

Processes of Elimination: Progressive-Era Hygienic Ideology, Waste, and Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*

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Disappointed that *The Jungle* did not result in a ground-swell of socialist sentiment, Upton Sinclair famously evaluated his best-known novel as a kind of failure. "I aimed at the public's heart," he wrote, "and by accident hit them in the stomach."¹ Yet no one could doubt that Sinclair aimed at the public's heart, given *The Jungle*'s sentimentality, but the idea that he hit the public in the stomach *by accident* obviously overstates the case. More likely, Sinclair aimed at the public's stomach, but hoped that the blow would cause moral outrage and a lasting change in the public's heart. He was following a venerable recipe for fomenting moral judgment: begin with your basic jeremiad, ladle in liberal amounts of the filthy and the revolting, and stir.²

As William Ian Miller affirms in *The Anatomy of Disgust*, Sinclair's gambit is right on target. Disgust and moral judgment are nearly always wrapped up together, for "except for the highest-toned discourses of moral philosophers, moral judgment seems almost to demand the idiom of disgust. *That makes me sick! What revolting behavior! You give me the creeps.*"³ Miller's illustration of how disgust surfaces in expressions of moral judgment highlights that disgust is encoded *bodily*. This is evidenced in the adjectives "sick" and "revolting" and the noun "the creeps," all three quite visceral in their tone and implications.

Invoking the disgusting is but one way in which *The Jungle* enlists the body, in this case, the bodies of readers themselves. Reading Sinclair's novel as

cultural critique, in what follows, I explore the idea of the body in Progressive Era hygienic ideology, a context within which Sinclair not only worked as a novelist but also as a health reformer.⁴ I develop a theory of how waste works in a capitalist system under the auspices of a certain way of thinking about and through the body, demonstrating how Sinclair's novel simultaneously criticizes and codifies these processes of elimination. When I refer to "the body" in the singular, as I will throughout this essay, I am speaking of an abstraction within Progressive Era hygienic ideology and thinking, especially as it addresses the processes of digestion, and not a generalized or universal concept such as could include all actual bodies. I take it as a given, as Karen Sánchez-Eppler has observed in relation to antebellum reform discourses of abolition and feminism, that a "universal, and so, incorporeal" understanding of persons, as one finds in any ideological construction of embodiment, will inevitably collide with the "fleshy specificity of embodied identities."⁵ This essay endeavors, in part, to map out just such a collision.

In trying to make his readers sick, to revolt them, Sinclair became the muckiest of muckrakers. Theodore Roosevelt had coined that term the same year *The Jungle* appeared as a novel⁶ to describe what he thought a dangerous, excessive journalistic practice. Like Bunyan's man with the muck-rake, to Roosevelt, some journalists could see only the filth and nothing of the good that they could easily glimpse if only they turned their gaze upward. In contrast, for Sinclair, the muck-rake serves as an essential tool toward social change; exposing the sordid would lead to change. A heaven might be made on earth, but only if first the churned-up disgust of the populace takes hold and motivates real and substantial (that is, socialist) change in the here and now. Thus did Sinclair hope to hit the heart by going through the stomach.⁷

Soon after the novel was published, Finley Peter Dunne satirized its attack through his Irish comic philosopher/barkeep, Mr. Dooley. He tells a tale of President Roosevelt's reaction. While reading through the novel over a "light breakfast" at the White House, Roosevelt, according to Dooley, "suddenly rose from the table, an cryin': 'I'm pizened,' begun throwing sausages out iv th' window."⁸ Were it not for journalistic propriety, Dunne might just as well have depicted Teddy's hurling his sausages out the window in the way we euphemistically mean by *hurling* today: vomiting, that is. I adduce Mr. Dooley's fictional report here not only for its considerable entertainment value⁹, but also because it foregrounds an imperative of the body which is foremost in Sinclair's novel—while there is a range of things which can be taken into the body as nourishment, what is filthy, dirty, and/or polluting must resolutely remain outside the body. The consequence of not maintaining such a boundary is poisoning, a dissolution of the body from the inside out.

Perhaps Dunne seized on Roosevelt because it was public knowledge that reading Sinclair's book had rejuvenated the president's commitment to strong food-protection legislation. Roosevelt was particularly concerned with what the

proper bodily maintenance of individuals would mean for the body of the nation as a whole, an extrapolation of what the robustness of his own body had meant for his own life.¹⁰ Thus Dunne's choice of the nation's president as victim of foul sausage also signals a broader context as well: impurity in food not only affects individual bodies, but also ravages the body politic itself, the nation as an aggregate of the bodies of its citizens. Via this nested construction of bodies, individual and national, a threat of dissolution to the body of the president at breakfast in the White House is also, via synecdoche, a threat to the body of the nation itself.

Sinclair's appeal to the sickening, then, gains its authority and force not only through the significant office that disgust holds in the moral appeal, but also because it taps into a generalized idea of the nation as a body. This has special resonance with a popular discourse about health contemporary with *The Jungle* and composed of a collection of fads revolving around the maintenance of the digestive process, especially the scientific chewing theories of Horace Fletcher. This discourse, a manifestation of hygienic ideology, relies on demarcating the body's boundaries along the lines of purity, holding to an ideal of the "*clean and proper*" body, as Julia Kristeva puts it.¹¹ This resides especially in controlling and monitoring input (ingestion) and output (excretion).

Ingestion, excretion, and what happens in between—the processes of the digestive system—connect in a narrative track running through *The Jungle*, making available to Sinclair what I call an "alimentary logic" for a critique of capitalist production. Deriving energy from the hygienic ideology undergirding popular digestive health fads, especially Fletcher's chewing theory, which presents a convergence of biologicistic and mechanistic thinking in the idea of "efficiency," the novel's narrative collapses the distinction between body and machine. The novel instates a slaughterhouse machine penetrated by the operations of the body, becoming a monstrous "alimentary machine" that ingests its workers, extracts and assimilates their labor, and finally excretes their spent bodies.

Jurgis Rudkis, the novel's central character, undergoes the complete digestive process. But while Jurgis can ultimately rise above his condition as a converted brother in the socialist order, the narrative fails to similarly remediate the bodies and lives of others. This happens, I argue, not because other characters fail to join the socialist cause, but rather as a direct result of *The Jungle*'s commitment to thinking through the operations of the body. Employing the very same alimentary logic from which the narrative would rescue Jurgis, the novel eliminates, as agents in the body politic, women and African American laborers, even while striving to articulate a socialism inclusive of all workers. In a kind of constitutive contradiction ultimately pointing to a basic flaw in thinking through the body, the novel wants to stand outside the alimentary machinations of the capitalist organism but apparently can do so only through masking (or perhaps forgetting) its own digestive narrative procedures.

Digestion was much on Sinclair's mind in the years preceding his writing of *The Jungle* in 1905 and immediately following, when he wrote *Good Health, and How We Won It* (1909), co-authored with Michael Williams, and *The Fasting Cure* (1911)¹²—plus numerous articles in such popular magazines as *Cosmopolitan* and *Physical Culture*. With these efforts, Sinclair became a health reformer in a tradition dating back to the Jacksonian era, a period which Ruth Clifford Engs describes as having witnessed the first of three “clean living movements” in the United States.¹³ Antebellum dietary reformers such as William Andrus Alcott and Sylvester Graham promoted healthy eating and living as the highest of callings and of national importance. Speaking with the same zeal amid the “second clean living movement” (1880-1920, according to Engs¹⁴), Sinclair's health reform writings joined in a broad Progressivist culture that responded to a rapidly changing America. Health reform at this time, especially in urban environments, employed a wide array of ameliorations for what seemed to be ailing the nation:

Physical culture, birth control, diet, and the concept of the “whole man” began to be emphasized, beginning in the 1890s. A crusade to regulate food, patent medicines, and the elimination of “narcotic addictions” arose in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Public-health reforms, such as sanitation, and crusades against specific diseases, such as tuberculosis, gained momentum during the first decade of the century. All these issues together culminated in one of the most widespread reform eras in the history of the nation.¹⁵

In both of Sinclair's health books, the cultural and the personal come together. As an entry into their specific agendas, each book gives a thumbnail sketch of the poor state of Sinclair's young adult body in his early days as a novelist—general problems with health, ranging from a seminal case of “a new and fashionable ailment called ‘la grippe’ [influenza]” while in college¹⁶ to chronic dyspepsia that began while he was working on his first novel, *Springtime and Harvest* (1901), and worsened as he finished his second, *The Journal of Arthur Stirling* (1903).¹⁷ Tellingly, Sinclair describes the state of his body in these years as in a crashing nosedive:

Gradually, . . . I was forced to realize that I was losing that find [*sic*] robustness which enabled me to say that I had not had a day's sickness in fourteen years. I found that I caught cold very easily—though I always attributed it to some unwonted draught or exposure. I found that I was in for tonsillitis once or twice every winter. And now and then, after some particularly exhausting labor, I would find it hard to get

to sleep. Also, I had to visit the dentist more frequently, and I noticed, to my great perplexity, that my hair was falling out. So I went on, until at last I was on the verge of a nervous breakdown, and had to drop everything and go away and try to rest.

