds (My lifetime in Letters 34). So did Israel Zangwill, whose positive appreciation of the latter play induced him to confess in a

letter reprinted in Sinclair's My Lifetime in Letters that it "almost converts me to expressionistic drama" (313). In Zola's case, adaptations of his novels into plays for the sake perhaps of reaching a wider audience, learned and uneducated as well, were quite common. L'Assommoir and Thérèse Raquin figure among these. Zola churned out a three-act comedy, "Les Héritiers Rabourdin," as a furthering of his endeavors in this realm. Of these however, Thérèse Raquin or The Devil's Compact reveals much about the generally ambiguous reception of his plays. While Louis Ulbach of the *Figaro* qualified it as "putrid literature," Hippolyte Taine and Sainte Beuve, in return, acclaimed it (Knapp 21). Still in the same vein, Vizetelly explains how the naturalist proposed this play to a certain M. Hostein, in charge of a new Parisian theatre, La Renaissance, where the audience's response to its staging unveils neither signs of success or failure for Zola (141-42). What is important to consider in this respect lies not in how well these two writers carried out the principles and rules of play composition, but in their versatility. Zola and Sinclair practiced literature to the fullest. They did not indeed confine themselves to a particular and specific field. They put their hands to poetry and to other types of literature as well. And it is actually hardly possible to deal with these authors without referring to potboiling as an integrative part of their fictional leanings.

As I mentioned earlier in this study, both Sinclair and Zola had at times to grapple with dire financial problems. Talented as they were, they set out to make ends meet by indulging in writing what many critics came to qualify as cheap fiction. Sinclair entirely managed to take care of himself thanks to the gains he made from his hackwork—with his writings, he was earning up to five dollars a week. Many of his jokes came out in a magazine called *Argosy*. In fact, it is through this medium that he attracted the attention

of Street and Smith, publishers of cheap fiction, aided in this by the publications of his novel In the Days of Decatur and a serial In the Net of the Visconti. Street and Smith consequently offered him a storytelling job. His stories this time evolved around the military activities at West Point and Annapolis. Floyd Dell gives a detailed account of Sinclair's budding talents. In the same vein, Zola's A Dead Woman's Vow (1866) and Les Mystères de Paris (1867) were classified as potboilers. In composing these stories Sinclair and Zola mostly made use of their journalistic abilities. Such a potential was later evidenced through their close observations and depictions of social, political, and economic realities prevalent in their times. Because Sinclair and Zola's literary outputs are immense, and because the scope of this project does not provide space enough to include them all, priority will then be given to their greatest masterpieces, The Jungle and Germinal mainly, as I attempt to document the multiple reactions to these.

The successfulness of any literary work is revealed by the extent to which it affects its readers, by how much valuable critical attention it attracts and for how long, and finally by its effect on that which it represents especially when it pertains to the realm of protest literature... It is the fate of any literary work to be subjected to the evaluations of both critics and scholars when it proves worth critiquing. The Jungle and Germinal leave no doubt about their worth, given the wide range of criticisms they have gone through. Occurring in times when the proletariat needed them most, while conceived of as a threat to the bourgeoisie, these two works became the subject of much controversy.

After six successive rejections including one by Macmillan, Sinclair's novel was gradually featured in a serial, the Appeal to Reason. This publication process made it easier for readers to appreciate the prelude to the sufferings of the Lithuanian family.

Referring to this seeming strategy, Harris notes, “there was favorable critical notice about the novel almost as soon as its first installment was printed on February 25, 1905” (78). Given the socialistic orientation of the Appeal and the novel’s upholding of this ideology, one would expect those who subscribed to the journal to react in this fashion. In fact, some critics have attacked Sinclair on account of what they believe to be a mere reproduction of George D. Herron’s political principles in The Jungle. Herron was among the muckraker’s mentors, and he proved to be a very influential one. Regardless of the plausibility of this critique, Sinclair continued to gain greater consideration all over the world. His work became translated into seventeen languages, and most importantly earned the sympathy of such an eminent historical figure as Winston Churchill, so much so that he wrote an article about it, one featured in an issue of T.P.O. The greatness and significance of The Jungle are given more value by the status of its celebrants. George Bernard Shaw, Van Wyck Brooks, Edmund Wilson, H.L. Mencken, Carl Van Doran, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Albert Einstein, to name a few, uplift the book above the mere socialist manifesto that some strove to turn it into to a highly valuable piece of American literature. Thus, it is with due respect that Jack London exclaims in a letter reprinted in My Lifetime: “Here it is at last! The book we have been waiting for these many years! The Uncle Tom’s Cabin of wage slavery! Comrade Sinclair’s book The Jungle” (20).

Of the celebrants aforementioned, Van Wyck Brooks’s case seems most exceptional. Primarily and unfavorably critical of Sinclair’s achievement in The Confident Years, the critic completely changed his position vis-à-vis the muckraker afterwards. One reason he gave to justify this about-turn was his reading of Sinclair’s The Return of Lanny Budd. “In the first place,” he said, “I read over at once The Return of

Lanny Budd [1953] and found that I couldn't put it down. It really won me completely, so I knew that my account of you was all wrong somehow" (Sinclair 385). Sinclair was much adulated by critics who felt a great sympathy for Socialism. It is worth noting that most of the translations of The Jungle were carried out in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Sinclair also appeared as a major literary figure in Germany where the commemoration of his centenary was covered by two television networks one of which turned out "a 45 minute documentary movie Was Kann ein Mann tun? Upton Sinclair- Ein vergessener Rebell" (Dieter Herms 246). According to Herms, the latter movie "starts off with Irving Stone's statement that 'Upton Sinclair and Jack London are the two geniuses in America, then goes on into the history of The Jungle, muckraking, and King Coal, briefly reviews Jimmy Higgins, Oil! and Boston..." (246). Bertolt Brecht actually acknowledged the influence the muckraker had on his career and thoughts. In his article "Upton Sinclair: Never Forgotten," Dorys Crow Grover draws attention to the recognition by Post-World War II German scholars of the propagandist's work as part of what he calls "progressive literature" (44). Sinclair's audience has so widely expanded abroad that his books became fairly well known in Japan. The rationale for his ready acceptance in such lands is closely related to the way literature is defined by these people. Literature must serve a cause to be valuable and the time at which The Jungle was published proved very crucial, for it marked the blossoming of socialism and the struggle of the working classes all over Europe. They heard a voice in this novel and thus identified with it.

Moreover, Sinclair's exceptional representation of America enlightened other nations about the realities of this so-called El Dorado. In my fourth chapter I will dwell

upon how America was presented to non-Americans before The Jungle set the record straight. It is in relation to this depiction of America abroad that Sinclair came to face the charge of disloyalty to his nation. Yet, however much respect he initially enjoyed in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, Sinclair ultimately lost it all as he challenged the emerging dictatorships in these regions. His shift led to much discontent among his fellow Socialists, as they felt betrayed by it. It was only then, however, that America spoke more favorably of him and his patriotism no longer doubted. Ideology was not the only basis for either endorsing or questioning Sinclair's The Jungle. Image and reputation as painted in this novel seemed to have propelled a somewhat negative reception. Two Lithuanian critics, Antanas Musteikis and Alfonsas Sesplaukis, deplored Sinclair's limited knowledge of Lithuanian culture (Crow 44). These responses are mainly motivated by the way Jurgis Rudkus, the main character in The Jungle, is depicted. This issue of cultural awareness will be dealt with more profoundly in the coming chapters. Thus far, I have barely made mention of the American reception of Sinclair in general and of his masterpiece in particular. Mark Twain, for one, simply confessed that he tried to read the novel but could not. Abraham Blinderman sums up the general reception for us as follows:

Sinclair has been unduly neglected by critics. Although he wrote almost one hundred books, twenty-eight of which are still in print, hundreds of articles and pamphlets, and hundreds of letters on literary themes, American writers generally ignored him in the studies of America culture. Scores of literary works on our library shelves completely deny him a place in American

letters; others accord him a seemingly begrudging paragraph,
usually on The Jungle.(10)

Although truthful in many respects, Blinderman's observation is no longer valuable today, for American critics are presently showing a renewed interest in Sinclair's enormous literary contribution. Like Sinclair, Zola had his ups and downs, but unlike him he has never been overlooked in France.

The Rougon-Macquart series of which Germinal is an episode brought the French writer success and fame. As a young artist coming into prominence, Zola depicts social realities from an angle of his own making. His introduction of naturalism as a literary technique and the picturing of the working class in his work became a source of delight and outrage. If Zola was attacked at all, it was mainly because of the degeneracy he portrays in his novels. In the case of Germinal, for example, the unwholesome sexuality unraveled and the animal metaphors used impinged against many critics' sensibilities. These depictions were meant to include the common man in a literary circle that was mainly classical and romantic by vocation. Zola was severely criticized for depicting the lower class people. Jean-Albert Bédé alludes to the very attempts made by Zola's conservative adversaries to discredit the latter on this account. Because his background was Greek, Zola came to be singled out as a "métèque, an interloper" (5). Others have gone so far as to study the etymology of his name for derogatory purposes. "It has been contended, with some plausibility," Vizetelly declares, "that the Italian word Zola is simply a variant of Zolla, which means, in a restricted sense, a clod or lump of earth, and, in a broader one, the glebe or soil. This circumstance has suggested to certain detractors of Emile Zola and his writings the scornful remark that he was at least well named, having been of the earth, earthy" (1). Such statements emanated from individuals who

felt threatened by Zola's growing popularity. They had reason to fear because the Parisian-born author became so influential that he entertained a group of disciples, all young talented writers, among which figured Joris-Karl Huysmans, Paul Alexis, and Guy de Maupassant, all co-authors of Les Soirées de Médan. Zola was no man to falter before such challenges as aired by Andrew Lang, Louis Albach, and Barbey D'Aurevilly. His staunchness and artistry eventually earned him a stronger reputation in, respectively, the Soviet Union, Europe, and America. Zola's growing importance among the communists was made possible by Ivan Tourgeneff as the Russian recommended him to a St-Petersburg journal, the "Viestnik Yevropi" (Vizetelly 150). If Russian readers felt drawn to Germinal notably because of Zola's sympathy for the proletariat and his denunciation of the bourgeois, his influence in America was mainly on the literary realm. It is indeed impossible to study Theodore Dreiser, Stephen Crane, or Frank Norris without touching on what Donald Pizer terms the "characteristics of Zolaesque naturalism" (5). At a lower and more practical level, Zola won the miners' esteem. These could find no way to express their sympathy for Zola, but to shout out loud the name of that which lent them a voice, Germinal namely. Sinclair was also cheered in a similar fashion as he toured the Midwest.

CHAPTER 2

CHARACTERIZATION

Precocity and Waywardness: Children in a Capitalist System

The advent of massive industrialization in the nineteenth century and its impact on the human condition triggered a renewed interest among writers of this time and times thereafter. The new pattern of production that went along with this evolving system set the basis for capitalist materialism, which, while uplifting the ruling class or bourgeoisie, proved in many respects very detrimental to those whose blood and sweat kept it in progressive motion. As witnesses to societal phenomena, novelists took it upon themselves to investigate the ins and outs of this characteristic of civilization. Some writers were fortunate enough to get acquainted with cases in which the fairness of capitalism was seriously challenged. It was after the outbreak of strikes within the working class group at Anzin and Packerstown that Zola and Sinclair respectively churned out Germinal and The Jungle. In their reconstitutions of the incidents resultant from the protest movements mentioned above, both touched on issues so similar that a study of their characters might enlighten their overlapping. These evidence Zola's influence on Sinclair.

Among other realities delineated in Germinal, the problem of precocious labor proves strikingly immoral. In the great rush for profit, the regulators of the work force did not care enough to set ethical standards of employment. When Zola went down the mine and rubbed elbows with the miners at Anzin in February 1884 (Henry Mitterand 111), he discovered what he later described through the mischievous trio, Jeanlin, Lydie, and Bébert, subjected as they are to the tortures of wage-slavery. In one instance, Zola's

narrator portrays the three brats as they prepare for work: “Jeanlin, without waiting for his father, went to take his lamp, with Bébert, a big, stupid boy, and Lydie, a small child of ten” (G, p32). In another case, they are pictured in active duty, managing their tasks as perfectly as possible:

A gleam pierced the night, he [Etienne] felt the rock tremble, and when he had placed himself close to the wall, like his comrades, he saw a large white horse close to his face, harnessed to a tram of wagons. On the first, and holding the reins, was seated Bébert, while Jeanlin, with his hand leaning on the edge of the last, was running barefooted behind. (37)

Although under age, these kids act with maturity—note that Jeanlin does not wait to be told what to do. Despite the darkness of the seam they are going through and regardless of the arduousness of the labor— the wagons are heavily filled with coal— Jeanlin and Bébert keep a cool head to focus on their chores. They are not to be given full credit for their actions, however. The environment in which they dwell determines any move they make.

Indeed, the system of wage slavery is such that catering to a family’s needs requires more than one hand. Thus, father and son collaborate to make ends meet. Parents do welcome the company’s condoning of child labor, a practice that somewhat thwarts any childhood experience. Indeed, just as the capitalist system entraps their parents through need, children are also deprived of any possibility of escape. When Jeanlin plays truant from work to allow himself some leisure time, he runs to the forest of Vandame with Lydie and Bébert to enjoy their boyish pranks, Maheude warns him about the worst

punishment she has in store for him should he fail to understand that there is much at stake, survival most probably:

That morning, when the men and the girl [Catherine Maheu] set out for the pit, Maheude sat up in her bed to say to Jeanlin: “You know that if you begin that game again, you little beast, I’ll take your skin off your bottom!” (175)

In The Jungle, little Stanislovas’s reluctance to go to work on account of the dreadful winter—the boy almost froze to death in a previous experience—awakens Jurgis’s ire. After Maheude’s fashion, the Lithuanian imposes the dictates of the adult world upon the helpless boy.

All that day and night the family was half-crazed with fear that Ona and the boy had lost their places; and in the morning they set out earlier than ever, after the little fellow had been beaten with a stick by Jurgis. There could be no trifling in a case like this, it was a matter of Life and death... (119)

In the same vein, Vilimas and Nikalojus, respectively eleven and ten years old, fail, after spending a whole day selling newspapers, to take their wages to their needy relatives. They are consequently severely punished and sent back to work the following morning (121). Such “direct impression[s] of life,” a part of what Henry James defined as Naturalism (quoted by Sidney J. Krause 3), were meant by both Zola and Sinclair to emphasize the extent to which the burdening capitalist system induces parents to act out of panic. This was cause for much child abuse among the exploited masses. Fear of insufficiency, a cause of starvation and death among workers, almost always haunted them. The novelists understood both their plights and endeavors to prevent waywardness.

Yet, because a tight control of these children was hardly possible, other types of vagabondage became commonplace.

In his discussion of Zola's The Rougon-Macquart, Grant contends that even if the importance of heredity in this series is unquestionable, the impact of the naturalist setting, the environment, upon the workers becomes far more significant (47). This statement is not unwarranted at all judging by the negative influence of the social and work milieus on Jeanlin and his companions. All through Germinal, the trio indulges in acts of high mischievousness. Lydie and Bébert, respective daughter and son to the levaque woman and Pierronne, feel a profound awe for the ape-like character Jeanlin. The boy is an advanced state of degeneracy and his physiognomy suggests his beastliness. In a passage quoted above, Maheude qualifies him as a "little beast." This demeaning reference pertains to what Jean Pierre Savoine terms "metaphors animals" or "animal metaphors" (384). The narrator goes more at length in this matter as he focuses on the child's personality:

He [Jeanlin] would come up slyly without his lamp and vigorously pinch his companion, inventing mischievous monkey tricks, with his yellow hair, his large ears, his lean muzzle, lit up by little by little green eyes shining intelligence and the quick skill of a human which had returned to its animal ways. (176)

This portrayal, among others, might have inspired Anne Belgrand's perception of Jeanlin as a monster whose very presence "confer[s] a supernatural and demoniacal dimension to the text" (My Translation, 148). Over and above that, Jeanlin proves to be a shrewd dictator and a "captain" who rules over his subjects with such brutal authority that he epitomizes the bourgeois's oppressing of the worker. He strays away from the right path

and strives to drag his helpless and submissive comrades in a world of his own making as evidenced hereby:

On the next day the weather was superb; it was one of those clear frosty days, the beautiful winter days when the hard earth rings like crystal beneath the feet. Jeanlin had gone off at one o'clock, but he had to wait for Bébert behind the church, and they nearly set out without Lydie, whose mother had again shut her up in the cellar, and only now liberated her to put a basket on her arm, telling her that if she did not bring it back full of dandelions, she should be shut up with the rats all night long. She was frightened, therefore, and wished to go at once for salad. Jeanlin dissuaded her; they would see later on. For a long time Poland, Rasseneur's big rabbit, had attracted his attention. He was passing before the Avantage when, just then, the rabbit came out on the road. With a leap he seized her by the ears, stuffed her into the little girl's basket, and all three rushed away... (256)

Zola unveils more than one instance of Jeanlin's naughtiness. Two aberrant cases stick out because of their daunting monstrosities.