As one might expect, given Sinclair's good old-fashioned narrative of decline and salvation (which is the stuff of health-reformer testimony), having tried many a doctor and finding no help, a fortunate and life-changing accident awaited the supplicant at his lowest moment: "That was my situation when I stumbled upon an article in the *Contemporary Review*, telling of the experiments of a gentleman named Horace Fletcher. . . . This article came to me as one of the greatest discoveries of my life."¹⁸

Fletcher, a widely read, charismatic health reformer at the turn of the twentieth century, promoted, as part of a general philosophy of life, a gospel of scientific chewing.¹⁹ Perhaps the greatest testimony to his popularity in his time is his having left us an eponymous verb for vigorous chewing, "to fletcherize."²⁰ In brief, Fletcher argued that people do not chew their food thoroughly enough, the result of which is that the rest of the alimentary track has to take on a burden for which, according to Fletcher, it was not designed. Thorough chewing resulted in the liquidification of solids, which could then be swallowed, which, in turn, occurred just at the right moment automatically by means of an irresistible impulse that Fletcher called "Nature's Food Filter."²¹ Any excess fibrous material or "bulk" left in the mouth afterwards would need to be spit out, such material thought by Fletcher to be unnecessary to the body and so, dangerous.²² In this way, the best that food has to offer could be assimilated readily, with no overwork on the part of the body.²³

Improperly masticated material, on the other hand, would lie in the gut and putrefy as the direct result of the influx of bacteria that becomes necessary to deal with such matter. This in turn would lead to "auto-intoxication," or a self-poisoning from within, manifesting itself in a general malaise and a host of related health problems. Just as surely as spoiled meat could poison the unknowing consumer, such as Mr. Dooley's Roosevelt, even fresh foods improperly chewed could result in a form of self-poisoning. Correct the mistake of insufficient mastication, however, and one banishes auto-intoxication and lays claim to a surplus of energy, strength, and vigor.

It would be tempting to reduce Fletcher to the rank of mere quack, where he would join the likes of uber-reformer John Harvey Kellogg, so humorously satirized in T. Coraghessan Boyle's *The Road to Wellville*.²⁴ The same kind of criticism has been leveled at Sinclair. William Bloodworth classifies Sinclair's health reform writings in the early twentieth century as "part of an undercurrent of bizarre interests (including various kinds of psychic phenomena) that have little obvious relationship to Sinclair's political and social views." Moreover,

Bloodworth finds that for his purposes, “this ‘spookology,’ a term used by some of Sinclair’s friends to describe such interests,” apart from “reveal[ing] the breadth of the author’s concerns and shed[d]ing some interesting light on his personality,” “includes little worthwhile writing and deserves little attention.”²⁵

Reducing either Sinclair or Fletcher’s health-reform writings to a sort of cultural froth that has little to say about politics and society, however, would be a mistake. While these writings appear to be thin and ephemeral, they resound with Progressive Era culture and ideology.²⁶ As James C. Whorton, in his study of Fletcher, argues:

When any health crusader’s popularity is lazily explained by nothing more complex than human credulity, he is reduced to the status of a mere aberration, a figure whose illusions are idiopathic rather than symptomatic of his intellectual and social environment. Instead, health reform movements must be understood as hygienic ideologies, idea systems which identify correct personal hygiene as the necessary foundation for most, even all, human progress, and which invite acceptance by incorporating both certain universal feelings about man and nature, and the popular values and anxieties peculiar to distinct eras.²⁷

In adopting Fletcherism and in engaging with health reform efforts, Sinclair had much more than simply his own health and well being at stake. Similarly, it would also be fair to expect in *The Jungle* an obvious engagement with not only socialist ideology, but also hygienic ideology.

As Whorton keenly observes, hygienic thought systems figure forth a certain vision of nature. But to summon “nature” is also to summon “culture,” intentionally or not; neither concept proves capable of being thought in isolation from the other. For Fletcher and other reformers, the body and its processes are “natural,” and yet Fletcher’s understanding of these processes is also shot through with reference to man-made machinery. So serviceable does he find this way of thinking that he devotes nearly ten pages of *The New Glutton* to an extended analogy between the body and a “modern electric power plant,” assigning both the former and latter to the category of “energy-creating machines.”²⁸

Thinking of the body through the machine is nothing new, of course. As Bryan S. Turner observes, the mechanistic model of the human body goes as far back as Descartes’s *Discourse on Method*, which avers that “the body, not requiring a soul, can function like a machine according to mechanical laws.”²⁹ The Progressive Era, however, marks an inflection of Cartesian thinking through industrial capitalist organization, making for a new way of understanding the body. The body in the Progressive Era, then, is not simply “like a machine,” but more specifically like an industrial capitalist machine. As Cynthia Commachio explains:

The contemporary industrial system . . . became the central metaphor of the body. Just as social science borrowed from medicine to convey its images of social malaise, medicine increasingly appropriated an industrial vocabulary to conceptualize bodily health. Depicted variously as a machine, a motor, a factory in itself, the human body absorbed industrial symbolism. Industrialization dramatically reconfigured such earlier mechanistic versions as the “animal-machine” of the seventeenth-century Cartesian discourse and LeMettrie’s preliminary “man-machine” theories from the mid-18th century.³⁰

This convergence of the body and the machine at the turn of the twentieth century is further examined in Mark Seltzer’s landmark study of American literary naturalism, *Bodies and Machines*. Seltzer suggests that what surfaces here are both ways of thinking about bodies and machines and a generalized anxiety about their inter-relationship. Seltzer attends especially to “the *relays* articulated between the life process and the machine process: the invention of systematic and scientific management and the work of human engineering, and the practices and discourses that manage to ‘coordinate’ the body and the machine.” What he isolates as “the American body-machine complex” resides in “a double discourse of the natural and technological” that exposes a “shifting line between the natural and the technological in machine culture.”³¹

What is of particular import in this nexus between the “natural and the technological,” or put another way, between the natural and the cultural, is how efficiency serves as a lynchpin concept holding the two systems together. “Efficiency,” of course, strikes us most immediately as a way of thinking about systems of production, as the main subject of the discourse of scientific management and Taylorism.³² It is well to note that Sinclair, despite his opposition to capitalist economics, like Edward Bellamy before him, held efficiency of production and organization in great reverence.³³ This is apparent in the narrator’s attitude toward the slaughter process in *The Jungle*, in which revulsion for what happens when workers are caught up in slaughterhouse machinery is tempered by a genuine fascination for the meat-packing process. He views the slaughter process, “pork-making by machinery, pork-making by applied mathematics,” with spectatorial rapture: “it was all so business-like that one watched it fascinated.”³⁴ He speaks in adulatory tones of “wonderful” machines, both in the slaughterhouse (44) and later in the novel, when in the harvester plant (238).³⁵ Moreover, in the year following the publication of *The Jungle*, Sinclair himself would take his narrator’s fascination for systems of efficient production to a higher level of generality. In *The Industrial Republic*, he praises the development of the trust as a signal of the very ripeness of time for the rise of a socialist re-organization of the economy.³⁶ Redirected from the goal of accumulating wealth

for a very few, efficiency could provide the capacity for meeting the needs of everyone. What Bloodworth observes of the closing sections of *The Jungle*, then, fairly characterizes Sinclair's general teleology of history and the place of efficiency within it: "the industrial jungle gives way to a garden of technological delight."³⁷

What the writings of health reformers in general and Fletcher in particular throw into relief is the degree to which efficiency was a concept to be *discovered* in nature and in the human body itself. In other words, it was not only associated with machinery and business. Whorton notes that, like scientific management experts, health reformers too talked of "efficiency," putting it through "hygienic conjuring," by using the terms of what he calls a "financial concept" (but what is perhaps better thought more broadly as an "economic" one) to describe and evaluate the processes of the body: "deposits of food and rest" and "withdrawals of exertion and self-neglect," with "wise management yield[ing] efficiency of operation."³⁸ "Hygienic conjuring," however, may be an overstatement. It seems to suggest a concerted effort to bend efficiency to fit within the mold of health reform, when in the case of Fletcher, at least, there is no need for such an interpretative move—efficiency is *a fait accompli* of nature, clearly visible when one attends to the *sine qua non* of efficiency-thinking: the elimination of waste.

If we maintain our end of the bargain, according to Fletcher, the human body wastes nothing. This is made obvious to us, Fletcher notes, in excretion, whose products, according to a chapter in *The New Glutton* entitled "Tell-tale Excreta" (which follows on the heels of his human body/power plant analogy), can be read as signs of the system's health: "there is no knowledge so valuable in its relation to health as that which enables one to read health bulletins by means of the excreta."³⁹ As Whorton notes, Fletcher thought initially that the proper maintenance of digestion at entry would result in no excretion whatsoever: "ideally, it would appear, there should be no excreta to tell tales," proper chewing and swallowing having eliminated at the source anything not capable of complete absorption.⁴⁰

In practice, though, and for obvious reasons, Fletcher eventually moved away from the notion of the no-waste human body. He adopted the next best thing, however. The properly functioning body would produce only a small, dry, and inoffensive remainder every "six, eight, or ten days" and not daily, as some thought proper.⁴¹ Such excreta, to Fletcher's mind, were not unlike the dusty remains of the spent coal used in generating electricity, leading him to term excrement "economic digestion-ash":

The economic digestion-ash forms in pillular shape and when released these are massed together, having become so bunched by considerable retention in the rectum. There is no stench, no evidence of putrid bacterial decomposition, only the odour of warmth, like warm earth or "hot biscuit." Test samples of

excreta, kept for more than five years, remain inoffensive, dry up, gradually disintegrate and are lost.⁴²

Thus, the body, like a machine, operates on a knowable and predictable input/output model. Garbage in—garbage out. Like an efficiency expert, Fletcher studied the body/machine's output with great scrutiny in order to evaluate the input and to lay hold of the greatest efficiency of "movement," so to speak. That Fletcher articulates this understanding of the body, couched in terms like "economic digestion-ash" and reinforced through recourse to industrial machinery, at the same time as the armature of scientific management is being wound suggests a deeper matrix of thinking about how "systems" operate. If scientific management had made incisive observations about efficiency in machinery and in human organization, it was because these were already felt in some deep way to be laws of nature itself. Under the apotheosis of Fletcher, the body looked like not only a machine, but also the perfect Progressive Era industrial machine—lean, clean, and super-efficient.

It was precisely this kind of body that Sinclair wanted for himself. As he puts it in a recollected dialog with the doctor he visited for his first bout of "*la grippe*": "I want to get as much out of my body and mind as I can."⁴³ Furthermore, not only did Sinclair *desire* such personal bodily efficiency, but he also believed it entirely within the realm of human possibility. *The Jungle* manifests this in a character who has brought his body to a state of perfection through careful self-management. Dr. Nicholas Schliemann, spokesman for socialism, has broken down the needs of his body to its basic elements and knows exactly how to soldier these resources toward abundant health. Besides his hirsuteness (a sign perhaps of his virility and vigor) and his status as ex-professor of Philosophy (no slouch in the thinking department, either), his keen body management is the first thing we learn about him in the novel: "He studied the composition of foodstuffs, and knew exactly how many proteins and carbohydrates his body needed; and by scientific chewing he said that he tripled the value of all he ate, so that it cost him eleven cents a day" (395). A master of nutrition, economy, and management, Schliemann serves as the precursor for the man that might be. Sinclair held on to such optimism for quite some time after *The Jungle*, as is evident in *The Fasting Cure*⁴⁴, which opens with the following appeal:

PERFECT HEALTH!

Have you any conception of what the phrase means? Can you form any image of what would be your feeling if every organ in your body were functioning perfectly?⁴⁵

The hygienic ideology that saw the human being as perfectible, like the properly-managed machine, meshed well with Sinclair's socialist ideology. Both engaged in a utopic sensibility and optimism.

Against this Schliemannesque body of the future is projected the stunted and used-up worker body of the present in *The Jungle*. The novel's critique of capitalism owes much of its energy and direction to the body-machine matrix made available to Sinclair in turn-of-the-century hygienic ideology. Moreover, Sinclair's narrative, as through a camera obscura, flips the relation between body and machine latent in Progressive Era hygienic ideology and manifest in Fletcher's work. The novel's narrative does not explore the idea that bodies are like machines but instead presents the idea of a machine that is like a body, figuring the slaughterhouse under capitalism as taking on the digestive nature of a living animal—ingesting, assimilating, and excreting.

As an entry point into *The Jungle*'s machine/body, Mark Seltzer's work provides at least one compelling avenue. The "radical and intimate *coupling* of bodies and machines," he notes, can occur on a number of fronts, including centrally, "the linked problems of production and reproduction," for which the naturalist novel works out "a counter-model of generation that incorporates and 'manages' these . . . problems."⁴⁶ Certainly an anxiety over reproduction and production describes *The Jungle* quite well, and though not a through-and-through naturalist novel, it does make central use of the naturalist narrative of breakdown and decline. Working out of Seltzer's description of the "Naturalist Machine," Scott Derrick has keenly observed that production and reproduction in *The Jungle* precipitate a crisis in male authority, represented especially in the horrific birth of Ona's second child and more generally in scenes of enclosure which serve to entrap men in figurative wombs.⁴⁷

To adduce an example of such entrapment not used by Derrick, we can clearly see such a figuration at work, but we can also begin to see how the Seltzerian account of the linking of body and the machine could be expanded. Speaking of the men on the killing beds, the narrator notes that, "there was not even a place where a man could wash his hands, and the men ate as much raw blood as food at dinner time. When they were at work they could not even wipe off their faces. . . ." Replete with imagery redolent of life and death, the passage closes with a simile in which the narrator implies the infantilization of the male worker, made obvious in their "helpless" bodies covered in blood, stillborn, yet powerless even as such to escape their horrific womb: "they were as helpless as newly-born babies . . ." (123).

So far this reading falls squarely in line with Derrick's account of male entrapment within a figurative womb. If, however, we turn our attention to the lines immediately preceding this passage, it becomes clear that there is more to this particular moment, and more to the novel in general, than such a reading might suggest: "the men who worked on the killing beds would come to reek with foulness, so that you could smell one of them fifty feet away; there was

simply no such thing as keeping decent, the most careful man gave it up in the end, and wallowed in uncleanness” (123). If we read both quotations, as the novel encourages us to, in terms of the body, we can begin to see that the “radical and intimate *coupling*” of body and machine in Sinclair’s novel lies not solely in the realm of (re)productivity, but also in the idea and reality of waste, its processing, and its elimination, although the two are clearly linked. Thus the men within the machinery of the packing system become not only infants, the bloody products of a female body, but also feces, their stench so potent as to be apparent to strangers at a great distance.

The two types of bodily ejectamenta can be categorized, as Julia Kristeva suggests in *Powers of Horror*, under two headings: “while they always relate to corporeal orifices as to so many landmarks parceling-constituting the body’s territory, polluting objects fall, schematically, into two types: excremental and menstrual.”⁴⁸ This taxonomy, in turn, informs the larger process of abjection, by which bodies and subjects begin to take shape through the elimination of what is for the subject the radically “not me” (2), that which refuses to be assimilated by the body and/or the subject:

These body fluids, this defilement, this shit are what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, on the part of death. There, I am at the border of my condition as a living being. My body extricates itself, as being alive, from that border. Such wastes drop so that I might live, until, from loss to loss, nothing remains in me and my entire body falls beyond the limit—*cadere* [Latin – “to fall”], cadaver.⁴⁹

Elimination as such continuously structures bodies and subjects. Furthermore, that which is eliminated as abject, “lies there, quite close, but it cannot be assimilated,”⁵⁰ threatening terrible disruption and dissipation even as it underwrites the very existence of bodies and subjects.