The issue raised in the first place is sexual precocity. Jeanlin and Lydie become the vehicles for such moral degeneracy. These children are too young and innocent to have a clear understanding of morality, however. As in a marital situation, the "vicious puppies" take to "... playing at papa and mamma" (118). Their sexual experience occurs in the presence of an unexpected intruder, Etienne Lantier, whose reaction to the abhorrant scene gives us insight into the conditioning of acts of this nature by an unfavorable environment. "No doubt it was too early, at their age," Etienne muses

through the narrative's voice, "but they saw and heard so much that one would have to tie them up to restrain them. Yet Etienne became sad" (119). The early years of capitalism were indeed characterized by social promiscuity in the workers' dwellings. Families lived at very close quarters, and there was almost no privacy. This "elbow to elbow" life, to use Zola's words (21), and the immorality it entailed were and still are to be blamed on the bourgeoisie. In setting forth the effect of promiscuity on Jeanlin and Lydie, Zola meant to indict the ruling class.

The second instance through which the naturalist sets out to alarm his countrymen about the danger of wage-slavery appears to us in the form of an appalling murder case: Jeanlin's assassination of Jules, the soldier from Pogloff:

And suddenly, as a cloud threw its shadow, Jeanlin leapt on to the soldier's shoulders with the great bound of a savage cat, and gripping him with his claws buried his large open knife in his throat. (379)

Jeanlin's act is dictated by his environment and heredity. His grandfather, Bonnemort, commits a similar crime. Is there a gene that makes them inclined to violence and murder? The various instances of Zola's use of the heredity theory in his other novels provide ample proof about his tendency to suggest that bad behavior is not solely spurred by one's environment; it is also accountable to one's family's temperamental nature. Sinclair does not strain the relationship between behavior and heredity. Nevertheless, his evaluation of the dichotomy milieu/demeanor features some zolaesque elements. True, the social and work environment of Packerstown fashioned enough delinquents from whose ranks Sinclair could draw appropriate samples. But a technique was what the socialist needed most, especially when he intended to buttress a specific logic that was

deeply embedded in capitalism around the early twentieth century. Such a logic was based upon the conviction that the continuous growth of materialism would inevitably lead to the corruption of minds and behaviors. The contention is no novelty at all, for we have just been apprised of it through Zola's depiction of Jeanlin, Lydie, and Bébert. The argument overall points to the repetitiveness of history and the passing of the methods employed for its description from one generation of writers to another regardless of nationality and boundary.

The muckraking realism associated with The Jungle furthers the literary naturalism experimented with in Germinal. Muckraking simply means exposing scandals before the public's eye by means of naturalistic and realistic devices. Zola achieved this task through Jeanlin's characterization. So does Sinclair via Kotrina, Nikalojus, and Vilimas, who also constitute a trio.

Although Sinclair's trio stays away from any such outrageously appealing deeds as done by Zola's—neither one of them steals goods or turns out a murderer—Kotrina and her brothers yet evince a wayward adaptation to the capitalist sphere. They become treacherous in breaking the rules regulating public transportation. The rationale for their action is a noble one, however. The expensiveness of their carfares along with a desire to spin out the money they hardly earned—the trio toils from 4 a.m. to dusk—account for their treacherous act. Thus the narrator recounts their new pattern of action:

[L]eaving home at four o'clock in the morning, and running about the streets, first with morning papers and then with evening, they might come home late at night with twenty or thirty cents apiece—possibly as much as forty cents. From this they had to deduct their carfare. They would get on a car when

the conductor was not looking, and hide in the crowd; and three times out of four he would not ask for their fares [...]; or if he did ask, they would hunt through their pockets, and then begin to cry and either have their fares paid by some kind old lady, or else try the trick again on a new car. All this was fair play, they felt. (121-2)

Is it really “fair play”? The narrator’s opinion about this cause/effect situation, while equivalent to Etienne’s apologetic reaction to juvenile delinquency, seems to condone the children’s strategy. Just as Etienne takes the social environment to task in this respect, so does Sinclair, who points an accusatory finger to the meat-packing industry on this account:

Whose fault was it that at the hours when workingmen were going to work and back, the cars were so crowded that the conductors could not collect all the fares? And besides, the companies were thieves, people said—had stolen all their franchises with the help of scoundrelly politicians! (122)

Sinclair’s plea is obviously underlain by a principle of legitimate retaliation, which Jeanlin interestingly brings up as a way of justifying his thefts before Etienne. “What! when the bourgeois are stealing from us!” the boy exclaims; “It’s you,” he goes on, “who are always saying so. If I nabbed this loaf at Maigrat’s; you may be pretty sure it’s a loaf he owed us” (254). The line of reasoning adopted by the boy and taken up by Sinclair’s narrator simply suggests that “man does what he can” as opposed to “what he ought to,” an authorial choice that carries the pessimistic tone of any deterministic novel, according to John J. Conder (3).

As a deterministic novel, Germinal introduces a young female character, Catherine Maheu, who prematurely gets acquainted with human exploitation. Her relative immaturity is underscored as follows:

For the rest she was not ignorant concerning man and woman, although he [Etienne] felt that her body was virginal, with the virginity of a child delayed in her sexual maturity by the environment of bad air and weariness in which she lived. (48)

Her frailty misleads Etienne into thinking that she might be fourteen (48). The fifteen-year old girl displays virtues and qualities that also appear through Ona Lukoszatie's characterization. Similarly, Catherine's ordeals bring to mind Ona's terrible fate in The Jungle. Interestingly enough, Sinclair, like Zola, chooses to focus on a frail fifteen-year-old female: "She [Ona] was so young—not quite sixteen—and small for her age, a mere child..." (2).

In spite of her physical underdevelopment, Catherine performs her tasks with great skillfulness and endurance. Having been exposed to no social reality other than the one she daily experiences in the Deux-Cent-Quarante Settlement, the workers' slum, and at the Voreux, Catherine accepts her lot with innocent patience. Maheude's daughter manifests a behavioral pattern the major trait of which exemplifies her utter submissiveness to the dictates of the bourgeoisie. It is actually not surprising at all that her reaction to Etienne's confessed blunder should be one of alarm and bewilderment:

"Then you are an engine-driver, and they sent you away from your railway. Why?" she asks. "Because I struck my chief." She remained stupefied, overwhelmed, with her hereditary ideas of subordination and passive obedience. (46)

Ona is also alarmed by Jurgis's vow to punish Connor, one of the bosses at the factory (151). Just as Catherine nurtures the feeling that the bourgeois should not be challenged because the key to the worker's survival is in his keeping, so does Ona, who in the meantime believes passive obedience to be the safest way out of poverty. Such similar states of mind indicate the extent to which the bourgeois-capitalist exerts an almost total control over the great majority of the working class people. These similarities also reflect the impact of Zola's novel on Sinclair. Their respective characters are turned into easy preys by their identical conceptions of family responsibility.

Faced with the growing need for sustenance, Catherine and Ona work themselves to extreme exhaustion in order to bring their share in the struggle for survival and family consolidation as well. Fate has it that Catherine should be born within the proletariat's ranks. Fate also compelled Ona to move from her native country, Lithuania, to settle among the workers in the back of the yards, a settlement characterized by wretchedness and stench. Sinclair's reference to "Bubbly Creek" as well as Poni Aniele's desolate four-room flat vividly illustrates the immigrants' degenerate status. As a matter of fact, Ona is prematurely tricked into the labor force by her family's urge to escape from this setting—they are eventually lured into buying an expensive house on credit (51). As a cog in the tirelessly rolling capitalist machinery, Ona receives no maternal leave, and in consequence develops womb troubles made worse by her hysteric mood. Sinclair's rendering of the Lithuanian girl's misfortune is no invention at all, for, as, Ingrid Kerkhoff reveals, "Ona's story is not only authentic but also representative of immigrant as well as Black female labor in America" (179). Ona's precocious and unhappy marriage is part of such a story.

Although Jurgis and his wife seem at first totally enamored of each other, the breaking labor ultimately sets a barrier between them (135). Ona even comes to doubt the sincerity of her husband's true feelings towards her (122). This marital crisis bears some resemblance to Sinclair's interactions with his first wife, Meta Fuller. The writer deprived the latter of the sexual satisfaction and loving affection she needed. Sinclair found a loophole in his writing contracts and in his alleged fear of a second childbirth, which he believed would have been a disaster. Sinclair actually projects this feeling in his novel:

Ona was with child again now, and it was a dreadful thing to contemplate; even Jurgis, dumb and despairing as he was, could not bit understand that yet other agonies were on the way, and shudder at the thought of them. (139)

These forebodings are turned into reality as Ona dies of miscarriage in a dimly lit garret in spite of Madame Haupt's attempt to rescue her— Madame Haupt is one materialist midwife sought after by Jurgis. Sinclair meant Ona's death to lay bare the brutality of capitalism. This is so much the more so as Ona dies of work-related problems.

Prior to Ona, the issue of female victimization was dealt with through Zola's depiction of Catherine Maheu. Death strikes in Germinal just as it did in The Jungle. Catherine and Ona die in their prime, and the circumstances of their demise illustrate the authors' similar approaches. Although Catherine dies not of miscarriage—she reached puberty a short time before her death— she yet lost her life on account of her obstinate involvement in the work process. She meant to do good by going down the mine, but was struck dead in a terrible accident. In a like manner, Ona regained her position at the factory one week after she gave birth to little Antanas, her first child, not quite fully recovered but hopeful that she would be able to support her family. Unfortunately, the

long hours spent sitting just to sew covers on hams cause womb troubles, which lead to a deadly and unsuccessful childbirth. Moreover, after Zola whose Catherine dies in darkness and isolation, Sinclair chooses an isolated and obscure garret as the setting for Ona's tragic ending.

In another vein, Ona's love dilemma somewhat resembles Catherine's premature involvement with Chaval, her co-worker. Having eloped with the young man, Catherine expects to be pampered with love and attention. Chaval not only completely ignores her at times, but he usually mistreats her. Jurgis does not go this far with Ona, however. In addition, just as Catherine proves worth fighting over—Etienne physically confronts Chaval, his rival, and kills him for her sake—so appears Ona whose undesired extramarital affair with Connor induces Jurgis to attack the latter with murderous intent. It is actually at this juncture that these female characters' waywardness comes out in the open. A major difference needs be underlined in this respect. If indeed Sinclair opted in furthering Ona's degenerate state for a much stronger narrative impact, Zola, on the contrary, moderates his characterization. Catherine is not driven into prostitution by despairing need. She might have offended her mother by eloping with Chaval, but she manages to keep herself "clean" and dignified. What Connor represents for Ona had some chances of coming into effect in the bargain between Maheude and Maigrat. In order to keep her job, Ona had to lie with her superintendent. Similarly, Maigrat consented to providing for the Maheus in the hope that he would lay his sinful hand on Catherine.

Another case in point that illustrates Zola's influence upon Sinclair concerns Alzire Maheu, and Kotrina. It is worth emphasizing that Alzire, one of Maheude's three

daughters, does not evince any sign of waywardness. Alzire is both a fictional and real-like character, and this latter aspect is suggested through Lewis Kamm's reference to the changes made from the first to the second outline of Germinal:

Alzire, because of her name, deserves special attention.

Originally called Flora in Zola's preparation of Germinal, her name was changed late in the Deuxième plan. This modification may have resulted from Zola's learning of the murder of a child named Alzire during his visit to the Anzing mines. (36)

Whatever the reason for such a change, the nine-year old girl is overall made to act as mother, housekeeper, "mediator and peacemaker," to use Kamm's terms (33). Wiser than her age, the humpback puts on a cheerful look in moments of dire straits. She is aware enough to avoid alarming her parents who have other matters to worry about. When her sickness is getting worse, Alzire patiently and courageously bears her pains. She not only acts intelligently but also independently as this latter instance reveals:

Alzire, very seriously, with a cloth in front of her, had set about making the soup, seeing that her mother did not return. She had pulled the last leeks from the garden, gathered the sorrel, and was just then cleaning the vegetables, while on the fire was heating the men's baths when they should return. (102)

Kotrina is not only as precocious as Alzire; she also performs the aforementioned tasks in an adult-like fashion:

Little Kotrina was like most children of the poor, prematurely made old; she had to take care of her little brother, who was a cripple, and also of the baby [Alzire also takes care of her little sister, Estelle, and of her two brothers, Lénore and

Henry]; she had to cook the meals and wash the dishes and clean house, and have supper ready when the workers came in the evening. (131)

It is worth noting that both Zola and Sinclair end their descriptions of Alzire and Kotrina with a strikingly similar observation: they are making the necessary preparations for the incoming workers. Another point of resemblance is obliquely revealed to us via Kotrina's crippled brother, Kristoforas.

Although not completely handicapped, Alzire suffers from a physical disability just like Kristoforas, though to a lesser extent. This puzzling similitude is yet contrasted with two different temperamental dispositions. Kristoforas and Alzire act in typical ways; to the latter's meek and passive demeanor, Sinclair opposes the boy's whimperish attitude. The physical, however, outshines the temperament, for we, as readers, feel more sympathy for these children because of their disability. What Kamm argues about Alzire proves valuable for Kristoforas in this respect. "Positioned in the middle of the Maheu family's seven children— after Zacharie, Catherine, and Jeanlin but before Lénore, Henry and Estelle— Alzire could easily go unnoticed except for her physical deformity" (33).

Even their very deaths and the motives underlying the authors' tragic dramatizing of their endings bring this unique resemblance to a peak. In the midst of the miners' strike, the bourgeois ordered that no working class family be provided with coal during the winter, and as the Maheus had none left, Alzire went about the Voreux in search of it. She accordingly caught a cold, which, aggravated by malnutrition, leads to her death. Doctor Vanderhagen could provide no medical assistance to the girl. Similarly, Kristoforas had the ill-luck to eat a smoked sausage made from tubercular pork— the

meat-packers minded no sanitary rules in their food production— and, as a result, died of consumption. These deaths lay bare one authorial motive: the denunciation of capitalism as anti-human and immoral. Zola and Sinclair did not confine themselves to picturing the children's fate to expose to the ruthlessness characteristic of their materialistic societies. They also incorporated the life, occupation, and major behavioral traits encountered in the adult world.

The Adult as Character: Life and Behavioral Traits

In attempting to free literature from the “supernatural and transhistorical explanation of the physical world” (Richard Lehan 47), Zola resorted to Prosper Lucas's Traité ...de l'Hérédité Naturelle (1850) and to Claude Bernard's Introduction à l'Etude de la Médecine Expérimentale (1865). With such materials at hand, the naturalist set out to apply science to his depictions of man. Drawing from theories of heredity and environment, Zola sought to account for the ways in which these particulars affect not characters but temperaments instead. Lehan quotes Zola on this matter. “I wanted to study temperaments and not character,” he argues. “I chose beings powerfully dominated by their nerves and their blood, devoid of free will, carried away by the fatalities of their flesh” (47). One such sample is Etienne Lantier, the main character in Germinal. As one of Gervaise Macquart's illegitimate children, Etienne symbolizes both resistance and revolt. His heredity sets him up as a violent figure, one sometimes lacking in self-control. We are let into this behavioral flaw in the opening chapter of the novel: “He [Etienne] saw himself again at his workshop at the railway, delivering a blow at his foreman, driven from Lille, driven from everywhere” (11).