With this in mind, slaughterhouse production in the novel begins to look as much like a digestive process as it does like machine-disciplined work. As a machine, the slaughterhouse becomes an “alimentary machine.” The slaughterhouse, like the digestive track, presents not an assembly, but rather a disassembly line. Hogs and cattle enter at its highest elevation and are carried by their own weight “through all the processes necessary to make them into pork” or beef (42), enabled along the way by great wheels, pulleys, trucks, and so forth, the machinery of the disassembly line.

Aside from this cursory comparison, the novel’s narrator also portrays the slaughter process with a distinctly organic, digestive overtone, continually describing the openings through which flow the remainders, entrails and other items, as “holes,” calling up biologicistic imagery of sphinctered passages from one section of the digestive canal to the next. The severed head of a hog falls

and vanishes “through a hole in the floor” (46); “through various yawning holes there slipped to the floor below—to one room hams, to another forequarters, to another sides of pork” (47); blood from slaughtered cattle is shoveled “through holes,” their rolled-up skins “tumbled . . . through one of the inevitable holes in the floor” (49). In the various chambers below, the further work of processing and making meat into marketable products occurs.

This is comparable to the body’s work of assimilation, in which it absorbs nutriment through breaking down complex foodstuffs. Assimilation, in line with the word’s etymology, “makes it the same” as the body. That which it cannot absorb is ultimately ejected, in some form or other, from the system. The packing system, likewise, works through the same basic process: breaking down animals and assimilating them, but assimilating them to the order of the saleable commodity. The dream of the packers is, of course, to assimilate the entire animal to saleable products—to use everything but the squeal.

But the drive for perfected assimilation in the alimentary machine of the packinghouse, in which “no tiniest particle of organic matter [is] wasted . . .” (50), presents a bizarre body indeed. Rather than a canal, which assumes a single-directed stream of matter, the flow of waste in the packinghouse continuously folds back on itself, literally “recycling”⁵¹ in an effort to reclaim all organic matter that might be assimilated to the order of the commodity. Thus, applying the word “waste” to any matter within the packinghouse makes little sense. On their initial tour of the packinghouse, Jurgis’s family visits the floor below the killing beds, “where the various waste materials were treated” (47), but the very definition of the blood and guts of the slaughter as “waste” does not hold. In their “treatment” or processing, these items become usable, suggesting that “waste” is not much more than a temporary appellation, a temporary conceptual place-holder for that which might be assimilated in the future.

“Waste” describes items that have exited the system completely, but even marking whether matter has “left the system” becomes difficult in *The Jungle*. The most striking example here is the story of “Bubbly Creek,” a “blind” arm of the Chicago River so named for the “filth” and “drainage of the square mile of packinghouses” that stays in its depths “forever and a day,” producing “bubbles of carbonic acid gas,” which “burst” on the water’s surface, leaving “rings two or three feet wide” (115).

The packing system, however, ultimately encloses even this “open sewer.” The narrator tells of how “an ingenious stranger” began raking the filthy scum off the surface of the water in order to turn it into lard;

then the packers took the cue, and got out an injunction to stop him, and afterwards gathered it themselves. The banks of “Bubbly Creek” are plastered thick with hairs, and this also the packers gather and clean. (115)

The Chicago River itself becomes an extension of the alimentary machine of the packing system, the water's surface a means to congeal lard-making material, the banks a screening system to trap valuable animal hair. As with the guts and blood swept into the holes in the killing bed floor for further processing below, Bubbly Creek also indicates that "waste" is only ever a temporary condition of matter as inassimilable.

That said, however, there is one end product of the alimentary machine which ultimately falls beyond the limit of the packing system and is eventually ejected: the used body of the immigrant worker. Workers are forced to leave work in the packing system for a variety of reasons, which can mostly be subsumed under the category of the breakdown, or even disassembly, of the body under the weight of the work process. In this way, they often come off as failed parts of a vast machine, an inevitability of machinery itself. Thus, the narrator notes of Jurgis:

In the beginning he had been strong, and he had gotten a job the first day; but now he was second-hand, a damaged article, so to speak, and they did not want him. They had got the best out of him—they had worn him out, with their speeding-up and their carelessness, and now they had thrown him away!
(149)

"Flung aside, like a bit of trash" (192), Jurgis joins the ranks of those who were once proud "cogs" in the "marvelous machine" (41), but now are just the "worn-out parts of the great merciless packing machine" (150).

In keeping with the penetration of the body into the machine, however, the narrative does not represent Jurgis's breakdown solely in mechanistic language. Rather, what Jurgis has undergone in the packing system is a "process of elimination." This becomes all the more evident once he enters work at the fertilizer plant, the only place where he can get a job after having becoming injured on the killing floor. The narrator gives us a catalog of the ways in which Jurgis becomes, literally, a "fertilizer man." Six times more potent than that of the killing-bed worker, "the odour of a fertilizer-man would scare any ordinary visitor at a hundred yards . . ." (120). Discolored by the penetration of the brown constituent elements of fertilizer into his skin, mouth, and ears, Jurgis, after his first day of work in the fertilizer mill, begins to look "like a brown ghost at twilight—from hair to shoes he became the color of the building and everything in it . . ." (156). At the dinner table, "he smelt so that he made all the food at the table taste [*sic*], and set the whole family to vomiting; for himself, it was three days before he could keep anything upon his stomach—he might wash his hands, and use a knife and fork, but were not his mouth and throat filled with the poison?" (157). Jurgis becomes the excremental abject, the packing house system, like a body, having ingested and processed him, assimilating his labor.

The machine in *The Jungle*, then, is emphatically like a body, but, as I have noted above, it is also a perverse one. In its folding back on itself, its reintegrating of waste matter and its processing of and excreting of the bodies of laborers, two systems have come together, resulting from the penetration of the operations of the body into the industrial machine of the packing system. As recuperation, *The Jungle* wishes to pull these two systems apart, to rescue the body from the mouth of the machine, in essence restoring a “clean and proper” body. This same process, it is worth noting, can also be seen from the other side: not only does socialism rescue the body from the machine, it also recovers the machine from “the body,” where, under capitalism, it has come to take on the contours of a digesting, organic being. This is the essential separation (see below) that must occur in order to restore a kind of purity to the economic system and to its relation to its subjects.

The Jungle's narrative grows out of a fertile crossing between socialist and hygienic ideology. Quite suggestive itself on an etymological level, hygiene is defined as the practice or science of preserving and promoting good health, but there is also a related and strong idea of “cleanliness” and “purity.” As I mention above, Sinclair deliberately sought to disgust his readers by exposing them to the unclean and impure, and he gained much from this, although in the end he felt that he gained too little. What generates the reaction of disgust is the sense of an unsavory mixing having occurred. Things that should have remained separate, notably various kinds of waste and meat meant for human consumption, were mixed together, polluting what should have been healthful and beneficial. As repugnant as were the conditions of the packing plants, however, the novel appears to want to generate a still deeper level of disgust, a revulsion with the extent to which capitalism has allowed what Mark Seltzer has referred to in a different context as the “miscegenation of nature and culture” (125). The Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906, propelled in no small part by the controversy that *The Jungle* stirred up,⁵² cannot go far enough in relation to the real problem as encapsulated by the novel because capitalist structure, the novel suggests, is itself fundamentally impure and unclean. The legislation can only be an *ad hoc* solution, since as the novel seeks to make clear, the real problem is an improper relation between the economic at large and the body.

For Sinclair, democratic organization of the means of production will return the fullness of the individual, a return of previously exploited and expropriated labor and a re-integration of the previously dis-integrated body. What is hoped for in the novel's articulations of a socialist world view, primarily in its last four chapters, is no less than a total *conversion*—a qualitative shift from the previous capitalist organization to an economy that addresses need alone. Such is the theory bandied about by the novel's card-carrying socialists. In practice, however, the only conversion that seems to take place in the novel is the quasi-religious one of Jurgis from the dregs of society to member of the socialist brotherhood. Sinclair's narrative, though, does not provide for an all-encompassing system.