As a self-conscious character, Etienne strives to stay away from alcohol as it incites him into violent action. Etienne actually feels a strong aversion for liquor (46). Nature shackles his endeavors, however. The powerful impact of environment through its traditions— drinking is fairly common among miners— induces him to indulge in drink, at which point his true self comes forth, thus stamping out his free will. In such occurrences, Etienne acts more instinctively than reasonably. Zola instances his character's degeneracy through this following altercation with Chaval:

His [Etienne's] fists closed and his eyes were lit up with homicidal fury; his intoxication was turning into the desire to kill. "Are you ready? One of us must stay here. Give him a knife; I've got mine." Catherine, exhausted and terrified, gazed at him. She remembered his confidences, his desire to devour a man when he had drunk, poisoned after the third glass, to such an extent had his drunkards of parents put this beastliness into his body. (312)

In addition to the heredity theory, Zola expressed a keen interest in Darwin's idea of natural selection. It is noticeable that one aspect of this theory, viz., the survival of the fittest concept, found its way in the passage quoted above. Etienne ultimately proves the fittest but only after he kills Chaval (460). The murder not only delights but somewhat restores and strengthens his sense of manhood.

In The Jungle, the main character, Jurgis, would have delighted in Connor's death, but having done him up seems highly satisfactory for the infuriated Lithuanian. Rivalry, as in Etienne's case, becomes the medium through which Jurgis's animal side comes forth. Sinclair's character indeed loses his self-control as he sets out to right a

wrong done to Ona. In order for Jurgis to restore his manhood, he, just as Etienne, must annihilate that which threatens it, Connor mainly. Sinclair uses one zolaesque characteristic, beastliness, in capturing Jurgis's temperament as he is about to do himself justice:

He [Connor] saw Jurgis as he crossed the threshold, and turned white. He hesitated a second, as if meaning to run; and in the next his assailant was upon him[...] To Jurgis this man's whole presence reeked of the crime he had committed; the touch of his body was madness to him—it set every nerve of him atremble, it aroused all the demon in his soul. (151-2)

In her analysis of Jurgis's evolution throughout the novel, Elzbieta O'Shea comes up with the "cycle victim-rebel-victim" (148). By attacking his superior, the Lithuanian indeed sets himself up as a rebel. O'Shea thus corroborates such classification in her comparison of The Jungle and Melville's Moby Dick: "Although cyclical and also 9 times out of 10 doomed to failure, Jurgis' rebellion like Ahab's, is [ennobling]. It is noble even when it means beating up his boss" (48). Jurgis's response to Ona's adulterous involvement with Connor is truly honorable in that it provides temporary contentment to the assailant while elevating his manhood in the meantime. Ironically however, the aftermath of this outburst of violence turns out badly for Jurgis just as it was the case with Etienne. Both are indeed "driven from everywhere," deprived of almost every job opportunity. In short, they became "blacklisted." Blacklisting of disorderly workers was a fairly common practice in the Chicago meat-packing enterprise. Tightly enforced, these regulations were meant to discipline unruly workers (196). In Germinal, Etienne has to venture beyond Lille to try his luck in a land where he is unknown. His exodus to Montsou, the setting of the novel,

translates his desire to escape the miserable life he has been thrown into by his insubordinate attitude. But in lieu of a better existence, Etienne stumbles into a milieu characterized by hunger, suffering, and injustice. Zola employs Etienne's exodus as a pretext to sensitize his readers about the serious shortcomings of the French Revolution.

As in Germinal, exodus becomes associated with better opportunity for social uplift in The Jungle. Jurgis's dreams equal Etienne's hopes; yet the former's expectations stand in sharp contrast with the desolate environment of Packingtown. Visions of beauty and bounty impinge against a nightmarish reality. As a matter of fact, Sinclair follows Zola's steps in employing the immigration motif as a loophole through which the falsity of the American Dream is brought to bear. In so doing, Sinclair depicts Jurgis as the new man he is turned into as opposed to the Lithuanian he initially was. The Lithuanian critic, Musteikis, in fact, deploras such a metamorphosis:

We agree that corrupted industrial and political patterns had to affect our "new Americans," more or less disintegrating their previous cultural ways. But we could not contend that the Rudkus family instantly becomes a kind of tabula rasa in which only the experiences of the new environment remained. (33)

In terms of experience, Jurgis goes through various ordeals—I will delve more deeply into these in the oncoming chapter—that eventually cause him to embrace trade-unionism before joining the socialist party, his last resort in the struggle for social justice. As a new convert within both circles, he manifests an enthusiasm for the theoretical principles governing these organizations to such an extent that he sets about hustling his people into making the proletarian cause theirs. His temperament is thus put forward:

Here [...] was a new religion—one that did touch him, that took hold of every fiber of him; and with all the zeal and fury of a convert he went out as missionary. There were many nonunion men among the Lithuanians, and with these he would labor and wrestle in prayer, trying to show them the right. (90)

Jurgis thus becomes a “Bote aus der Fremde,” the messenger coming from elsewhere, a terminology pertaining to the German naturalist theatre, and which Pierre Morel employs to designate Etienne Lantier (191). Over and above that, Jurgis’s new faith impels a desire for education. It is only by being more enlightened about the issues at hand that the proselyte will prove more effective in his struggle for social justice (91). All such characteristics were primarily evinced through Etienne’s characterization.

Although Zola spares his main characters from the multiple drudgeries Sinclair compels Jurgis to go through before reaching the happy ending— Etienne is neither turned into a beggar or prisoner, nor does he become a tramp by choice— he nonetheless brings him to sympathize with the collier’s lot. A rebellious person by nature, Etienne endorses the proletarian cause, and as a result takes to speechifying his co-workers about the need to wage a battle against the bourgeoisie. He not only acquires a new identity as messenger, he also feels obligated to act as a catalyst, an organizer of this mass of benighted souls. Because he intends to organize the struggle along Marxist lines, and given his poor understanding of this ideology, Etienne turns himself into a moderate bookworm.

Especially consumed by the need of knowledge, he had long hesitated to borrow books from his neighbor, who unfortunately possessed German and Russian works. At last he had borrowed a

book on Co-operative societies ... and he also regularly read a newspaper which the latter received, the *Combat*, an Anarchist journal published in Geneva. (138)

Even when he manages to gather substantial material, he finds it difficult to assimilate. “He boldly entered on obscure questions of law,” the narrator reports, “and lost himself in the difficulties of the special regulations concerning mines” (263). Jurgis too experiences similar difficulties. He is indeed hardly capable of comprehending the pamphlets he reads or simply follow the political debates he attends.

[T]here were hall meetings every night, and one could hear speakers of national prominence. These discussed the political situation from every point of view, and all that troubled Jurgis was the impossibility of carrying off but a small part of the treasures they offered him. (326)

This inability to be knowledgeable is not gratuitous at all, for, as Pizer remarks, “A third tragic naturalistic theme concerns the problem of knowledge ... Knowledge is now elusive, shifting, and perhaps even non-existent except for solipsistic ‘certainties,’ but man’s tragic fate is still to yearn for it” (7). In spite of this shortcoming, Etienne elevates his rank in a milieu where people were at first suspicious of his whereabouts—Rasseneur, one of his main rivals, refers to him as a stranger. As a leader, a sense of pride and satisfaction in the wielding of power bring him to lose sight of the true motives of his leadership. While displaying a condescending attitude before the miners’ ignorance, Etienne worries over his personal political career. This behavioral shift might have given Bédé enough reason to contend that Etienne “...will sink to the level of raw politics—perhaps becomes the prototype of the corrupt labor chieftain” (30). Bédé’s hypothetical

contention is somewhat contradicted by Etienne's introspection, which enables him to look into himself only to acknowledge his egotism as faulty, unbecoming, and pointless (477). Etienne makes these reflections as he sets out for Paris where he hopes to start a new political career, as Bédé indicates. Overall, Zola meant to lay bare the complexities of political leadership through Etienne's brief change.

A similar description of the effect of power also is elaborated in The Jungle. Presented as a round character in quest of the ideal, Jurgis deserts his family soon after his son's death and, after tramping about the countryside, unexpectedly accedes to the bourgeois-capitalist milieu. His acquaintance with Buck Holloran and Mike Scully, the most prominent man in Packingtown, opens a vista of opportunities for the Lithuanian. A change in social status accordingly comes about: "Jurgis had long cast off his fertilizer clothing, and since going into politics he had donned a linen collar and a greasy red necktie" (264). Of all the events that occur in The Jungle, this sudden metamorphosis seems strained beyond the ordinary. Zola did not resort to any such miraculous deus-ex-machina, for this method would have thwarted his attempts at verisimilitude. In any case, Sinclair designed an exceptional course of action for his main character with not only the intent to expose thereby the corruption rampant in the capitalist world, but also to prove his point that power does lead astray when wielded with narrow-mindedness (271). Jurgis displays such a behavioral trait by indulging in drink, gambling, and bribery, flaws from which he is ultimately rescued by means of the same deus-ex-machina. Such rescuing patterns evolve more as an authorial contrivance than as a fate-based occurrence. This actually accounts for most of the difference between Sinclair and Zola, the latter choosing to follow a more natural and realistic format reinforced by a strict observance of time by

means of chronology and regular seasonal changes. The writers' orientations do not altogether preclude the many correspondences between the two novels. Notwithstanding the duality Etienne/Jurgis, some other parallels can rightly be established. The latter associations Jurgis/Toussaint Maheu and Maheude. Marija/Teta Elzbieta, for example, can be taken as cases in point.

So far as Maheu and Jurgis are concerned, one needs to ask the following question: What aspects pertaining to the latter can accurately be traced through the former character? In Germinal, the absence of a mother is what particularizes Maheu's case. There is no mention of a mother figure throughout the whole novel. In short, Maheu is bereft of a mother of whom he has no recollections. A father, on the contrary, is there to share and sympathize with his burden while in the meantime striving to provide a helping hand. Over and above that, Maheu is depicted as an exemplary father figure and a caring husband. The delicate and arduous role of family upkeep within a social and economic context marked by a chronic paucity of means is assigned to the latter. Acting in consequence, Maheu relies on his physical strength and endurance to cater to his family's needs. He is aided in this by his sons Zacharie and Jeanlin, and by Catherine, his daughter. Maheu keeps a seam of his own, the seam Guillaume, at the Voreux, and his enormous hard work earns him a favorable reputation among both the bourgeoisie and his co-workers. In a nutshell, he is what Sinclair's narrator says about Jurgis, namely "...the sort of man the bosses like to get hold of, the sort they make it a grievance they cannot get hold of" (20). Such a grievance is evinced through Mr. Hennebeau's reaction to Maheu's abrupt straying from the path set by the ruling class for him to follow—Maheu indeed moved from submissiveness to actively speak in behalf of the proletariat during

the strike. “What! you, a good worker who have always been so sensible, one of the old Montsou people whose family has worked in the mine since the first stroke of the axe! Ah! it’s a pity, I’m sorry that you are at the head of the discontented” (203). Hennebeau’s response typifies what Ira Schor terms “bourgeois consciousness” (175), one aspect of which is the psychological subjugation of the worker by the bourgeoisie. Hennebeau’s purpose is to provoke a sense of guilt he hopes will cause Maheu to surrender.

In Jurgis’s case, the female parent also remains a mystery. Even when the narrator retraces the main character’s background, her role in his upbringing was either significant enough to trouble oneself about or there simply was no such thing as a maternal part in Jurgis’s life beside that of the birthing act. Instead, Antanas Rudkus, the father figure, emerges as the unique parent responsible for both roles— he acts as father and mother. Jurgis originated from the Imperial Forest of Brelovicz— the right spelling, however, is Bielowiez, according to Musteikis (30)— and so was his father Old Dede Antanas “...who had been reared himself, and had reared his children in turn, upon half a dozen acres of cleared land in the midst of a wilderness” (21). One wonders at this juncture why Sinclair and Zola chose not to include a mother figure to complete the family circle. In considering the muckraker’s situation, however, we may notice that although he seemingly gleaned the model of Jurgis’s character-construction from Germinal, it remains that the writer’s love for his mother may have accounted for his decision to exclude her from the dissolute realities of The Jungle. In other words, Sinclair opted out of a complete identification with his main character by subconsciously depriving him of a

mother figure. He did not wish his mother to suffer in real life and in fiction as well.

Sinclair's partial identification with Jurgis is thus exemplified in his Autobiography:

Externally, the story had to do with a family of stockyards workers, but internally it was the story of my own family [...]
Ona was Corydon [a Miltonic name for Meta Fuller], speaking Lithuanian but otherwise unchanged. Our little boy was suffering from pneumonia that winter, and nearly died, and the grief of that went into the book. (Sinclair 112)

Sinclair does not mention his mother at all in this passage. It would yet be enlightening to know why he chose, like Zola, to focus on the father in lieu of the mother. Sinclair felt less affection for his father because of his disrespectful behavior. His drinking problems indicated an advanced level of human degeneracy. To portray Jurgis's father as relatively degenerate simply tallies with that aspect of the author's life. In spite of it all, however, Jurgis seems not in the least affected by his mother's absence—Maheu is not either. In fact, Jurgis appears highly satisfied with Ona, and his love for her prods him to act more responsibly by not only working hard, but also by staying away from alcohol for some time. Maheu also shuns the Montsou's bars and inns on account of his dutifulness and respect for Maheude. These are signs of an almost perfect parallel between the two characters. There, however, occurs a breach in this correspondence that puts Maheu and Jurgis at opposite angles.

However much responsible, Sinclair's hero reaches a point where his resolve totally fails him. When he sees his last hope fade through little Antanas's death, he seeks solace in alcohol. Unlike the immigrant, Maheu sticks to his principles. Neither does he succumb to the solacing effect of drink, nor abandon his family at a time they are much in

need of his support. Jurgis follows an adverse course of action. Maheu, on the contrary, struggles and dies in a most heroic way for the sake of his family's and a whole community's happiness (397). Such distinctive depictions shed light on Sinclair's obsession with grim details in particular. It is important to remember that Sinclair's pattern of characterization was to "hit the public's heart," and what he needed most in this respect was extreme tragedies.

There is no more bitter tragedy other than the one that falls upon Teta Elzbieta and Constance Maheude. Their social role as mother leads to a gnawing sense of anxiety and grief. They represent the many working class women whose pains are not rewarded but rather compounded by a ruthless fate. Although their destinies offer no certain gleam of hopeful and happy future, Maheude and Elzbieta endeavor to give meaning to their present existences. We are, for example, struck by their attachment to such qualities as cleanliness and tidiness in the midst of their respective jungles. Maheude's household is so neat that it becomes a showcase for the visiting bourgeois, who, through Madame Hennebeau, display a hypocritical and condescending pride in such neatness. Through Maheude's and Elzbieta's concern for cleanliness, we are let into the difference between beastliness and typically human properties, between the completely debased and the civilized one. These women's efforts are indeed to be interpreted as a struggle to maintain a certain acceptable level of humanity, and a minimal comfort is a way to it. Yet they are not so much worried about tidiness as they are about the quest for bread. All through The Jungle and Germinal, they are depicted running hither and thither in search of a loaf. Both Zola and Sinclair rivet our attention on the extent to which the two women constantly brood over the paucity of means. In fact, they are always appalled when the

wages fall short of the needs, for any such shortage causes pains, fear, and despair. These burdening moments do not provoke so much pity and sympathy as the repetitive losses they mournfully experience. The reporting of their worst misfortunes is extravagantly identical. Maheude's ordeals are thus detailed:

But the mother touched them, that poor woman who had just lost her son after having lost her husband, and whose daughter was perhaps a corpse beneath the earth; to say nothing of an invalid grandfather, a child who was lame as the result of a landslide, and a little girl [Alzire] who died of starvation during the strike. (446)

Elzbieta's fate in return is revealed to us as follows:

Elzbieta was one of the premature creatures: like the angleworm, which goes on living living though cut in half; like a hen, which, deprived of her chickens one by one, will mother the last that is left her. She did this because it was her nature— she asked no questions about the justice of it, nor the worthwhileness of life in which destruction and death ran riot. (193)

Zola and Sinclair hereby provide vivid accounts of what I would term the “martyrization” of the female figure. Its representation is not altogether monolithic, for Maheude and Elzbieta do differ on certain issues.