Indeed, the novel calls for certain key *separations* along the lines of gender and race,⁵³ where people are sloughed off, set aside, or entirely eliminated as agents from the body politic. Furthermore, the narrative suggests that qualitative conversions, such as that of Jurgis to socialism, absolutely require such separations.

To say that Jurgis's is the only conversion in *The Jungle*, though, is to miss something significant in the novel about the status of conversion under capitalism. One of the key criticisms of the meat packing industry in the novel is that it relies too much on conversion. The packers' very fortune rested on the margin provided by converting waste in a traditional butcher shop into saleable products, which in the estimation of meat-packing giant, Philip Armour, was all to the benefit of the consumer.⁵⁴ Sinclair would probably not have argued otherwise when it came to such useful materials as buttons, fertilizer, and glue. It is the conversion of what should *remain* waste into edible products that bothers Sinclair and so nauseates the public.

A series of "miracles of chemistry" are performed in these conversions, in which the packers are capable of "giving to any sort of meat, fresh or salted, whole or chopped, any colour and any flavour, and any odour they chose" (162). But some conversions go beyond even the purview of chemistry, seeming to partake of the magical, transformative powers of alchemy:

They were regular alchemists at Durham's; they advertised a mushroom catsup, and the men who made it did not know what a mushroom looked like. They advertised "potted chicken",—and it was like the boarding-house soup of the comic papers, through which a chicken had walked with rubbers on. Perhaps they had a secret process for making chickens chemically—who knows? said Jurgis's friends; the things that went into the mixture were tripe, and the fat of pork, and beef suet, and hearts of beef, and finally the waste ends of veal, when they had any. (117-18)

Even Jurgis's trip through the fertilizer mill tends toward a conversion so incredible as to merit comparison between his stench and the pure power of radioactive elements, only recently discovered by the Curies and others: "as it was, he could be compared with nothing known to men, save that newest discovery of the savants, a substance which emits energy for an unlimited time, without being itself in the least diminished in power" (157).

These and other such conversions that violate a sense of "the real," not to mention the healthful, serve as examples of "false" conversions in the novel. They are opposed to the "true" conversion of Jurgis into a socialist and, by extension, the true conversion of capitalist into socialist production. Jurgis's conversion, essentially religious in nature, compares with the "alchemical"

transformations taking place within the packing system, which essentially turn waste into profit, base matter into gold. Like Emma Lazarus's "wretched refuse" in the sonnet which since 1902 has graced the base of the Statue of Liberty, Jurgis, the "brown ghost" and broken "cog" of *The Jungle*, passes through a "golden door."⁵⁵

Instructive here are the many attempts in the period to convert garbage into profit.⁵⁶ One of these particularly worth looking at more closely for its use of the alchemical sensibility of conversion is a 1902 investment pamphlet, *The Garbage Question*, which provides a striking turn-of-the-century illustration of this sudden conversion of value.⁵⁷ In its cover illustration, refuse poured from a garbage cart enters a mill and appears again underneath as a vast sack of gold coins. The site of conversion from polluting material into gold is a device labeled

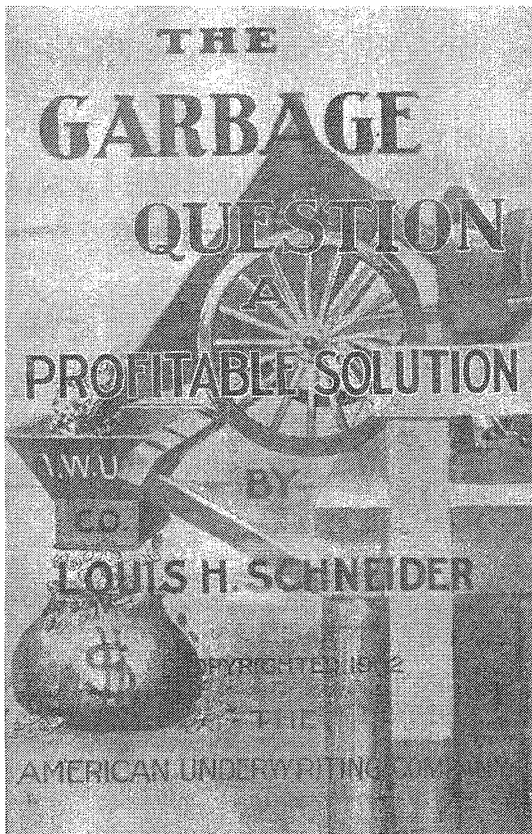


Figure 1: A variant of the *The Garbage Question*, promoting the International Waste Utilization Company and authored by Louis H. Schneider, but otherwise identical in its cover to the Albert C. Day authorized pamphlet. Reprinted with the kind permission of the John Crerar Library, University of Chicago.

USGR Co. (United States Garbage Reduction Company), the company in which the brochure asks readers to invest. The Day System, named after the brochure's author, Albert C. Day, processes the wastes from other systems—domestic,⁵⁸ agricultural, industrial—promising to produce no waste itself. Whether as tin cans sorted from the incoming garbage, livestock feed reduced from it, or brick formed from incinerator ashes, the former waste reenters the world of use value. The Day System eliminates all waste.⁵⁹

Day couches this reclamation in terms of purification. The dross that enters the Day System by means of conveyors, an appalling amalgam that includes “infected rubbish, dangerous sputum, and human excreta” is reduced and purified into wholesome, useful products for the consumer.⁶⁰ As in the slaughterhouse, the Day System is not so much an assembly line as a disassembly line, the end of which is the return to purity. Such is the dream of the totally efficient system.

Of course, at base the Day pamphlet represents little more than a slick marketing brochure, an attempt to gather (or bilk) capital from investors by appealing both to a social conscience and a keen business sense. Not surprisingly, the dream of the wasteless system of garbage reduction is inconsistent with the reality of such turn-of-the-century efforts. As Rathje and Murphy note in their recent study on the archaeology of garbage, such reduction plants “emitted nauseating odors as well as a black liquid runoff that polluted nearby watercourses.”⁶¹

And yet the alchemical sensibility here is quite powerful, representing a utopian optimism in the machine's ability to convert loss into gain, to close the loop of production and circumvent the very law of entropy. Ultimately, though, the impossibility of alchemy makes its narrative a fundamentally religious one. Such is Jurgis's conversion from wasted and broken laborer to comrade in the socialist cause, a conversion that is a problem in the narrative of the novel because it ruptures what can be seen as a naturalist tendency toward decline. I want to focus on the extent to which the alchemical/religious conversion of Jurgis, not unlike the miracles of the Day system, is *not* conversion without loss or remainder. Rather, in *The Jungle*, the movement of Jurgis into a socialist fullness of being demands loss, requiring the separation from and wasting of the bodies and agency of women and blacks.

Scott Derrick observes of *The Jungle* that the very “desire of the text,” acting out of a deep anxiety about masculine authority, enacts Jurgis's separation from his family and especially from femininity.⁶² That separation also constitutes a detachment from strong female characters in the novel, especially Marija. As Martha Banta argues, the novel's narrative structure makes the world of political action solely the world of the collectivity of men, leaving the female characters powerless and without agency. Thus, “the women who appear during the first half of the novel are wiped out as human agents long before Jurgis has his place usurped by the nameless voice crying, ‘Organize! Organize!’”⁶³ Women become a means to an end, and when the end is reached they disappear.

This tendency toward the separation from women is encapsulated in the very scene of Jurgis's conversion, which takes place, and perhaps could only take place, through a woman as an intermediary. Having dozed off at a socialist rally, at which he is only present as a respite from the harsh weather outside, Jurgis is awakened by "a voice in his ear—a woman's voice, gentle and sweet—'If you would try to listen, comrade, perhaps you would be interested'" (357). Jurgis responds by slowly coming to and turning his focus on the woman who had spoken to him. What he sees there puzzles him at first, but it eventually makes him turn his attention to the speaker on which she is transfixed.