To the virtuous quality that is cleanliness, Maheude enjoins a strict code of moral ethics she abides by even in moments of stringest hardship. It is not seldom at all that her closest companions, the Levaque woman and Pierronne, for example, engage in a ménage à trois to escape from want. But even so, her strong personality stands in the way of any

attempt at ruining her moral integrity. Furthermore, Elzbieta, in contrast to Maheude, sees her Lithuanian sense of morality dwindle to such an extent that she condones Marija's involvement in prostitution. Self-sufficiency and survival are more important to them than a suicidal morality. Even though Musteikis acknowledges Marija's act as an observance of the "Gemeinschaft principle"—the concept means to save one's "social group" from death and starvation—he nonetheless declares that the form through which such a help is attained, prostitution, is hardly permissible in the Lithuanian culture given its immorality. Chastity was most valued in an unmarried woman, according to Musteikis (34). As a matter of fact, Maheude's rebuking of Catherine's involvement reflects her disapproval of premarital sexuality. She turns down Catherine's gift of provisions on this account.

In another vein, Maheude is almost always put at the forefront of the proletariat struggle. She acts like a leader for the female side. Marija and Elzbieta are outstripped in this regard, however. The least leadership Marija enjoys is associated with the Veslija, that is Ona's wedding ceremony in Chapter 1, a moment tainted by fear, indignation, and joy. This occasion marks the beginning of the Lithuanians' woe, and Elzbieta's reaction to it is opposite to Maheude's response to the various troubles she undergoes.

In Germinal, Maheude's woeful experience as mother and wife entails no bitterness. It adversely promotes wisdom and understanding. Zola's female character does not even blame Etienne for her husband's death, nor does she lose faith in the future victory of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie. Rather, her optimism reveals her capacity for wise and moral judgment. She has full control over her free will and thus appears as an exceptional figure in this novel. Such a disposition, John J. Conder contends, conflicts

with the pessimistic orientation inherent to any deterministic novel (3). While Maheude is uplifted by her noble attitude, Elzbieta, on the contrary, falls in moral standing because of her aiding and abiding in immorality. I herein disagree with Suk Bong Suh's reflection that although Elzbieta is portrayed as a victim, she is not made to appear as a degenerate character (16). In addition to being sinful, Elzbieta's "soul had been baked in the fire of adversity, and there was no altering it now..." (317). Her heartlessness is indicative of an advanced state of moral decline. Like Elzbieta, Marija collapses under the tight pressure of the capitalist environment. Maheude does surrender to such a pressure but in a much more honorable and combative fashion. Her abdication is indeed truly chivalric as opposed to Marija's— the former character becomes a miner after her husband's death. Their motives, however, remain the same: to provide for their families. Because idling was unbecoming and unpropitious in a system in which lack of occupation entailed death and oblivion, such aging personas as Bonnemort and Old Antanas felt compelled to join the labor force.

Beyond Adulthood: Portrait of the Aging Breadwinner. It is remarkable how Zola successfully built his plot upon the life experiences of a whole family, the Maheus, without leaving out any generation. The naturalist included Bonnemort as a typical old age character within this framework to somehow complete the family picture, but also to achieve a realistic purpose. Through Bonnemort, Zola represents the very many grandfathers who had to work like slaves at Anzin. Jacques Duquesne gives a non-fictional account of his own grandfather's experience in the mid 19th century in "L'Enfer de la Mine" (114). Quoting a passage from Jacques Brel's song "Jaurès", Duquesne

reveals what Zola meant by Bonnemort's characterization, viz., the destructiveness of wage-slavery:

They were wasted at age fifteen/ They ended as beginners/
The twelve months were called December [...]/They were old
before reaching that age/ Fifteen hours a day were tiresome to
the body/They left an ashen complexion upon the face. (My
translation 114)

Bonnemort's destruction starts on his eight birthday and continues up to his fifty-eighth year. He has been respectively putter, pikeman, and carman, a transitional process that might have cause his death, but which, as it did not, leaves him with an ironical and comic nickname: Bonnemort literally means "good death." The old man expectorates and suffers from chronic coughing. His health, like Dede Antanas's, is as poor as ever. Jurgis's father has not spent his life at the service of the bourgeois like Bonnemort, and yet the short experience in Packingtown as a breadwinner and its downside seem to bring him closer to the former. The poor working conditions at Durham's dark and cold cellars turn him into a chronic rheumatic. His legs, in addition, are badly affected by the acid used in the beef-trimming process. By delineating Dede Antanas in this fashion, Sinclair furthers a typically zolaesque type of capitalist victimization.

Sinclair seems to have gained inspiration from Zola especially in his picturing of Old Antanas as the advocate of the Lithuanian tradition. He stands as the voice and guardian of a nostalgic past almost forgotten by his fellow immigrants just as Bonnemort safeguards the legacy of the mine—more than two generations work for the bourgeois in his family. In spite of it all, however, Bonnemort manages to break free from a past that perpetuates his enslavement. Such a freedom ironically comes forth in a moment of

insanity, and its expression reflects the negative impact of heredity upon Zola's character. Bonnemort indeed retaliates almost unconsciously against the system by murdering Cecile, the Grégoires's daughter. Unlike Bonnemort, Old Dede Antanas fails to adapt to the ways of capitalism, and as an unfit being is doomed to die a most miserable death.

CHAPTER 3

THEMATIC ISSUES IN GERMINAL AND THE JUNGLE

The design of any literary characterization is meant to suit a particular thematic issue or issues an author seems most interested in. As social critics, Zola and Sinclair managed at best to organize their characters' lives around such factors as labor, class, and self-awareness.

Burden or Relief: Characteristics of Labor

Sinclair's famous contention that The Jungle was written in the hope that its message would reach the Americans' hearts, but ironically hit their stomachs, can rightly be verified by looking at how he handles the complex issue of labor in his novel. The central importance of labor as an alleged means of social uplift and an indication of self-worth as well is what the muckraker primarily sets forth— with the intent to prove the contrary— however. The portrayal of labor indeed takes a dual form the first aspect of which appears through the Lithuanians' naïve conception of it. It is one of relief and plentitude they believe, and the tidbits they receive from former friends, now immigrants in America, not only heighten this conviction, these also accelerate the process of their exodus. Thus the narrator explains:

It was Jonas who suggested that they all go to America, where a friend of his had gotten rich. He would work, for his part, and the women would work, and some of the children, doubtless— they would live somehow. Jurgis, too, heard of America. That was a country where, they said, a man might earn three rubles a day; and Jurgis figured what three rubles a day would mean...

(22)

The capitalists' propagandizing of the American economic system as healthy and profitable reached various desperate nations abroad—Eastern Europeans are included in this category. The prospect of a promising voyage to the El Dorado was envisioned with great optimism. Even when taking such a trip meant laying themselves open to risks of corruption and mistreatment, as is the case with Jurgis and his fellows, they did not mind these as long as their dreams would come true in America. After crossing the inevitable barriers then, Jurgis after the fashion of the Lithuanian, Slovak, and Polish pioneers, discovers American through Packingtown. If the desolate atmosphere of the milieu—smoky, filthy, and gloomy as it is—brings him to doubt, however insignificantly, the truthfulness of the American dream, he ultimately takes pride in portraying himself as an actor in the meat-processing enterprise. This feeling is expressed during his first visit at Durham in company of Jokubas Szedvilas, who actually appears as proud as his companion.

Jurgis was even glad that he had not seen the place before meeting with his triumph, for he felt that the size of it would have overwhelmed him. But now that he had been admitted—he was a part of it all! He had the feeling that this whole huge establishment had taken him under its protection, and had become responsible for its welfare. (41)

Jurgis's triumph is his immediate employment, a new situation he naively but happily interprets as a foreshadowing of his family's luck and escape from any burdening need. Sinclair carries the Lithuanian's reaction to incredible proportions. "He had a job! He had a job!" the narrator exclaims; "And he went all the way home as if upon wings, and burst into the house like a cyclone..." (31) The socialist's rendering of this quest for

and response to labor mirrors the early stages of Etienne's acquaintance with Montsou in Germinal. I referred in the previous chapter to how this engine operator was compelled to leave Lille and how fate drove him to the Voreux. Although his trip from Lille to Montsou through Marchiennes appears not as readily prepared and organized as the Lithuanians' voyage, it nevertheless revolves around one similar motive: job-hunting. Etienne's introspection clearly impresses this aspiration upon us: "While examining it, he thought of himself, of his vagabond existence these eight days he had been seeking work" (11). That Zola's main character should deplore his "vagabond existence" implicitly indicates his wish to live better just as Jurgis's unsavory life in Lithuania nurtures a desire for improvement. Like the Lithuanian and before him— just to make it clear that it is Sinclair who sought inspiration from Zola and not the other way round— Etienne believes the key to this problem to be a matter of relocating in a place where opportunities of employment are available. Zola was quite aware of the migration tendencies of the working classes, and Duquesne again provides a historical detail regarding this trend:

Alors, il en vint de partout. Des champs d'alentour d'abord quand, au début XVIIIe, fut découvert le premier gisement important de houille grasse, du côté d'Anzin [...] Tout changea au milieu du XIXe quand on apercut que le bassin du Nord se prolongeait sous le crétacé des collines d'Artois, dans le Pas-de-Calais. Ce fut la ruée [...] Les nouveaux venus venaient souvent des Flandres belges. (114)

People then came from everywhere. Primarily from the neighboring farms when, in the beginning of the eighteenth

century, the first considerable layer of thick coal was found in the Anzin Area [...] Everything was extending under the cretaceous of the Artois hills in the Straits of Dover. It marked the outset of the rush [...] The newcomers often originated from the Belgian Flanders. (My Translation 114)

Duquesne is here referring to the Belgians immigrating to the Northern part of France in search of work. Zola's main character is thought to be one of them (13).

Etienne geographic relocation along with the motives underlying it may have seemed an efficient narrative subterfuge for Sinclair to use as a model for Jurgis's initiation to the realities of the meatpacking industry. That Sinclair should have opted for an almost complete overlooking of the Lithuanians as Lithuanians—the wedding ceremony proves the only instance that reminds the reader of their national and cultural identity—suggests that he wanted them to appear as mere victims of the capitalist system. Sinclair needed a technique of introduction to the capitalist world so as to buttress the victimization process, and the opening of Germinal with its broad allusions to immigration may have provided him with such a narrative device. Zola's influence is even evidenced by Etienne's response to the news of his employment soon after his arrival at the Voreux. The following dialogue between Catherine and the young man unveils the nature of his feelings in this respect:

“‘Come,’ said Catherine; ‘there’s something for you.’ At first he could not understand. Then he felt a spasm of joy, and vigorously squeezed the young girl’s hands. ‘Thanks, mate. Ah! You’re a good chap, you are!’ She began to laugh, looking at him in the light of the furnaces, which lit them up [...] He also

was laughing, with satisfaction, and they remained, for a moment, both laughing in each other's faces with radiant cheeks.'" (33)

This temperamental exhibition is milder in tone compared to Jurgis's over-excitement. Moreover, whereas Sinclair brings in a character whose sense of elation is strained to the point of implying his ignorance of the dangers inherent to labor, Zola selects a persona who is enlightened enough to understand that the work process in itself can be both helpful and burdening. Jurgis, for example, is so blinded by his optimistic conception of employment that he disdains the wise advice given him by his companions.

Jurgis talked lightly about work, because he was young.

They told him stories about the breaking down of men, there in the stockyards of Chicago, and of what had happened to them afterward— stories to make your flesh creep, but Jurgis would only laugh. He had only been there four months, and he was young, and a giant besides. (20)

If four months of labor at Durham's did not provide Jurgis with new insights, one day at the Voreux proves long and bad enough for Etienne to receive confirmation about the downside of labor.

As he ascended in the cage heaped up with four others, Etienne resolved to continue his famished course along the roads. One might as well die at once as go down to the bottom of that hell, where it was not even possible to earn one's bread. (60).

In spite of it all, Zola's hero resolves to stay and keep his job. Such a decision is absolutely not governed by a desire to set up household as is Jurgis', but simply results

from an urge to be closer to the girl he has passionately fallen in love with. The latter factor actually ascribes a romance-like aspect to the workplace.

The dichotomization of labor also appears through both Maheude's plight and Bonnemort's personality. At the end of Germinal, Maheude is portrayed as a widow bereft of two children who died in the tragic setting of the Voreux. The circumstances of their deaths are indications of how disastrous the performance of labor can be. It brings disaster not upon the dead one, but rather affects the living beings. Maheude thus suffers the most as a survivor, for she has to battle alone. Ironically, however, she and her orphaned son, Jeanlin, have to return to the mine, the scene of her loved ones' demise, in order not to mourn them but to earn their bread. Strikingly enough, Maheude feels somewhat contented with this order of things:

“Yes,” she says, “those gentleman found something for him [Jeanlin] to do at the top. He gets twenty sous. Oh! I don't complain; the bosses have been good, as they told me themselves. The brat's twenty sous and my thirty, that makes fifty. If there were not six of us we should get enough to eat.”
(474)

Bonnemort goes beyond mere contentment to proudly express the part he plays in the Montsou Company (16). Zola here shows how years of subservience have caused these poor creatures to find even some delight in the roles assigned to them by a bourgeois-regulated system. The naturalist manages far better than Sinclair to portray the psychology of the miner at work. It is indeed part of his schema not only to reflect one of the two images of labor, but also to shed light on the dynamics of its operation. Zola

ultimately transcends the psychology of the working class to focus on physiognomy. It is, in fact, through this shift that the shocking truth about capitalist labor comes forth.

Truth is of uppermost importance in The Jungle and Germinal. The novelists' conceptions of literature as engagé encompass their desire for impartiality. Pizer dwells particularly upon Zola's as he argues: "Fiction, Zola believed, should above all be truthful rather than polite, amusing, or ennobling, and truth was achieved by depicting life in accord with scientific laws and methods" (4). William Dean Howells stressed the naturalist's artistic integrity as follows: "Word for word, I should take Zola's word as to the fact [...] because I have rarely known the observant instinct of poets to fail..." (390) What Zola held as literature's primary goal impelled Sinclair to rely on facts. It is in this respect that he "set out for the industrial slums of Chicago's South Side, determined to write the great American labor novel," as James R. Barrett observes (97). Sinclair indeed mingled with the inhabitants of Packingtown at home and in the workplace as well. After seven weeks of intensive investigation— see Walter Rideout in *Blinderman* (113)— the muckraker returned to Princeton, New Jersey, where he endeavored for three months to put *Shelley* in the form of Zola. The result emerged as a groundbreaking and heartrending testimony against human exploitation just as Zola had done in Germinal. Before addressing the negative patterns of this wage slavery— and therefore labor as burdensome—I would like to draw attention to Harvey Swados's most significant paralleling of the two writers. "Zola's brutalized coal miners of northern France and Sinclair's immigrants of Chicago's Packingtown can nevermore be briefly forgotten," Swados argues; He goes on to say that "[t]hey take their place in history as the cruelly used builders of the modern era, along with all the other untold millions who gave up

their lives on the altar of production in the strange and terrible rites of the new industrial age” (quoted in Blinderman 118). One can appreciate the veracity of this statement by simply taking a look at their descriptions of the workplace as well as the many troubles encountered by their major characters.

In The Jungle, the elaboration of the theme of labor as burden is partly carried out by means of a melodramatic use of language. The meat-processing machinery of Packingtown, whenever depicted, is made to appear in a frightful guise that augurs no good for the proletariat. This method of portrayal employs the operational patterns of the means of production to give the reader a hint about what capitalism has in store in terms of treatment for its helpless subjects. As Jurgis and his family visit Brown’s killing beds, for instance, the narrator makes an appealing reportage on the forces of material production in motion:

In these chutes the stream of animals was continuous; it was quite uncanny to watch them (the cattle), pressing on to their fate, all unsuspecting—a very river of death. Our friends were not poetical, and the sight suggested to them no metaphors of human destiny; they thought only of the wonderful efficiency of it all. (33)

Along with the meat-processing maneuvers, the condition of the cattle serves as an analogy to the terrible reality awaiting the worker. To these repulsive images, Sinclair adds the even more depressing atmosphere of the stockyards as an indication of the “Kafkaesque nightmare,” terms used by Harris (71), that will ultimately assail Jurgis and his fellow Lithuanians. At their arrival in Packingtown, the immigrants are taken by a discomfiting shudder as they stand in the midst of a chaotic milieu the main

characteristics of which range from a sickening odor and a bewildering noise to an oppressive smoke. The latter feature is actually meant to exemplify the pervasive, domineering, and noxious power of capitalism. The narrator describes the instance in language replete with allegorical imagery:

It might have come from the center of the world, this smoke, where the fires of the ages still smolder. It was as if self-impelled, driving all before it, a perpetual explosion. It was inexhaustible; one stared waiting to see it stop, but still the great streams rolled out. They spread in vast clouds overhead, writhing, curling; then, uniting in one giant river, they streamed away down the sky, stretching a black pale as far as the eye could reach. (25)

Such smoldering fires remind us of Dante's infernal world. As a matter of fact, the image given of Packingtown proves somewhat comparable to his Inferno. It also needs be pointed out that the latter descriptive approach bears some resemblance with Zola's, their motives still being the same in this case. Etienne, for example, is faced with the daunting and dreadful capitalist machinery as the Voreux comes to his sight:

He went on some two hundred paces. Suddenly, at a bend in the road, the fires reappeared close to him, though he could not understand how they burnt so high in the sky, like smoky moons. But on the level soil another sight had struck him. It was a heavy mass, a low pile of buildings from which rose the silhouette of a factory chimney; occasional gleams appeared from dirty windows, five or six melancholy lanterns were hung outside to frames of blackened wood, which vaguely outlined the profiles

of gigantic stages; and from this fantastic apparition, drowned in night and smoke, a single voice arose the thick, long breathing of a stream escapement that could not be seen. (10)

The central force of the Voreux is pictured as a hidden beast calmly awaiting its prey, the collier. Zola thus provides it with human properties, and accordingly carries out the pathetic fallacy. In dissecting this concept, Winston Hewitt came up with “five distinct principal varieties of pathetic”: the “sympathetic and empathetic,” the “prophetic,” the “malevolent,” and finally the “benevolent” (110). Of these, the “malevolent fallacy” seems most fitting to Zola’s and Sinclair’s portrayals of the workplace. It is so because of the hostile human appearance both the Voreux and Packingtown put on, and such hostility is directed against the proletariat. Zola’s narrative is actually pervaded by images suggestive of this malevolence. One of the most striking instances at this juncture is modeled after a repast scene during which the nourishment served is devoured with much greed:

For half an hour the shaft went on devouring in this fashion, with more or less greedy gulps, according to the depth of the level to which the men went down, but without stopping, always hungry, with its giant intestines capable of digesting a nation. It went on filling and still filling, and the darkness remained dead. The cage mounted from the void with the same voracious silence. (30)

Just as the shaft of the Voreux feeds on human flesh so does Durham’s productive device in The Jungle— the instance about the cattle, for example. The representation of the machinery of capitalism as cannibalistic was obviously first employed by the naturalist

before it found its way in Sinclair's novel. The socialist simply substituted meat for coal, the meat-packer for the collier. Even in his observation of Jurgis at work and his thorough detailing of the work process, one feels Zola's presence.

In writing The Jungle, Sinclair was most interested in depicting the poor and dehumanizing working conditions that led to the strike of 1904. Meat-processing was only important to him when it could lend itself to the exposing of the baseness of industrial exploitation. Just as Zola had no consideration for coal mining itself, so did Sinclair care nothing about meatpacking. Yoder actually points out how Sinclair "...cared little about meat, since he rarely ate it" (44). Their novels are then to be studied solely in relation to the working and economic conditions and how these affect the worker's social life.

The Lithuanians' quest for the American Dream ironically leads to no social uplift, but rather dooms three generations of innocent beings to death and degeneracy. Jurgis is the first to experience the brutality of a system based on Darwinism. Naïve and yet highly confident in himself, the Lithuanian uses his strength without any sense of restraint and moderation. As a healthy and energetic worker, Jurgis wins his bosses' respect. Yet fate acts against Sinclair's hero. The risky working environment at Durham's is to be held accountable for Jurgis's downfall. Sinclair at this level gets into an account of the "speeding-up" strategy, one that gives no respite to the worker, before referring to the darkness and slipperiness of the killing beds. It is not also uncommon that a steer escapes time and again, and as Sinclair's narrator reports, a foreman would run in "blazing away" in the darkness to kill the strayed animal, while in the meantime killers, sharp knives in hand, would rush hither and thither in search of a hiding place. These

were moments of great danger for the laborer in that his life was threatened by random gunshots, swaying knives, and by the risk of being gored to death. One episode underscores Jurgis's first ordeal when he sprains his ankle. The accident costs him his job, and this without any compensation whatsoever (114). Sinclair does not stack the deck in revealing a misfortune of this type. As a matter of fact, Barrett corroborates the writer's realistic approach as follows:

In one house alone, Swift and Company, 3,500 injuries were reported for the first six months of 1910, and this number included only those requiring a physician's care. According to the director of Armour's Welfare department, one of every two of the company's 22,381 workers were injured or became ill at work during 1917. The company's Chicago plant averaged twenty-three accidents per day. (98)

It is by means of a detailed and accurate description of labor that Sinclair reveals the factors accountable for the worker's victimization. A catalogue of the diseases most prevalent among the working classes is noted in The Jungle. Blood poisoning, for one, becomes a threat to every "beef trimmer." Marija, and her lover Tamozius Kuzleika, eventually suffer from its gangrenous effect. Rheumatism, in return, strikes the employees of the "chilling rooms." Old Dede Antanas, as I pointed out earlier, figures among those stricken by this illness. In the pickling rooms of Packingtown, each worker bears an insignia that says much about the ravaging nature of materialist production. "Let a man so much as scrape his finger pushing a truck in the pickle rooms, and he might have a sore that would put him out of the world; all the joints in his fingers might be eaten up by the acid, one by one," according to the narrator (97-8).

In the struggle for survival, the employee is also exposed to a “stifling heat” and to harrowing cold winters as well. The meatpackers’ obsession with profit accounts for the absence of effective ventilation and heating systems. Whether at Durham’s Pure Leaf Lard or at Brown’s, the worker appears as an entrapped and helpless beast of burden. Sinclair depicts all its unbecoming aspects via Jurgis’s experiences and his family’s. The immigrants’ involvement in industrial production turns their lives into a disconcerting and “dull round of daily existence,” to use Paul P. Reuben’s naturalistic terms (2-3).

Furthermore, the Lithuanians’ sense of family unity is violently shaken by a pattern of labor that neither affords respite from harrowing want nor strengthens the feelings of love and self-commitment. Rather, it paves the way for individualism. That Jurgis should turn into an irresponsible hobo after his wife’s and son’s deaths speaks volumes for such a behavioral inclination. Jonas also chooses a similar course of action by deserting the family. Both most probably perceive this circle as an obstacle to their self-fulfillment and freedom. Just as Sinclair or “Thyrsis [the writer identifies himself with this Miltonic figure in his Autobiography] saw himself prisoned in a cage, the bars being made not of steel, but of human beings” (Prashant K. Sinha 103), so did Jurgis, who, unlike the socialist, seeks refuge in a typically careless bohemian life. This instance figures among the rare moments in which Jurgis resorts to his free will. Overall, his reaction evolves as a logical response to a labor system that eradicates the human self just to promote the beast. Sinclair’s close look at the working conditions and the recreation he made of the ways in which these do disservice to the individual and the family as well indicate many zolaesque features as delineated in Germinal.

While conducting his research at Anzin, Zola constantly reminded himself of the purpose of his novel. In his “General notes on the nature of the work,” for example, Zola scribbled these significant words:

Don't forget that drama catches the public by the throat.

Readers get angry, but they do not forget. Always give them, if not nightmares, at any rate excessive books which stick in their memory. (quoted in Grant, 46)

Germinal sticks in the memory of any sensible reader— just as The Jungle, but to a lesser extent— on account of its uncompromising rendition of the miner's life. Zola unveils every aspect of the coal extraction business in order that the collier's miserable situation comes out in the open. Etienne's participation as an apprentice avails the naturalist with the pretext requisite for the reflection of his fellow mates' toils. At the seam Guillaume, Maheu, and his crew are thus pictured laboring in active duty:

Every thought disappeared in this rage for gain which was so hard to earn. They no longer felt the water which streamed on them and swelled their limbs, the cramps of forced attitudes, the suffocation of the darkness in which they grew pale, like plants put in a cellar. Yet, as the day advanced, the air became more poisoned and heated with the smoke of the lamps, with the pestilence of their breaths, with the asphyxia of the fire-damp— blinding to the eyes like spiders' webs—which only the aeration of the night could sweep away. At the bottom of their mole-hill, beneath the weight of the earth, with no more breath in their inflamed lungs, they went on hammering. (50)

Zola achieves a double task by on the one hand dramatizing the proletariat's concern for material attributes and by showing how this state of mind nurtures a conflicting pattern of action in a noxious environment on the other. The characters here depicted naively believe that hard work will reward their efforts, a sentiment also shared by Jurgis (19). Maheu and company get nothing for their pains but discontent, worries, and sickness. As a case in point, Etienne suffers from "... a slight fever which kept him in bed for forty-eight hours with aching limbs and throbbing head, dreaming in a state of semi-delirium that he was pushing his train in a passage that was so narrow that its body would not pass through" (129). It is striking that both Etienne and Jurgis should keep the bed in an almost similar fashion. Is this narrative sequence a mere coincidence? Or does it simply prove once more that Sinclair modeled his work after Zola's, as Bloodworth suggested earlier? In any case, the traits of their victimization leave us with much food for thought.

Some other characters whose conditions translate the brutality of capitalist labor are Jeanlin, Catherine, and Bonnemort to list a few. While Jeanlin's case affords insights into the real occurrence of landslips—the boy almost died, crushed as he was by a pile of thick coal— Bonnemort's degrading health, like Old Dede Antanas's, is a consequence of his unwholesome occupation at the mine. Zola conducted a preliminary search about the illnesses much rampant in the mining community. According to Jean Mark Kehres, he consulted Dr. Boens-Boisseau's Le Traité Pratique des Maladies, des Accidents et des Difformités des Houilleurs (1862) and Dr. Hyancinthe Kuborn's Les Maladies des Ouvriers Employés dans les Exploitations des Mines (1864) (259). Zola's searching methodology confirms the realistic import of his motives. It is for these same motives that he draws a parallelism between labor and drink, without mentioning the delicate

problem of uncensored sexuality, the “sensationalism of naturalistic fiction,” as Pizer terms it (x-xi). Sinclair either shies away from or lightly touches on these issues, especially the sexual aspect, probably on account of the Victorian training he received from his mother. Yet it is not seldom that some parts of his life find their way into his writings; the analysis of class stratification would not but confirm the close link between the author’s private life and his fictional achievements. Zola is not to be outdone in this respect.

Class Structure

I briefly mentioned in one of the previous chapters how Sinclair’s and Zola’s social backgrounds initiated them to the issue of class stratification. Poverty and ease were not a novelty for them at all. As a matter of fact, each of these writers’ lives was a constant seesawing between wealth and deprivation at a certain period. It is then not surprising that in recreating the clash between the proletariat and capitalism, they put a particular emphasis on the bourgeois and working class lifestyles. Zola, for one, strove to unveil class differences by contrasting in a most subtle and organized fashion his bourgeois characters’ concerns, occupations, conceptions of life and physical appearances to those peculiar to the underprivileged. His approach encompasses a whole community of beings and does not exclusively focus on the Maheu family or on a single character in this respect.

In Germinal, labor appears as a major factor in the distribution of social roles and in the definition of class standing as well. Whereas the collier works for his own sustenance, the bourgeois lives on the profit amassed from the inhuman investment of the former at the latter’s property. A class barrier is drawn between these actors in

accordance with the way in which they not only position themselves vis-à-vis the labor issue, but in relation to their respective compensations too. To the comfort of the bourgeois, for instance, Zola opposes the wretchedness of the miner's life. The contrast between Maheude's condition and the Grégoires suffices to suggest this disparity:

M. Grégoire thoughtfully contemplated this woman and these pitiful children, with their waxy flesh, their discolored hair, the degeneration which stunted them, gnawed by anæmia, and with the melancholy ugliness of starvelings. There was silence again, and one only heard the burning coal as it gave out a jet of gas. The moist room had that heavy air of comfort in which our middle-class nooks of happiness slumber. (91)

The reference to body parts— notice how Maheude's children are described— as a means of presenting different class standings is fairly common in Zola's novel. Kehres even argues in this respect that,

[p]our être efficace dans sa portée politique et social, le texte Zola s'articule sur une structure différentielle qui accentue les dissemblances mis en regard: le corps ouvrier du mineur n'acquiert son plein signifié que dans son rapport antithétique au corps bourgeois. (261)

To be efficacious in its social and political purview, the zolaesque text articulates itself upon a structure of difference that stresses the exemplified dissimilarities: the body of the miner acquires its real meaning only through its antithetic relation to the bourgeois's body. (My Translation 261)

Henri Marel also draws a similar parallel between Maheu's anemic complexion and Cécile, the Grégoires' daughter's shining skin with the intent to reflect the former's working class affiliation as opposed to the latter's high status. The dichotomies Catherine/Cécile, Maheu/Hennebeau, and Bonnemort/Grégoire are part and parcel of this trend. Sinclair actually employs a similar contrastive course in The Jungle.

Jurgis's foray into Jones's luxurious palace in company of Master Freddie sets the stage for the unveiling of the gap between the capitalist and his miserable subject. Sinclair somewhat insists on body parts, as he rivets his attention to attire, an indication of one's class belonging. As Jurgis's status shifts from the worker he used to be and the beggar he presently is, a change in clothing marks his degeneration. Unlike Jurgis, Master Freddie is not only all decked out, but the boy is sufficiently provided with cash, a luxury the Lithuanian craves for (243). The class contrast is rendered in more poignant terms through Jurgis's reaction to the lavishness characteristic of the milieu in which he is unexpectedly introduced:

He thought that the young fellow must have made a mistake—it was inconceivable to him that any person could have a home like a hotel or the city hall [...] Jurgis's heart was beating wildly; it was a bold thing for him to do—into what strange unearthly place he was venturing he had no idea. Aladdin entering his cave could not have been more excited. (237)

A similar attitude is displayed by the miners' delegation during their visit at Mr. Hennebeau's, the director of the Voreux.

At first the servant told them to wait, and shut the door on them; then, when he came back, he introduced them into the

drawing-room, opened the curtains [...] And the miners, when left alone, in their embarrassment did not dare to sit [...] They twisted their yellow fingers, and looked sideways at the furniture, which was in every variety of style, as a result of the taste for the old-fashioned: Henry II easy-chairs, Louis XV chairs...Five minutes passed by, and their awkwardness increased in the comfort of this rich room, so pleasantly warm.

(203)

In his analysis of class performance in Germinal, Sandy Petrey lays a special emphasis on the furniture described above. These “bourgeois objects,” as he terms them, “manifest the solidity of the bourgeois world” as opposed to the frailty of the working class community (167). This statement is also valuable for The Jungle, and Sinclair actually gives an imposing aspect to these markers of high social status. Just as Zola points out how intimidating the bourgeois milieu is to the miner, so does Sinclair through Jurgis. Unlike the muckraker, however, the French naturalist breaks the daunting solidity of the bourgeois sphere by providing the collier with a voice that threatens the status quo. As Petrey once again puts it “Maheu’s verbal performance makes Hennebeau’s things disappear for the same reason that it leaves Hennebeau’s voice unheard, because efficacious workers’ speech invalidates the preconditions for bourgeois self-definition whether through commodities or through commands” (175). Jurgis, on the contrary, remains a meek victim all through his encounter with and foray into Jones’s mansion. He is unable to challenge that solidity. Yet it is worth mentioning that the occasions of the visits and what underlies them are of opposite natures. Jurgis’s appears as solely guided

by chance, while the colliers' occurs in a moment of crisis and follows a logical pattern that necessitates a confrontation between bourgeois and proletariat.