She sat as one turned to stone, her hands clenched tightly in her lap, so tightly that he could see the cords standing out in her wrists. There was a look of excitement upon her face, of tense effort, as of one struggling mightily, or witnessing a struggle. There was a faint quivering of her nostrils; and now and then she would moisten her lips with feverish haste. Her bosom rose and fell as she breathed, and her excitement seemed to mount higher and higher, and then to sink away again, like a boat tossing upon ocean surges. (358)

After witnessing the woman's quasi-orgasmic response to the speaker, it occurs to Jurgis to turn his attention there, too. This is shortly attended by his own epiphanic, if not an also orgasmic moment, characterized variously as "vistas" unfolding before him, the ground breaking, feeling "suddenly a mere man no longer," "a flood of emotion" surging "up in him" (366). This woman, so vital an intermediary at the central moment of Jurgis's life and the plot of the novel, however, ultimately disappears from the narrative, without the slightest comment. She might perhaps be seen as a kind of singular *deus ex machina* if it were not for the thoroughgoing pattern already established in the narrative concerning women. The novel uses up its female characters, and once they have served their purpose they simply disappear, occasionally reappearing on the margins, as does Marija in the house of prostitution, as a remainder.

But if strong and important women like Marija represent a gross remainder by the end of *The Jungle*, African Americans fare even worse. Barring their irruption into the story line in the appearance of Southern blacks as strikebreakers just two chapters before Jurgis's conversion, the novel features few, if any, black people in Chicago. Sinclair depicts strikebreakers, like the packers, as another opposition to organized labor, but in doing so he neatly bifurcates the union and the strikebreakers racially. Interestingly, such a racial division is not borne in the historical record of the 1904 strikes in Chicago, on which Sinclair bases the strike in the novel. According to James Barrett, labor unions in Chicago sought to be inclusive by skill, gender, and ethnicity as well as race.⁶⁴ Barrett cites John R. Commons, an early social historian, "who viewed the strike firsthand" and

commented that “perhaps the fact of greatest social significance . . . is that the strike of 1904 was not merely a strike of skilled labor for the unskilled, but was a strike of Americanized Irish, Germans, and Bohemians in behalf of Slovaks, Poles, Lithuanians, and Negroes [*sic*].”⁶⁵ While racial and ethnic tensions were a factor in unions at the time, Sinclair nonetheless provides a frightening representation of black strikebreakers and erases blacks from labor politics.

Blacks, along with “the lowest foreigners,” as the narrator puts it, “had been attracted” to the stockyards “more by the prospect of disorder than by the big wages” (322). According to the narrator, “the ‘Union Stockyards’ were never a pleasant place, but now they were not only a collection of slaughterhouses, but also the camping place of an army of fifteen or twenty thousand human beasts” (328). As if the work stoppage were not itself chaos enough, Sinclair’s blacks inaugurate a veritable “saturnalia of debauchery—scenes such as never before had been witnessed in America,” “hell . . . let loose in the yards”:

any night in the big open space in front of Brown’s, one might see brawny Negroes [*sic*] stripped to the waist and pounding each other for money, while a howling throng of three or four thousand surged about, men and women, young white girls from the country rubbing elbows with big buck Negroes [*sic*] with daggers in their boots, while rows of wooly heads peered down from every window of the surrounding factories. (328)

The sense of disorder for the narrator grows out of a catalog of sinful and dangerous behaviors. But at its heart lies a tapping into fears of miscegenation, transmitted in only slightly veiled language—“young white girls from the country rubbing elbows with big buck Negroes [*sic*]”—suggesting profound contamination and pollution. Worse than any of the novel’s better-known descriptions of the pollution rife in the meat packing industry, this association of black males and white females threatens to pollute in the most disturbing of ways: “the nameless diseases of vice were soon rife; and this where food was being handled which was sent out to every corner of the civilized world” (328).⁶⁶

While he does so *ad infinitum* (or even *ad nauseam*) on behalf of Jurgis, the narrator fails to bemoan these blacks’ status as eventual rubbish, objects to be used to break a strike and then cast off. Rather, the narrator seems to endorse the idea of the black workers as a kind of pollution, material frighteningly out of place⁶⁷ in the stockyards of the North. Or perhaps a more apt description would be that blacks serve in the narrative as the category of the abject, which is precisely in line with the body politic metaphor.⁶⁸ Having been cordoned off from the rest of the narrative, blacks suddenly disrupt it in the strike scene, bringing not only chaos, but also the threat of an uncontainable contamination, figuratively, of course, but also literally in the food that goes out of the plant to the nation and the world. Once returned to their proper place outside the narrative,

geographically “the South,”⁶⁹ with the ending of the strike and the return of the non-black union workers, however, Sinclair can freely articulate his socialist narrative vision. Sinclair’s body politic constitutes its identity along the line of an essential separation—the redeemed and pure Jurgis only exists because the impure has been submerged.

In the strike scene, the very urgency of the strike as a problem for organized labor, then, turns on the threat of who is breaking the strike even more so than the threat of the packing trust itself. The trust is exploitative of (white, lower-class) labor, but for Sinclair this arrangement maintains some sense of order, perhaps because, for all its faults, the trust represents the future. But this is not to say that Sinclair’s treatment of blacks, or women, for that matter, in the context of a socialist agenda is unusual. As James Barrett observes, to expect anything else from him would have been asking too much, for Sinclair, despite his own brushes with privation, cut his teeth in a genteel tradition of reform that provided little intimate contact with members of the working class he sought to champion:

His Socialist party was the party of middle-class professional reformers, radical intellectuals, populist farmers, and Christian socialists—legitimate heirs of America’s nineteenth-century radical reform tradition, the most recent generation of rebels against industrial capitalism’s debasement of traditional American values.⁷⁰

That appeal to traditional American values ultimately had little to do with advancing a party that included women and blacks in any real way.

It would be easy to tally this under the category of racism and misogyny, but that is not my intent. Instead, I argue that this very exigency arises as a result of Sinclair’s adoption of a certain way of thinking through “the body.” Turn-of-the-century hygienic ideology, in a rapprochement with efficiency thinking, made available a perfectible human body, characterized in Fletcher’s iteration of it as a body that emits practically no waste. A true case of utopian dreaming, such a body, totally self-enclosed, stands alongside the perpetual motion machine in its optimism for circumventing the very laws of thermodynamics. Such a body, then, is also a practical impossibility.

Moreover, this progressive body *requires* the retrograde body as its alibi. In stark contrast to the progressive body, *The Jungle* presents, in the alimentary machine of the capitalist slaughterhouse and the worker bodies that it digests, a retrograde, even atavistic body that serves as a potent critique of capitalism. And yet, *The Jungle*, in its very effort to stand outside the perverse body of the alimentary machine in order to make it visible, also engages in a similar digestive operation. In producing Jurgis the socialist, the novel finds it necessary to use up and “eliminate” others. As surely as Jurgis is ground-up and expelled in order to produce the packers’ meat products and profit, blacks and women undergo a similar operation in the narrative of Jurgis’s rise. Once Sinclair opens

the tap on digestive thinking, there's no turning it off. The very operations against which the novel mounts its struggle, then, turn out to be essential to its own narrative. *The Jungle*, too, is an alimentary machine.

At his utopian best, Sinclair dreams of closing off open systems, as did many of his contemporaries. Fletcher promised that the natural processes of the body could be marshaled toward perfect assimilation of food, resulting in a superabundance of energy and practically no waste. Similarly, efficiency thinking promised a perfected manufacturing process by curtailing "wasted" time and effort. Promises, promises. Instead, what becomes apparent in Sinclair's narrative is that the linear necessity captured in the example of a real and stinking digestive system disrupts the utopian closed system. Implying a canal open not only at the "top," but at the "bottom" as well, processes of elimination make possible, continuously condition, and threaten the idea of a perfected factory, a perfected human body, and even a perfected nation.

Nauseating the nation, *The Jungle* rudely demonstrated that the meat packers had been feeding the body politic God-knows-what for God-knows-how-long. Yet Sinclair was not the first to mobilize a sense of the digesting body politic under the threat of what it was unknowingly eating. That model had been established when Sinclair was still in short pants, and did not at that time refer to threats from the food supply, per se, but rather, the more abstract threats to the digestive body politic from immigration. In 1885, Social Gospel leader Josiah Strong warned that immigration had so glutted the nation that America must either "digest or die." Undoing a body metaphor for cultural assimilation that he borrows from Henry Ward Beecher, Strong cautions that, when it comes to immigration, we are what we eat:

Mr. Beecher once said, "When the lion eats an ox, the ox becomes lion, not the lion, ox." The illustration would be very neat if it only illustrated. The lion happily has an instinct controlled by an unfailing law which determines what, and when, and how much he shall eat. If that instinct should fail, and he should some day eat a badly-diseased ox, or should very much over-eat, we might have on our hands a very sick lion. I can even conceive that under such conditions the ignoble ox might slay the king of beasts. Foreigners are not coming to the United States in answer to any appetite of ours, controlled by a unfailing moral or political instinct. They naturally consult their own interests in coming, not ours. The lion, without being consulted as to time, quantity or quality, is having the food thrust down his throat, and his only alternative is, digest or die.⁷¹

"Digest or die," Strong's reworking of Beecher's body politic metaphor curiously suggests a body with no apparent means of purging itself of unfit

matter. It must, without an outlet, simply bloat and maintain the corrupting matter which has been forced into it, eventually to be poisoned and to disintegrate from the inside out. Like Sinclair's alimentary machine, it folds back on itself, instead of eliminating pollutants, re-incorporating them, or seeking to, into its being. Or, from another angle, the self-enclosed Lion is not unlike Fletcher's most idealist thinking on the no-waste human body. That Strong's insistence on the metaphor stops short of carrying through to the bitter end, as it were, is perhaps nothing more than a simple matter of propriety. But it could also just as easily be a fundamental problem in applying the body metaphor to the nation. The difficulty is that the real Lion is not an enclosed system, vomiting or excreting as necessary removes the unassimilable, and there will always be the unassimilable which must be expelled.

On this score, the nation cannot very well be seen as a body. One might even surmise, given this, that the central purpose behind Strong's extension of Beecher's metaphor is to push it to the breaking point. But Strong, it appears, is equally committed to the notion of a digesting body politic. In his chapter on the perils of religion and public education, which argues against private religious schools, he strongly asserts the digesting body politic figure:

Democracy necessitates the public school. Important as is the school to any civilized people, it is exceptionally so to us, for in the United States the common school has a function which is peculiar, viz., to Americanize the children of immigrants. The public school is the principal digestive organ of the body politic. By means of it the children of strange and dissimilar races which come to us are, in one generation, assimilated and made Americans.⁷²

Assimilation for Strong means here just what it means elsewhere, to make the same: "it is the heterogeneous character of our population (especially in cities) which threatens the integrity of our public school system and at the same time renders it supremely important to maintain that integrity."⁷³ The social body, then, demands homogeneity, and so its alimentary canal must not simply pass the heterogeneous through (and out), but must somehow convert the alien material and absorb it.⁷⁴

Strong's reworking of Beecher's lion metaphor, alongside the various bodies invoked in Sinclair's *The Jungle*, suggests a turning, by the closing years of the nineteenth century, toward an emphasis on digestive processes for understanding a wide range of complex and increasingly general systems, from the human body to the nation itself. Sinclair, to mix a metaphor, had put his finger on something important in *The Jungle*. When these various digesting bodies come into operation or surface in Progressive Era reform literature, they point toward the idea of a "core truth" about human beings. It is a profoundly democratic, if

ultimately ambivalent observation: the human “heart” may vary, but the one thing we all share is a digestive system that works in the same way for all people. At least that was the idea. Sinclair’s effort to disgust the populace, then, appeals to the universal “truth” of digestion. Yet the processes of elimination that attend that truth amply suggest that Sinclair’s outcry against and solution for class-exclusion in capitalist America bases itself on still-deeper exclusions along the lines of race and gender.

Notes

I thank Jonathan Auerbach, William A. Cohen, James A. Hansen, Julie Cary Nerad, Patrick Erben, Yung Min Kim, Jaime Osterman Alves, and Charles Tryon for their generous and helpful advice at various stages of this essay’s life. Also, I want to thank the editors and readers of *American Studies* for their careful examination of the manuscript and their thoughtful suggestions for improving it.

1. Upton Sinclair, “What Life Means to Me,” *Cosmopolitan* 41 (October 1906): 594.

2. Although new editions of *The Jungle* emerge every couple of years (the latest one, edited by Clare Virginia Eby, was issued in 2002 [Norton Critical Editions. New York: Norton, 2002]), relatively little criticism on the book has appeared recently. Witness to the thinness of the field is a collection of previously published interpretations (1975-1997) of the novel that has just come out (Harold Bloom, ed. *Upton Sinclair’s The Jungle. Modern Critical Interpretations* (Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 2002). While Bloom’s collection features notable essays by Michael Brewster Folsom and Scott Derrick (which I cite in the original below), it seems “padded” with sections reprinted from biographical studies of Sinclair and editorial commentary to two of the novel’s innumerable paperback editions. (Also worth mentioning here is that the collection omits notes from the authors’ original pieces.)

Bloom’s dismissive introduction to the collection (which ruminates on “inadequate literature,” “period pieces,” and “bad books” [1]) reiterates the double gesture of recognition and repulsion that has animated the literary-critical take on *The Jungle* for most of the last century. While critics without exception bow to the historical import of the novel, for the most part, they become squeamish about its “failure” as art. Fortunately, efforts such as Folsom and Derrick’s, which I have found particularly suggestive for my approach to the novel, rise above the art versus propaganda dialectic. Folsom understands the narrative structure of the novel as conditioned by its process of composition and publication, the points of contact between the author’s aim and the audience to which he was reaching out (“Upton Sinclair’s Escape from *The Jungle*: The Narrative Strategy and Suppressed Conclusion of America’s First Proletarian Novel,” *Prospects* 4 [1979]: 237-266). Derrick observes some of the gender and body dynamics that subtext the novel’s narrative structure (“What a Beating Feels Like: Authorship, Dissolution, and Masculinity in Sinclair’s *The Jungle*,” *Studies in American Fiction* 23 [1995]: 85-100).

Biographical and critical studies of the life and work of Sinclair worth reading include R. N. Mookerjee, *Art for Social Justice: The Major Novels of Upton Sinclair* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1988); William A. Bloodworth, *Upton Sinclair* (Boston: Twayne, 1977); and Jon A. Yoder, *Upton Sinclair* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1975).

3. William Ian Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997): xi.

4. See William G. Little’s *The Waste Fix: Seizures of the Sacred from Upton Sinclair to The Sopranos*. *Literary Criticism and Cultural Studies: Outstanding Dissertations* (New York: Routledge, 2002) for a different treatment of the relation between Sinclair as novelist and health reformer and concepts of the wasting body.

5. Karen Sánchez-Eppler, *Touching Liberty: Abolition, Feminism, and the Politics of the Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993): 1.

6. James Harvey Young notes that while it is thought that Roosevelt was directing his harangue at David Graham Phillips, who had written about corruption in the Senate, Sinclair’s work could not have been very far from Roosevelt’s mind when he constructed the speech (“The Pig that Fell into the Privy: Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle* and the Meat Inspection Amendments of 1906,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 59 [1985]: 471).

7. Emory Elliott is precisely on the mark when he says that, “as is often the case with jokes,” Sinclair’s “seeming flip remark” to the effect of having missed the heart and hit the

stomach instead, “contains more truths than are immediately apparent: it speaks directly to the purpose, techniques, and results of the novel” (“Afterward to *The Jungle*” in Bloom, *Upton Sinclair’s The Jungle*, 89). At least two other critics have flipped Sinclair’s joke on its head. William Bloodworth, who seeks to understand the relationship between Sinclair’s health writings and his reform fiction (if incompletely, to my mind), suggests that “Sinclair apparently felt that the way to a reader’s heart was through his stomach” (“From *The Jungle* to *The Fasting Cure*: Upton Sinclair on American Food,” *Journal of American Culture* 2 [1979]: 447). Michael Brewster Folsom, who effectively analyses the composition and rhetoric of the novel, makes the case in relation to Sinclair’s horrific representations of black strike-breakers, which I will come to at the end of this article. A direct appeal to the polite white reader’s worst racist imaginings, “the vision of [a] brute sexual threat to white womanhood” in the form of black “scabs” has Folsom exclaiming: “clearly, Sinclair did not ‘accidentally’ hit his reader’s stomach; he aimed straight at it!” (“Upton Sinclair’s Escape,” 261).