I started out with a discussion of labor as social marker, and I referred to compensation as a major factor in the depiction of class values and concerns. In my reading of the two novels here analyzed, I was struck by the extent to which poor wages could be a burden on lower-class characters. The worker has barely enough resources to live on, so much so that want and shortage constantly haunt him and his family. The narrator actually sheds light on their misery:

She (Maheude) had put back the blinds, and stirred up the fire, adding some coal to it. Her hope was that the old man had not swallowed all the soup. But she found the saucepan dry, and cooked a handful of vermicelli which she had been keeping for three days in reserve. They would swallow it with water, without butter, as there could not be any remaining from the day before, and she was surprised to find that Catherine in preparing the bricks had performed the miracle of leaving a piece as large as a nut. But this time the cupboard was indeed empty: nothing, not a crust, not an odd fragment, not a bone to gnaw [...] When the men and the girl returned from the pit they would want to eat, for unfortunately it had not yet been found out how to live without eating. (84)

Zola suffuses such instances with grim and alarming details, ones that probably reminded him of the nightmares he went through as a child and adolescent (Knapp 97). These, however, are not so much a biographical remembrance as they are part of his attempt to provoke his readers' pity and sympathy for the entrapped working class

family. An opposite response, one of outrage, was also meant to evolve out of the parallel description of the Bourgeoisie's self-sufficiency, a privilege they owe to their hungered providers. Zola had a fairly sophisticated method of unraveling the imbalance characteristic of class stratification, and gloomy portrayals are almost always followed by glamorous pictures. To the worker's tragic penuriousness, Zola juxtaposes the parasites' abundance:

Madame Grégoire, who had planned this surprise of the brioche in bed, waited to see the dough put in the oven. The kitchen was very large, and one guessed it was the most important room in the house by its extreme cleanliness and by the arsenal of saucepans, utensils, and pots which filled it. It gave an impression of good feeling. Provisions abounded, hanging from hooks or in cupboards. (74)

Although Gyorgy Lukács, Gustave Lanson, and Paul Truffau criticize Zola on account of his excessive use of details (Petrey 163), it is yet undeniable that he does at times make the best out of these. Without a detailed description of class factors, Zola would have barely succeeded in pricking the French public's conscience. The injustice characteristic of the situation he delineates strikes us as appealingly unique simply because Zola chooses scenes that transcend the realms of the commonplace and the acceptable. He indeed was one of the first writers of his time to introduce such unfamiliar setting as the workplace and its characteristics and was much criticized in this respect. Moreover, his detailed choice of words—slangs and technical terms related to labor—seemed preposterous for many of his contemporaries, conservative writers mainly, but he manages to delineate the class issue by means of such eccentricities. The parallel he

draws between sufficiency and want, as a way of suggesting class distinctions, is also found in The Jungle.

Almost all the characters in this novel worry mainly about two related necessities: money and bread. In spite of their hard work, the Lithuanians barely manage to cater to their needs. As if cursed by a relentless fate, they move from one misfortune to another: they find out, for example, that their house is more expensive than they suspected; Jurgis and Marija lose their jobs; Jonas deserts the family; Stanislovas is ultimately eaten by rats. These occurrences add to their sufferings and deprivation. Stanislovas's grim revelation to Jurgis at the Bridewell where the latter is serving his sentence provides a vivid picture that is very telling in this respect: "[W]e can't pay the rent and the interest on the house; and we have no coal and nothing more to eat, and the man at the store, he says—" (169). The boy is not allowed to finish his heart-rending exposé, but even so his mentioning of the man at the store seems to indicate that they applied for food on credit, but were denied this resource. Interestingly enough, Maheude also begs a store manager, Maigrat namely, to provide her with at least a loaf of bread. She proved more fortunate than the Lithuanians in this case, for her appeals and supplication were heeded, at which she brought home plenty of provisions. That Sinclair should make mention of a store manager for the same reasons as Zola does and in the same context may seem to corroborate the muckraker's use of some zolaesque patterns in his plot. Yet we must not lose sight of the fact that retail businesses were part of Packingtown's economic sphere, and besides, just as the bartender was closely associated with the worker, so was the food provider. It would then be safer to argue that by introducing the latter aspect in his depiction of class characteristics, Sinclair observes the worker's social and economic

environment with a realistic eye, one that is zolaesque in origin. Here then lies the influence. To return to the theme discussed hereby, it would be appropriate to display the bourgeois-capitalist's lifestyle as an opposite of the proletarian image presented earlier.

Although Sinclair confessed that his novels are mostly about class, it is yet surprising how insignificant his exposé about this matter appears when compared to Zola's. Of the very few passages we can rightly associate with this issue, the most symbolic one revolves around Jurgis's foray into Jones's "castle." The terms of the description shifts as the components of the scene take different forms, a narrative pattern typically zolaesque. To the desolateness and promiscuity of the Lithuanians' house, Sinclair opposes the mind-boggling proportions of the millionaire's property (238). But most importantly, the muckraker dwells upon a lavishness that verges on immorality given the lack rampant within the working class community. Ironically enough, Sinclair chooses a scene where a representative of the latter social group is being fed by one of a higher status to suggest the disparity.

Now there came footsteps outside, and, as he opened the door a man in livery entered, carrying a folding table, and behind him two men with covered trays. They stood like statues while the first spread the table and set out the content of the trays upon it. There were cold patés, and thin slices of meat, tiny bread and butter sandwiches with the crust cut off, a bowl of sliced patches and cream (in January), little fancy cakes, pink and green and yellow and white, and half a dozen ice-cold bottles of wine.

(241)

Just as the sight of the brioche at the Grégoires excited Maheude's sons (G, p 93), so Jurgis must have reacted at this amazing display. Both instances take the form of charity giving.

Moreover, a most condescending albeit disdainful attitude is what characterizes these brief moments of contact between high class and low class individuals. In giving the brioche to Lénore and Henry, for example, Cécile reveals her superiority vis-à-vis the poor urchins and their mother, let alone her contempt for these "lowly" creatures (93). Similarly, Master Freddie invites Jurgis to eat to his heart's content, and his invitation is colloquially condescending: "Thass the stuff for you!" cried Master Freddie, exultantly, as he spied them (the servants). "Come long, ole chappie, move up" (241).

As a matter of fact, condescension figures as a major trait in the capitalist-bourgeois and proletariat interactions.

In Germinal and to a lesser degree The Jungle, members of the former group almost always address the laborers in such a way as to maintain the class barrier. Attitudes are not only markers of social standing, but they also serve the bourgeois-capitalist's objectives, which includes the taming of the underprivileged. Mr. Hennebeau's response to the miners' delegation sets him as an antagonist whose interests are typically bourgeois in essence. His attitude also reflects his disdain to the miner's lot, while buttressing the psychological method employed to dominate the latter: "At last Mr. Hennebeau entered, buttoned up in a military manner and wearing on his frock-coat the correct little knot of his decoration. He spoke first. 'Ah! Here you are! You are in rebellion, it seems.' He interrupted himself to add with polite stiffness: 'Sit down, I desire nothing better than talk things over'" (203). These few words highlight the way the

director of the Voreux perceives his employees. He does not take them seriously. On the contrary, he tries to rouse that dread that the miner has always felt towards the bourgeois. Mr Hennebeau's reaction is not exceptional; it is shared by his nephew Négrel, his wife Madame Hennebeau, and by M. Grégoire whose response to the miners' serious threats is as simple as this: "They're not bad-hearted; I know them." And Madame Grégoire to add, "Certainly, they have no malice at bottom. When they have shouted well they will go home to supper with more appetite" (329). Zola thus shows how lacking in sympathy these bourgeois are. They wallow in a comforting disdain to minimize the colliers' suffering. How would one have appetite when one has nothing to eat? This is what Madame Grégoire, and overall the selfish bourgeois community cannot see. These condescending behaviors are not unwarranted, however. They are nurtured upon the miner's religious fear of the ruling class. As a result of intimidations and continuous subjugation, this fear accounts for Maheu's reluctance to be part of the delegates deputed to meet with the director (201). Bonnemort epitomizes the miner's dread for the ruling class. A breakaway from this feeling will ultimately take place through the miners' revolt against the injustices they have been encountering. Revolt is also part of Sinclair's schema in The Jungle.

Although the socialist deals lightly with the class issue, two instances of revolt occur in his narrative: Jurgis's attack against a superintendent and a repressed strike. While this latter aspect is not given the zolaesque consideration it deserves, the former, because of its individualistic nature and the motives underlying it, becomes not so much a matter of class confrontation as it is a reflection of the "limitations imposed by physical nature, the Not Me, acting outside the physical self" (Luther S. Mansfield 24). In the

chapter about characterization, I mentioned how Jurgis was driven by instinct into attacking Connor. Mansfield believes that the Lithuanian acted thus because he was egged by an outside force. If Jurgis's attack against Connor is not directly related to class— it is more a matter of revenge— it obliquely results from an interaction between worker and superior. Connor indeed abuses his status in a most disrespectful and condescending fashion by seducing Ona. The superintendent uses the same pattern of intimidation encountered in Germinal. It is yet solely associated with sexuality in The Jungle. Just as the bourgeois sanctions the miner by depriving him of his precious labor, so Connor intends to do if Ona fails to consent to him. The latter displays the same fear the collier nurtures towards the bourgeois. It is indeed out of fear— the capitalist world opens one alternative for the girl, and employment is what can save her and her family from starvation, she believes— that Ona gives herself up to adultery. It is actually worth pointing out at this juncture that sexuality does fit in our discussion of class as represented in the two novels.

Hippolyte Taine once ventured that “vice and virtue are products like vitriol and sugar.” In Germinal as well as in The Jungle, social mores are presented as resulting from the dehumanizing working conditions. If there is any virtue at all among the mining community of Montsou, it is almost exclusively confined to the circle of the Maheu family. Zacharie, Maheu's eldest son, may be a pervert but not to the same extent as Mouquette, Pierronne, and the Levaque woman. These characters symbolize the fall from humanity to bestiality. Zola strives through both Pierronne and the Levaque woman to impress upon us the way in which pressuring needs induce these figures to adopt censurable sexual tendencies. They indeed practice what I would call disguised

prostitution in order to make ends meet. In the case of Levaque's wife, for example, we, as readers, are appalled by her admittance of another man, Bouteloup namely, in the marital bed. This immoral act becomes the subject of much gossiping among other women of the Deux-Cent-Quarante settlement—gossiping is another aspect Zola strictly associates with the lower class. Also, Pierronne's involvement with Dansaert, a supervisor at the mine, does not go unnoticed. Her husband casts a blind eye on her affair lest he should lose his job, just as Ona consents to Connor for fear of reprisals. These women act not in accordance with their free will, however. It is one of Zola's purposes to bring us to evaluate their behaviors as deriving from the manipulative and corrupting capitalist system. Degenerate attitudes, whenever emphasized in Germinal, target those whose economic and social well-being demands the exploitative deprivation of the masses. By depicting this subtle form of subjugation, Zola makes a plea against the bourgeoisie and its immoral materialistic procedures. In addition, the naturalist ventures beyond a correlative association between need and degeneracy to account for an exceptional type of immorality that is altogether dissociated from want itself. Mouquette stands as the epitome of this particular behavioral pattern.

All through Germinal, Mouquette appears in the guise of the female rake in perpetual quest for a beau who would satisfy her sexual cravings. She has been passed from one miner to another, and her reputation is the subject of much jest. Her precocious exposure to sexuality in both speech and act— I referred to Jeanlin and Lydie in this respect— in the work environment of the Voreux has promoted a propensity in her to ridicule any sexual taboo. Sex is not just a source of pleasure for her, it also serves as a medium through which her disgust and anger vis-à-vis the system are expressed. When

the soldiers— the watchdogs of the status quo— stand against the miners' interest, Mouquette resorts to her only weapon:

In the front rank Mouquette was choking with fury, thinking that the soldiers were going to gash the women's skins. She had spat out all her coarse words at them, and could find no vulgarity low enough, when suddenly, having nothing left but that mortal offence with which to bombard the faces of the troop, she exhibited her backside. With both hands she raised her skirts, bent her back, and expanded the enormous rotundity. (393)

As one of the most stunning pictures in Germinal, Mouquette's act proves that sexuality was a far cry from what we call taboo in the working class world. Not only that, but it also comes to question the ethical foundations of capitalism. Mouquette resides in an environment unpropitious for the breeding of noble values. Capitalism does not contribute to the worker's moral elevation. It shatters almost any sense of pride and decency, while promoting shamelessness and self-indulgence in either sex or drink, these symbolizing the worker's response to the oppressive reality of economic and social bondage.

In discussing sexuality as a class factor in Germinal, one must not overlook the field of Réquillart, which rightly emblemizes anarchic sexual libertinage and uncontrolled childbirth as suggested hereby:

Every girl found herself at home here (at Réquillart); there were concealed holes for all; their lovers placed them over beams, behind the timber, in the trams; they even lay elbow to elbow without troubling about their neighbours. And it seemed

that around this extinguished engine, near this shaft weary of
dislodging coal, there was a revenge of creation in the free love
which, beneath the lash of instinct, planted children in the bellies
of these girls who were yet hardly women. (119)

This latter instance celebrates the miner's momentary escape from the drudgeries of the capitalist machinery.

If sexuality relieves the worker of his burdening life, it becomes a way for the bourgeoisie to sink more into immorality for its own sake. Madame Hennebeau, for example, indulges into an affair with her nephew, Négrel, while in the meantime planning on having him marry Cecile, the Grégoires' daughter. Her sexual motives are neither governed by need nor are they the result of an unfavorable environment. She indulges in impermissible sex because the emptiness of her life requires a pastime, which she finds in her affair with the engineer Paul Négrel. Madame Hennebeau's sexuality differs from the miner's in the sense that they are not depicted in the same fashion. While the collier's copulation is depicted in gross terms to suggest his lowly status, Madame Hennebeau's is revealed to us via a language that suits her social standing. Furthermore, and contrary to his wife, Mr. Hennebeau needs but cannot have satisfy his sexual urges. He is accordingly depicted as a desperate and unhappy bourgeois. He thus becomes what I call an ironic character, that is a character whose outward fortunate social condition contrasts with his inner restlessness. Master Freddie resembles Mr. Hennebeau in that both are unhappy bourgeois-capitalists. The issue of sexuality is overall dealt with in a similar way by Sinclair and Zola.

Just as the former dwells upon sexual libertinage as a product of one's environment, the latter, through Marija and Ona, achieves the same narrative purpose.

For fear of being repetitive, a flaw that is typically Sinclairian, I will set aside these two cases to focus on Jurgis's social ascendance and the culture of sexuality that goes along with it. Whether a plot contrivance or not, Jurgis's abrupt admittance into the high class provides a way of contrasting his case to that the two aforementioned Lithuanian women. Whereas deprivation and helplessness account for their sexual orientations, Jurgis's not only finds expression in a different social milieu, one higher in status and condition, but it is motivated, just as Madame Hennebeau's, by the playful tendency characteristic of the upper classes. One instance from The Jungle suffices to substantiate my argument:

On Saturday nights, also, a number of balls were generally given in Packingtown; each man would bring his "girl" with him, paying half a dollar for ticket, and several dollars additional for drinks in the course of the festivities, which continued until three or four o'clock in the morning...During all this time the same man and woman would dance together, half-stupefied with sensuality and drink. (265)

What Jurgis feels during these occasions starkly contrasts with the sufferings Ona and Marija have to go through for survival's sake as opposed to entertaining the senses. What is enjoyable for Madame Hennebeau becomes a source of dire straits for the Levaque woman and for the very many prostitutes at the Volcan. Overall, Sinclair follows the same narrative pattern in portraying the dual image of sexuality. His line of argumentation though the narrative voice becomes, just as Zola's, a plea in favor of the worker and a condemning of the forces of capitalism. Their forays into class matters have helped shed light on the deceptiveness of both the American Dream and the French Revolution. These promised happiness and self-fulfillment to respectively the ignorant

immigrant and the obedient French worker. In both The Jungle and Germinal, attempts at restoring the integrity of the promise are undertaken as light dawns upon the poor worker.

Awakening and Propaganda. Although it is undeniable that Sinclair and Zola were truly interested in the proletariat's tough living and working conditions, their ultimate goal was to portray the worker's enlightenment. In each case, a preliminary process or processes are orchestrated in order for the exploited laborers to awaken to the reality of their situation. The authors primarily dwell upon the workers' meekness and accordingly portray them as fearful and obedient. If anything matters to them at all, it would surely be how to keep going, how not to starve to death. Yet the group will ultimately depart from the imposed and predetermined submissiveness to embrace a new way of looking at their condition. A personal reaction to the fairness of industrial capitalism provides a first glimpse into the worker's gradual awakening. In Maheu's case, for example, the lowered cost of the tram of coal and the separate payment for the planking, subtle ways for the bourgeois to cut down the miner's wages, provokes his wrath and indignation. Once a fine worker, Maheu sulks at his job for the time in his career for reasons aforementioned:

“‘That’s enough,’ said Maheu at last, worn out with anger and fatigue. ‘An hour and a half! A fine day’s work! We shan’t get fifty sous! I’m off this disgusts me.’ Though there was still half an hour of work left he dressed himself. The others imitated him” (55).

Zola expands this frustration among the colliers, thus moving from an individual to a communal stance. A most vivid and allegorical language affords insight into the rapidly growing unhappiness and the budding desire to come face to face with those responsible for such injustice:

Chaval and Levaque narrated the engineer's threat, the tram to be lowered in price, and the planking paid separately. And exclamation greeted this scheme, a rebellion was germinating in this little corner, nearly six hundred metres beneath the earth. Soon they could not restrain their voices; these men, soiled by coal, and frozen by the delay, accused the Company of killing half their workers at the bottom, and starving the other half to death. Etienne listened, trembling. (60)

Decades of patience and dictated compromise are about to give way to the rise of a new self, one that refuses to lie low when right to a basic life is under assault. Like Zola, Sinclair weaves Jurgis' shift from naivety to understanding around the complexities of the labor system. Just as Maheu finally realizes that hard work is not synonymous with decent pay, so does Jurgis, who, after months of toil, awakens to the disheartening fact that constancy in and perfecting of one's task do not lead to promotion in Packingtown. It is in this context that the underprivileged is shaken up to action. Sinclair has his main character follow this developmental pattern—Zola has not come to this level yet—as the latter gets rid of his reluctance to join the worker's union.

One of the consequences of all these things was that Jurgis was no longer perplexed when he heard men talk of fighting for their rights. He felt like fighting now himself; and when the Irish delegate of the butcher-helpers' union came to him a second time, he received him in a far different spirit. A wonderful idea it now seemed to Jurgis, this of the men—that by combining they might be able to make a stand and conquer the packers! (88)

Barrett stresses Sinclair's allusion to unionism as a system of organization in which workers hoped to get united regardless of race, gender, skill and ethnicity. One such union was the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen of North America (102). By bringing Jurgis in contact with this new ideology, Sinclair simply means to contradict the American dream, which just amounts to "one gigantic lie," as his narrator phrases it (74). Involvement in union activity is not the ultimate resort for the Lithuanian, however. His awakening proves two-fold and much more complex than the miners'.

In Germinal, we are acquainted through repeated instances with the progressive maturation of the proletariat, a developmental aspect that comes to its full blossom in the Montsou strike. The advent of Etienne Lantier contributes to the triggering of the protest movement around which the novel is centered. Soon after his arrival at the Voreux, he witnesses the swindling methods employed by the bourgeoisie. Zola uses negative propaganda to divulge these corrupt practices. Lantier's temperament can hardly put up with such treachery. I alluded to how he struck his boss on grounds of unfair treatment and disrespect; he intends to act against the ruling class in a similar fashion with yet a greater strength and impact. He thus takes the destiny of a whole community in his hands and consequently strives to inculcate its mind with what Ira Schor terms "materialist knowledge" by means of propaganda. "Materialist knowledge," as defined by Schor, is "knowledge about who you are in society, who is doing what to you, and how you resist the distortion of people and nature" (175). As Lucifer, the "bearer of light," an "apostle" at times and an "oracle" at others— all this terminology pertains to Naomi Schor's designation of Etienne as a syncretic figure (48-9)— takes to preaching his comrades about the existence of a promised land for the dregs.

With his enthusiastic voice he spoke on and on. The horizon was bursting out; a gap of light was opening in the somber lives of these poor people. The eternal wretchedness, beginning over and over again, the brutalizing labour, the fate of a beast who gives his wool and has his throat cut, all the misfortune disappeared, as though swept away by a great flood of sunlight; and beneath the dazzling gleam of fairy land justice descended from heaven. Since the good God was dead, Justice would assure the happiness of men, Equality and Brotherhood would reign. A new society would spring up in a day just as in dreams, an immense town with the splendour of a mirage, in which each citizen lived by his work, and took share in the common joys.

(160)

We are, at this juncture, in presence of an apostle speaking as an oracle in the language of prophetic imagery, a speech pattern meant to bring light to benighted souls. Through this performance, Etienne becomes what N. Schor calls the “voluntary truth-bearer” (53). His truth is so enticing that such conservative personas as Maheu and his wife—the latter falters a bit, however (160)—cannot help but adhere to it. Just as the African slave, the miner was made to believe in the irreversibility of his alleged predetermined fate. Freedom was thought of as beyond his reach. By admitting Etienne in their circle, however, the colliers benefit from an outsider’s perspective about the notions of emancipation and fulfillment. Because his “gospel” is one of hope, it wins totally them over—Bonnemort, Rasseneur, and Souvarine are exceptions, however.

Etienne's influence increased; he gradually revolutionized the settlement. His propaganda was unseen, and all the more sure since he was growing in the estimation of all. (162)

Even though the individual takes precedence over the community in The Jungle—Barrett criticizes the muckraker for having merged a whole community's experiences into one character (100)—it is a point of fact that Jurgis is driven to unionism for the same reasons that the crowd espouses Etienne's revolutionary ideology: a desire for improvement. What Zola aimed at achieving through the interactions between Etienne and his comrades is what Sinclair carried out by orchestrating Jurgis's meeting with the Irish trade-unionist. The latter sequence pertains to one of the two important stages Jurgis has to go through before becoming a totally reborn person. In between these stages, he yet experiences various changes of identity. After his child's, the Lithuanian respectively becomes a "hobo, a scab, and a crook," as Van Wyck Brooks succinctly sums it up (quoted in Blinderman 68). In spite of O'Shea's contention that each of these periods is characterized by an "acquisition of some knowledge about the world and the man" (147), Alfonsas Sesplaukis rates Jurgis' evasion as "...highly contrary to the Lithuanian character which is usually portrayed as abiding by the 'Golden Mean' and avoiding extremities in action" (28). Sesplaukis has lost sight of the fact that Jurgis is no longer under the guidance of the Lithuanian culture and mores. Man is the product of his milieu, and Jurgis is not exposed to the realities of his homeland, but to the wiles of America. In any case, Jurgis's evolution defies verisimilitude; but, even so, Sinclair succeeds in elaborating his negative propaganda against the justice system, the "honest graft"—he was let into this matter by his uncle Bland, a prominent business investor (Autobiography, p 64)—police brutalities, the interconnectedness between brothels'

owners, the police, and politicians. Jurgis's momentary stay in this dissolute and high-class environment sharply contrasts with his introduction to socialism. Sinclair contrives his plot so as to bring his main character face to face with such prominent socialists as the "Little Giant"— a fictional incarnation of Eugene B. Debs— Ostrinski, Dr. Schliemann, and Lucas.

Whereas Jurgis's early experiences ended all in disenchantment and humiliation, his ultimate discovery of the Reds becomes a source of never-ending hope, excitement and deliverance:

He had never been so stirred in his life—it was a miracle that had been wrought in him [...] He had been torn out of the jaws of destruction, he had been delivered from the thralldom of despair; the whole world had been changed for him—he was free, he was free! (309)

This passage provides ample hints about Sinclair's propagandizing of socialism against capitalism. Such a propagandistic tone, one that pervades the last chapters of the novel, along with the abrupt narrative shift have induced many critics to attack Sinclair for using Jurgis as a pawn to propagate his socialist principles. What these critics see as a flaw ironically corroborates Sinclair's conception of the link between characterization and theme. The novelist indeed believes that "...if literature is an attempt to place ideology before readers in an understandable way, an obvious spokesman becomes a convenient tool rather than a literary liability" (Yoder 12). Sinclair evinces that zolaesque aversion for the Parnasse, and as a result associates art with activism through propaganda. Did he not even acknowledge that "[a]ll art is [...] universally and inescapably propaganda, sometimes unconsciously, but often deliberately, propaganda" (Mammonart, p 9)?

Sinclair gleaned such a definition of art from Tolstōi's Qu'est-ce-que l'Art? (What is Art?), from both Whitman's Democratic Vistas and Frank Norris's The Responsibilities of the Novelist, according to André Muraire (289-90). Be it as it may, Jurgis's conversion, a mark of his second awakening, lends itself to a paralleling of the inhumanity of materialist capitalism and the humanism of Sinclairian socialism.

Authorial partisanship is revealed through the happy ending of Jurgis's journey – this is contrary to Etienne's evolutionary pattern— as well as the portrayal of his new political milieu. In this circle, competition recedes before sincere comradeship. Jurgis is indeed amicably referred to as “comrade” (300). Hierarchy and class distinctions are not maintained but are rather nonexistent. Tommy Hinds, a wealthy hotel owner, humbles himself before his employee, Jurgis. It is by means of these purely personal and exceptional types of interactions that Sinclair puts the image of socialism on a pedestal. He even goes so far as to vest it with a spiritual and religious cloak:

[T]he socialist movement was a world movement, an organization of all mankind to establish liberty and fraternity. It was the new religion of humanity—or you might say it was the fulfillment of the old religion, since it implied but the literal application of the teachings of Christ. (315)

Lucas's reading of socialism as a reformed Christian religion bears some resemblance to Abbé Ranvier's new Catholicism in Germinal. “In one week,” the priest prophesizes, “they would purge the world of the wicked, they would chase away the unworthy masters. Then, indeed, there would a real kingdom of God, every one recompensed according to his merits, and the law of labour as the foundation for universal happiness” (360). Here and in The Jungle as well, socialism is synonymous with civilization. Withal,

because Sinclair intended it to spread all over America, he bestowed it with a sweeping and domineering power. That Packingtown should be the socialists' stronghold in fiction illustrates this fact. Whereas Sinclair orchestrates Jurgis's enlightenment and escape within an anti-capitalist circle, Zola proceeds somewhat differently. As I pointed out earlier, Etienne acted as the catalyst of the proletarian movement by advocating the necessity to rebel against the established order.

As an "influencer," a term coined by Claude Brémont (quoted in N. Schor 51), Zola's hero urges his comrades into setting up a "Provident Fund"—the term "Co-operative Commonwealth" is its closest equivalent in The Jungle (340)—that would sustain them as they confront the capital. While Etienne is made to appear as an organizer of the proletariat, he also assumes the role of the propagandist and thus becomes a "Marxist and a rationalist," to borrow two of Knapp's key terms (102). His socialist leanings are evinced through his infatuation with the Internationale, a Marxist union represented by Pluchart, Etienne's guru. The Communist Manifesto proves his most important reference source as he concocts a strategy conducive to their emancipation. Souvarine's energetic disapproval of the effectiveness of the Marxist ideology actually gives us insight into Etienne's theoretical background. "Foolery!" the Russian nihilist exclaims, "[y]our Karl Marx is still thinking about letting natural forces act. No politics, no conspiracies, is it not so? Everything in the light of day, and simply to raise wages. Don't bother me with your evolution!" (136) Etienne and Souvarine contemplate different ways of ending the ruling class's hegemony. Each of them propagandizes his own beliefs, the former standing as the representative of radical socialism, while the latter sides with anarchism. This latter conviction is thus exemplified through Souvarine's own

words: “Set fire to the four corners of the town, mow down the people, level everything, and when there is nothing more of this rotten world left standing, perhaps a better one will grow up in its place” (136). Quoting David Baguley, Yelena Matusevich contends that “Souvarine’s creed directly came from revolutionary Catechism the description of which Zola found in Laveleye’s book and from which the idea of his character are largely borrowed” (My translation 321). Matusevich goes a step further by assimilating the nihilist to Bakounine and Herten (322). The analogy is all the more so accurate as Souvarine himself carries out a unique and apocalyptic act of sabotage— he sawed the timbering at the Voreux so as to not only wreck havoc upon the lives of the unprincipled miners who abandon the common cause, but to also do damage to the bourgeoisie’s property. Although Sinclair incorporates no terrorist act of this scale in his plot, it is yet notable that one of his minor characters, Jack Duane, features some of the Russian’s anarchistic tendencies.

Their reactions to injustice are fairly similar as this following instance indicates: “[H]e...had felt the world’s injustice, but instead of bearing it patiently, he had struck back, and struck hard. He was striking all the time—there was war between him and society” (163). As Jurgis’s cellmate at the Bridewell, Jack Duane resembles Souvarine in more than one respect. Both are indeed against the institution of matrimony. To their awakened minds, this cultural convention shackles individual emancipation. Nicolas Schliemann, a diehard socialist in The Jungle, endorses such a point of view. The duo Jack Duane/Souvarine, among others, along with the similarities it carries substantiates my hypothetical contention that Sinclair used Germinal as a model with yet a certain level of moderation. The integrity of his character, while seeming to owe a great deal to

Zola's anarchist's profile, unveils one innovative aspect: Sinclair orchestrates Jack Duane's imprisonment—Zola, on the contrary, enables Souvarine to get away with his crime—just to further Jurgis's awakening. In terms of differences, it is worth noting that while Sinclair propagandizes a single remedy to the worker's suffering, Zola realistically puts forward four ways of seeking justice and improvement. None of these affords respite and happiness to the miners; Sinclairs's does, however.

I have already mentioned Etienne and Souvarine's antagonistic solutions to the bourgeoisie's preeminence. To these Zola adds the will of the mob and Rasseneur's moderate approach. In the case of the mob or crowd, it seems undeniable that their leader's electrifying speech in the forest of Vandame sets him up as a leader. The latter is yet not so much a permanent and charismatic figure as his helplessness before the unruly attitude of the crowd suggests. In the midst of the strike, for example, the mob pays no heed to Etienne's orders, but rather follows its own instinctive desire for revenge. Thus, they wander from Mirou, Crève-cœur, and Jean Bart where they savagely attack the capitalist machinery. The instance is hereby related:

A few buckets of water had been thrown over the heaps to complete their extinction; all danger of a fire had gone by, but the anger of the crowd had not subsided; on the contrary, it had been whipped up. Men went down with hammers, even the women armed themselves with iron bars; and they talked of smashing boilers, of breaking engines, and of demolishing the mine. (300)

As part of the crowd, women—Maheude leads them in action—play an important part in the struggle for justice. They act as protective shields for their men: they

are indeed placed in the front rows as a strategic way of thwarting any attempt at repressing their demonstration. The chaotic atmosphere of the strike turns them into a powerful organ of repression. Maigrat, the corrupt storekeeper earlier referred to— he is by the way the spitting image of the unscrupulous bartender, Graiczunas, in The Jungle— is brutally killed and deprived of his genitals by this uncontrollable group of blood-thirsty females. The actions of the crowd are not fortuitous narrative features. As a matter of fact, they contribute to the molding of a pattern germane to naturalism itself, as Lehan puts it in general interpretative terms:

The crowd, more than just an aggregate of individuals, has a reality of its own and is capable of bestial and violent behavior, mindlessly following a leader, whose own fate at the hands of the mob can be tenuous. (48)

Etienne's fate at the hands of the crowd proves tenuous indeed. In moments of hope, the leader is acclaimed and exulted, while remaining the unbothered "voluntary truth-bearer." When defeat and death rankle, however, he becomes targeted as the "involuntary deceiver." In fact, N. Schor uses the word "lapidation" to reflect how Etienne is ultimately treated by his comrades— Maheude excepted— at the end of the unsuccessful strike. His lapidation, as N. Schor points out, benefits his rival Rasseneur who by the by regains his fame among his former fellows (52). Moderation and wisdom thus outshine radicalism. Is Zola hereby implicitly condoning moderate and intelligent action as the passport to emancipation? By way of responding to this question, I would just say that Zola was a close observer of society and its ways, and his observations of the four categories of action unveiled herein are to be seen as mere propositions directed to the proletariat. My reading is actually corroborated by William J. Beck and Edward

Erickson. “In many ways,” they start out, “Germinal may be viewed as a documentary of existing political philosophies, the alternatives society has at its disposal to change the existing political order” (48). In seeking inspiration from Zola’s novel, Sinclair deliberately chose to do without such a “neutral” narrative approach. His transcends the mere articulation of a proposal to become a strongly imposed agenda. Just as Sinclair imposes socialism on his main character, so he endeavors to impress it upon his readership, most of whom subscribers to the Appeal to Reason, a socialist newspaper in which The Jungle’s propagandistic plot was first serially published.

CHAPTER 4

NARRATIVE AND ART

Plot Structure

In his biography of Sinclair, Bloodworth emphasizes the writer's attempt to "put Shelley in the form of Zola." The biographer goes on to point out how Sinclair's failure to note that just as his "political idealism" was incompatible with the type of naturalism he churns out in The Jungle, so was the correspondence between the romantic poet and the French naturalist (49). Bloodworth develops a very interesting yet debatable argument in relation to the two novels:

In Emile Zola's Germinal, which Sinclair apparently had in mind as a model, the French naturalist avoided Sinclair's problems by creating a story of wage slavery climaxing in an abortive uprising of French coal miners which, in spite of its failure, allowed the protagonist—but not Zola himself—to claim that the miners "had shaken the workers of all France by their cry for justice." Zola unified his story by using a central character, Etienne Lantier, who is first involved in the mining community and who later leads the uprising. This solution was not possible for Sinclair. In the first place, he could not have considered using an Americanized version of Zola's plot... (53)

What the biographical critic thinks to be an impossible solution for Sinclair to apply to The Jungle—unification of Germinal's plot around Etienne's leadership—is not so. I would have expected Bloodworth to argue that Zola's decision to realistically highlight the setback of the miners' struggle was not a solution for Sinclair because it

conflicts with his propagandistic design—the muckraker wants socialism to prevail. Yet even if this narrative line were developed, it would not in any way contradict my evaluation of these seemingly opposed narrative endings as part of the similar quintessential formats upon which their novels are based. Beck and Warren conducted an interesting dissection of Germinal's plot, a division also applicable to The Jungle even when these critics direct their focus on Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath, which they compare to Zola's novel. Their analysis goes as follows:

[B]oth novels employ basically the same skeletal structure and each falls naturally into a tripartite division. The first is the introduction of the solitary individual into a pre-existing, self-contained society. The second, which necessarily constitutes the bulk of the novels, is the individual's evolution and gradual incorporation into his milieu. The third and final section describes the individual's inability and refusal to function within accepted norms in the society as it is presently constituted. In Marxist terms these three stages are defined as (1) complete ignorance of, or apathy to, the proletariat's plight; (2) a gradual growing awareness; and finally, (3) a totally aware individual with either the ability or presumed potential ability to modify the society. (47)

This “tripartite division” brings Germinal and The Jungle even much closer. Jurgis and Etienne enter worlds they are not familiar with. The self-contained aspect of Packingtown appears through its secluded emplacement and the language barrier it erects—Jurgis can hardly speak and understand English at his arrival in America. In Etienne's case, we are informed that he not only stumbles into an isolated mine, but also that his integration is

relatively delayed by the miners' distrust for strangers. Although the word "solitary" seems to be more suitable to Zola's character, it is undeniable that Sinclair's preferential treatment and overemphasizing of Jurgis's as a central figure sets the latter apart from the other characters. Moreover, both initially display characteristics pertaining to what Beck and Erickson label as a "complete ignorance of, or apathy to, the proletariat's plight." Jurgis's response to his co-workers' complaints about the backbreaking labor translates his lack of awareness about and unsympathetic disposition towards the rationale for their burden. After his first descent in the mine, Etienne feels the colliers' hardship not worth enduring. He accordingly decides to distance himself from them (60)— he eventually stays not out of sympathy for the workers' existence, but because of Catherine. These depictions introduce us to the first aspects of both Zola and Sinclair's identical plot structures.

Still in the same vein, Etienne and Jurgis move from their disdainful attitudes to merge in the proletariat. As significant obstacles to their social integration, the language barrier and the feeling of distrust then disappear before their fellow workers' reciprocal desire for comradeship. Just as Etienne gets admitted in the colliers' community at large and within the Maheu family as a lodger, so does Jurgis benefit from his first union membership. The changes here noted contribute to the progressive building of the second phase of the novels' plot structures. Zola and Sinclair indeed center this penultimate part of their narratives on their main characters' "evolution and gradual incorporation into [their] milieu[s]." In terms of evolution, it is worth clarifying that Etienne and Jurgis experience ups and downs, although the latter persona encounters more of these. Sinclair's plot is replete with incidents propitious for Jurgis's maturation, but one

narrative feature appears as typical of the socialist writer, viz., the confinement of all such drudgery to the second phase of the plot. In Zola's case, difficulties are not solely confined to this level; in fact, they make their way into the third and final section. Etienne falls from his leadership status to become the lapidated "involuntary deceiver" (N. Schor 51) just before the novel's ending. His downfall among the miners does not mark the end of Etienne's political career but rather celebrates its continuance in Paris, his new destination. Notwithstanding this zolaesque stylistic peculiarity—Sinclair has his own too—one thing is worth remembering, namely that the "gradual growing awareness" of their characters is what they have most at heart in this section.

In reading Beck and Erickson's article, I was most stricken by the adaptability of their tripartite plot division of Germinal and The Grapes of Wrath to the Jungle itself. Of this analysis, however, the Marxist third stage proves more striking to me, for it reveals everything about the concluding chapters of Sinclair's masterpiece. Once converted to socialism, Jurgis starts thinking of himself as capable of changing his society. He accordingly sets out to spread a new gospel among people of his entourage: "He met some neighbors with whom Elzbieta had made friends in her neighborhood, and he set out to make Socialists of them by wholesale" (324). In the socialist sphere Jurgis turns out as "a totally aware individual," one endowed with the "presumed ability to modify the society," as Beck and Erickson put it (47). Etienne and his political leadership, in addition to the brutal repression of the miners' strike, are of uppermost importance in the third part of Germinal. Zola provides a sketching of Etienne's beginning as an immature leader. He is yet ultimately shown as fully grown and insightful. He has no doubt about

his ability to promote justice. The following instance testifies to this newly acquired self-confidence:

Was Darwin right, then, and the world only a battlefield, where the strong ate the weak for the sake of the beauty and continuance of the race? This question troubled him, although he settled it like a man who is satisfied with his knowledge. But one idea dissipated his doubts and enchanted him—that of taking up is old explanation of the story the first time that he should speak. If any class must be devoured, would not the people, still new and full of life, devour the middle class, exhausted by enjoyment? The new society would arise from new blood...

(478)

Zola's representing of Etienne's understanding of social reform is elaborated through a metaphorically harsh language. Revolution occurs and becomes effective only through bloodiness and murder— after the fashion of the French Revolution— a method Sinclair finds most despicable. In fact, when Jurgis speaks of reform, he mainly confines himself within the boundaries of political fair play. The ballot thus replaces the “axe” or the guillotine. Zola himself did not advocate violence as a way to end social injustice, but being a naturalist who strove to include every aspect of the clash between the proletariat and the capital, he could hardly overlook the barbarian conception of revolution in that it was part and parcel of the proletarian language and strategic alternatives. This will lead us to the discussion of Zola's realistic propaganda as opposed to Sinclair's utopic narrative conclusion.

Art vs. Propaganda: Realism, Authorship and Utopia

The most significant point of divergence between Sinclair's and Zola's plot narratives bears on their propagandist styles. Although The Jungle is suffused with plot, characterization, and thematic features that favorably underscore Sinclair's modeling of his novel after Zola's, it nevertheless turns out that such modeling process displays some deviatory traits— these are of course telltale signs of Sinclair's attempt at originality. Among these, one needs to mention the muckraker's eccentric and excessive use of propaganda in his work. In writing The Jungle, Sinclair was most interested in bringing socialism to the fore. His characters were serviceable to him only as proponents of the socialist ideology. They lack what Bloodworth calls "psychology complexity" (60). They act and think solely in accordance with a narrative design that merely reproduces the author's own political beliefs. Critics of Sinclair have made various comments about his subjectivism. Musteikis thus contends that, "Sinclair's noble intentions to help the working men are clearly felt in the novel, but we suspect his leading hero has indicated too much of the author's, and not of the palpable hero's, desires" (38). In his introduction to The Jungle, Dickstein makes a doubly meaningful statement in the same vein. "The great novelists like Zola and Dreiser," the critic argues, "fortunately did not adhere too closely to their own pseudoscientific ideas. They recognized that novelistic characters cannot begin to exist without a modicum of freedom; they must have some capacity to surprise us, to reshuffle their lives, to say and do things that seem arbitrary and unexpected" (xii).

In Sinclair's schema, everything goes according to plan, and questioning or challenging socialism is not part of such a plan. At no point in his narrative is this

ideology contradicted or evaluated from a non-socialist point of view. Socialism is, on the contrary, presented through the narrator's lens, and his evaluation simply takes the form of a lengthy political pamphlet meant to expose its positive principles. That Jurgis should feel elated and relieved of a burden right after his political conversion— feelings that are wholly imposed by a partisan author— is truly revealing in this respect. The precedence of the message over the character is no happenstance at all, however. The Jungle resulted from a contract between Sinclair and the Appeal to Reason, one of the most prominent socialist newspapers in the USA in the early twentieth century. Moreover, the muckraker got deeply immersed in socialism, a philosophy he was introduced to by Leonard D. Abbott and George D. Herron, to name a few. All such factors contributed to Sinclair's representation of this ideology as first and foremost. In fact, Sinclair could not have proceeded otherwise, for as Utz Riese observes, he was “partly authorized by a political movement and its discourse of socialism” (12). His “influencer” was, in return, not affiliated to any such party and therefore felt solely accountable to his own self. “Zola, fervent crusader though he was,” Bédé argues, “never evinced an interest in politics, never carried a ‘party card,’ never courted elective office, never spoke on the issues in anyone's name save his own” (9).

The absence of any liability makes Zola's literary task much easier and less tainted with an overly and overtly stressed political partisanship. In reading the propagandist passages in Germinal, we are not only struck by the naturalist's absenteeism, but also by his ability to bestow “psychological complexity” on his characters. Dickstein earlier on mentioned that Zola's greatness as contrasted to Sinclair's weakness lies in his capacity to provide his characters with that “modicum of freedom”

necessary for their self-fulfillment in the fictional realm. Authorial intrusions are not lacking in Germinal, yet these do not interfere with the characters' self-expression through action and thought. The miners are left to themselves, unmonitored by any outside force. Just as Etienne and company act in accordance with their personal desires, emotions, and beliefs, so is the propaganda carried out.

As I mentioned earlier, Zola was not reflecting one philosophy or ideology, let alone his own; he, in reality, endeavored to present a whole picture that would be inclusive of every aspect of the proletariat's mindset. It is in this respect that he shows conflicting views about how social justice is to be attained. Questioning and challenging one's fellow's convictions are part of Zola's methodology. Etienne's radicalism impinges against Rasseneur's diplomatic approach. Public speech and dialogic confrontation capture such moments of controversy. In addition to Rasseneur, Bonnemort, and Souvarine stand at different angles, for the former calls for meek submissiveness while the latter argues in favor of his anarchistic leanings. By thus compartmentalizing his narrative propaganda, Zola, unlike Sinclair, takes a diversified approach as opposed to a unified one. Such a realistic orientation leaves the question about Zola's true political affiliation unanswered, at least in Germinal. This is all the more so as his technique of propaganda loses that sharp obviousness associated with Sinclair's. Still in the same vein, the connection between the novels' propagandist notes and their endings need also be discussed along the lines of realism and utopia.

After many narrative and characterization acrobatics, Sinclair ends The Jungle in a tone adverse to the title of the novel. As socialism spreads all over the Midwestern factories, hope and confidence in the imminent socialization of Chicago and of the

America productive system at large prevail (346). The culmination of Sinclair's propaganda yet gives us much food for thought, especially in relation to the effectiveness of socialism as an alternative to capitalism. Does the prophetic conclusion of the novel have any chance of being a dream come true? Or will it simply be another recipe for disillusionment? Sinclair's prophecy verges more on utopia than it does on reality. A look back at the historical political context of the early 1900s reveals that Americans felt more comfortable with capitalism. In addition, most of them dreaded alien ideologies on account of the propaganda against the countries from which these systems of political organization originated. Furthermore, the socialist party was not up to the task and could therefore not fuel the change Sinclair energetically prophesized. Jacqueline Tavernier-Courbin makes a most appropriate observation at this juncture:

Disappointed by the socialist party's inaction and the mediocrity of its leaders, and convinced that it would go nowhere because Americans prefer democratic to revolutionary methods, London (a friend of Sinclair) felt that he could not reach more people through political action... (237)

Sinclair's political utopia was eventually offset by the passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906 under Teddy Roosevelt's administration. But for the muckraker, this was more a lip service rendered to his work than a valuable reward of it. Zola, on the contrary, gained satisfaction for the mining community of France in the Second Empire. Germinal expressed the miners' concerns and grievances, and even though these are not automatically and appropriately dealt with in the novel by the bourgeoisie, history has proven that what Zola prophesized in terms of a gradual yet irreversible social change—change in mentalities also—ultimately came true. Zola was realistic enough to set a

reasonable time span before the working class's maturation could come to full bloom. It is only by crossing this timeline that they would be able to put the machinery of change in motion: "Men were springing forth, a black avenging army, germinating slowly in the furrows, growing towards the harvests of the next century, and their germination would soon overturn the earth" (480). Zola has managed through this futuristic vision to match the novel's title to its content. The nineteenth century French writer thus outshines Sinclair. Yet what seems to separate them at this level— the futuristic vision and how it affects the levels of their successful mirroring of content through title— actually proves once again to emphasize the nexus between the two works. The prophetic element not only occurs at the very end of the plot narratives, it is also naturalistic by essence. Thus Lehan notes in this respect: "While the naturalistic novel often deals with a static moment in time, it also presupposes an atavistic past or a futuristic ideal toward which characters can be drawn" (47-8)

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The groundbreaking genre that is naturalism has had a thorough impact on the careers of many American writers including, among others, Norris, Dreiser, Crane, and most particularly the greatest figure in muckraking literature, Upton Sinclair. In his quest for literary fame and excellence, Sinclair followed the steps of his talented contemporaries. They indeed ventured beyond the American boundaries to seek inspiration from the uppermost actor in the naturalist realm, viz., Emile Zola, the founding father of the theory that suited best their respective purposes. William Ellery Channing implicitly acknowledged the relationship between American literatures and European literatures, and by responding to his call about the need to parallel these two, I have analyzed the extent of Zola's presence throughout The Jungle. From this study, one major conclusion is drawn, that the two writers had so much in common that we cannot help but confirm the hypothetical contentions made about Sinclair's modeling of his masterpiece after Zola's. His influence pervades the novel that added to the "richness and heterogeneity" of American literature (Ronald Gottesman 136). It is notable through Sinclair's characterization, and thematic and narrative outlines.

The process of Jurgis's fictional creation does significantly owe to Etienne Lantier, Ona's to Catherine Maheu, to name a few. The delineation of such issues as class and labor along with the established nexus between authorial commitment and propaganda as underscored in The Jungle simply testify to the fact that Sinclair was not indifferent at all to Germinal. It truly afforded many insights about how to go about allying Shelley and Zola, which was his primary literary purpose. Yet Sinclair had talent

enough to turn borrowed material into a heartrending picture of the horrific reality of Packingtown. Sinclair did not yet conduct a mere replication of Germinal— he would have been accused of plagiarism had he done so, and his reputation been considerably damaged. The many differences between this novel and The Jungle suggest the socialist's attempt to break new ground.

Yet in striving for originality and practicality, Sinclair heavily emphasizes ideology through a typically partisan rhetoric. By thus expressing his preference for “spirit” in lieu of “form,” as Izabel González Diaz puts it (95), Sinclair refused to accept that literature is art first, everything else being secondary to it. An artful work of fiction is only recognized as such when its author leaves it all to his characters to express whatever message the latter aims at propagating. In short, a balanced combination of the spirit and the form perfected by authorial absence is what make a book a great work of art. Zola managed to do just that. In proceeding otherwise, Sinclair deliberately set himself apart from the American canon, thus blotting his chances to not only receive the Nobel Prize, but also to see his work widely taught in colleges and universities. Leftist scholars yet continue to appreciate Sinclair's literary output. Zola's work has always figured in the curricula of prominent universities, however.

Whether Zola's use of art makes him a better writer than Sinclair or not, one thing surely singularizes them, that is their leanings towards what Rodney Livingstone in his introduction to Lukacs' Essays on Realism refers to as “romantic anti-capitalism” (4). “What was romantic anti-capitalism?” he asks, and by way of responding goes to say that, “[f]ollowing Lowry's account, we may think of it as a wide spectrum of opposition to capitalism, ultimately tracing its roots back to the romantic movement, but acquiring a

new impetus in the latter part of the nineteenth century [...] Capitalism is attacked for a variety of reasons, including machine-production, the modern division of labor, the depersonalization of individuals (Nietzsche), the growth of large towns and the break-up of small communities (Tönnies) and the inexorable growth of rational calculation (Weber)” (4). Most, not to say all, of these characteristics are developed in The Jungle and Germinal. These novels have so far not been studied in the light of this romantic anti-capitalist theory, here then is another project to undertake.

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