8. F. P. Dunne, “Mr. Dooley on the Food We Eat,” *Colliers* (23 June 1906): 15.

9. This particular scene goes on to reach great heights of absurdity. Many sausages flew out the window, but

Th’ ninth wan sthruck Sinitor Biv’ ridge on th’ head an’ made him a blond. It bounced off, exploded, an’ blew a leg off a secret service agent, an’ th’ scattered fragments destroyed a handsome row iv ol’ oak trees. Sinitor Biv’ ridge rushed in, thinkin’ that th’ Prisdint was bein’ assassynated by his devoted followers in th’ Sinit, an’ discovered Tiddy engaged in a hand-to-hand conflict with a potted ham. Th’ Sinitor fr’m Injyanny, with few well-directed wurruds, put out th’ fuse an’ rendered th’ missle harmless. (*Ibid.*, 15)

10. See, for instance, Roosevelt’s *The Strenuous Life* (New York: The Century Co., 1900; Bartleby.com <<http://www.bartleby.com/58/>>, 27 Nov. 2001).

11. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982): 108.

12. Upton Sinclair and Michael Williams, *Good Health and How We Won It* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1909); Upton Sinclair, *The Fasting Cure* (New York: Mitchell Kennerley, 1911). It should be noted that while Williams collaborated with Sinclair on *Good Health*, the introduction, from which I cite hereafter, was penned by Sinclair. For a treatment of the fasting movement which *The Fasting Cure* joins, see R. Marie Griffith, “Apostles of Abstinence: Fasting and Masculinity during the Progressive Era,” *American Quarterly* 52 (2000): 599-638.

13. Ruth Clifford Engs, *Clean Living Movements: American Cycles of Health Reform* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2000). See also James C. Whorton, *Crusaders for Fitness: The History of American Health Reformers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982) and, for a lighter approach, Ronald M. Deutsch, *The Nuts among the Berries* (New York: Ballantine, 1967).

14. Engs, *Clean Living*, 101-102.

15. *Ibid.*, 102.

16. Sinclair and Williams, *Good Health*, 1.

17. Sinclair, *The Fasting Cure*, 14.

18. Sinclair and Williams, *Good Health*, 3-4, 4.

19. Fletcher’s influence was wide-spread, among both common people and the intelligentsia. Among his more famous devotees was Henry James. See chapter two, entitled “Waste Products,” of Tim Armstrong’s *Modernism, Technology and the Body* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) for an interesting reading of James’s revision of his novels for the New York edition. Armstrong suggests that James’s revision process shows a marked influence from Fletcher’s chewing theory, surfacing especially in the prefaces in a penchant for masticatory figures. James, also, as it turns out, had corresponded with Sinclair about Horace Fletcher (Sinclair, *My Lifetime in Letters* [Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1960]: 31-32).

20. Sinclair and Williams attribute the word to John Harvey Kellogg, “after the analogy of ‘pasteurizing’,” *Good Health*, 49-50.

21. Horace Fletcher, *The New Glutton or Epicure* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1912): 8. Fletcher’s 1912 text provides a summary of his thinking on digestion dating from the late 1890s, when he began publishing articles in the popular press. Fletcher’s books largely consist of material gleaned from materials he printed earlier in popular periodicals.

22. This was a point of contention between Fletcher and John Harvey Kellogg, the chief diet reformer of the period. While he had adopted Fletcher’s chewing philosophy wholeheartedly and without reservation for patients at his Battle Creek sanitarium, Kellogg put a premium on “regularity,” and found the assistance of fibrous material to this end to be indispensable. James C. Whorton notes that both reformers were after the same thing—purity of the body: “Kellogg shared Fletcher’s loathing of internal filth . . .” Their opposed attitudes toward fiber merely represented two different means of approaching the same goal: Kellogg would have a regularly swept system, Fletcher a system that would not need sweeping since nothing untoward would

enter it in the first place (“‘Physiologic Optimism’: Horace Fletcher and Hygienic Ideology in Progressive America,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 55 [1981]: 83).

23. Jaime Osterman Alves has pointed out to me an analog to Fletcher in our contemporary popular culture: the Juice Man, whose infomercials for a juicing system and philosophy of eating frequently appear on late-night television and cable shopping channels. In essence, his claim is the same as Fletcher’s: the juicer extracts what is best from food, making it ever so easily available for assimilation, and at the same time saving the internal organs the trouble of breaking the food down.

24. T. Coraghessan Boyle, *The Road to Wellville* (New York: Penguin, 1993).

25. William Bloodworth, *Upton Sinclair* (Boston: Twayne, 1977): 70-71.

26. Fletcher himself was after much more than change in the eating habits of Americans. His theory of chewing was but one, albeit significant, part of a larger social reform effort. Whorton points out that Fletcher was much concerned late in his life that his legacy not be reduced to his chewing theory: “He complained repeatedly during his later years that this popular conception of his work was a simplification which detracted from his complete program. Careful chewing of food was the major element—but only one element—of a philosophy designed to stimulate mental, moral and social progress, in addition to physical improvement” (Whorton, “Physiologic Optimism,” 59).

27. *Ibid.*, 60.

28. Fletcher, *The New Glutton*, 133, 136.

29. Bryan S. Turner, *Regulating Bodies: Essays in Medical Sociology* (London: Routledge, 1992): 182.

30. Cynthia Comacchio, “Mechanomorphosis: Science, Management, and ‘Human Machinery’ in Industrial Canada, 1900-45,” *Labour/Le Travail* 41 (1998): 38.

31. Mark Seltzer, *Bodies and Machines* (New York: Routledge, 1992): 3-4.

32. Although I make much in this analysis of the role of efficiency-thinking in relation to Progressivism, this does not imply that the two are coextensive concepts. Taylorism represents but one pronounced thread in the web of Progressivism. Nor should Taylor himself be seen as the singular progenitor of the discipline and technologies of scientific management. As a recent biography puts it, “he was no genius in the way Einstein or Picasso were. Rather, he took fragments of thought and practice drifting through the nineteenth century and directed them down one tight channel, focused them, packaged them, sold them as a single idea—and projected it into the twentieth century” (Robert Kanigel, *The One Best Way: Frederick Winslow Taylor and the Enigma of Efficiency* [New York: Viking, 1997]: 19).

There have been many good studies of efficiency and scientific management and American culture and literature. Among these are Martha Banta’s *Taylored Lives: Narrative Productions in the Age of Taylor, Veblen, and Ford* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993) and Cecilia Tichi’s *Shifting Gears: Technology, Literature, Culture in Modernist America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987).

33. As Michael Brewster Folsom observes, Sinclair’s *Mammonart* (1925), his analysis of the relationship between literature and society, takes special pains to differentiate the socialist *Looking Backward* of Edward Bellamy from the socialist *News from Nowhere* of William Morris precisely along the lines of efficiency thinking, which, interestingly, also serves to encapsulate for Sinclair what is “American” about Bellamy:

Explaining his differences with William Morris on the matter of art and industry, [Sinclair] noted that *News from Nowhere* is a reply to *Looking Backward*, which Morris “did not like . . . because Bellamy was an American, and had organized and systematized everything.” Sinclair was pleased to identify himself with things organized, systematized, and, thus, American: “I am a Socialist who believes in machinery, and has no interest in any world that does not develop machine power to the greatest extent.” (242)

34. Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle* (New York: Penguin, 1985): 44. All subsequent page numbers are cited parenthetically in the text.

35. Folsom aptly characterizes Sinclair as captivated by the “efficiency and power—even the beauty—of men and machines organized together in an essentially ugly (but necessary) business” (“Upton Sinclair’s Escape,” 242). Sinclair was not alone in his appreciation of efficient production models. The stunning efficiency of the meat packing system, according to James Barrett, in the introduction to his edition of *The Jungle*, captivated “economists and other professionals” of the time: “‘it would be difficult to find another industry where division of labor has been so ingeniously and microscopically worked out,’ pioneer labor historian John R. Commons observed in 1905. ‘The animal has been surveyed and laid off like a map’” (quoted in James R. Barrett, ed., *The Jungle*, by Upton Sinclair [Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988], xv). A model of efficiency which both predates and informs Henry Ford’s assembly line, the packer’s “division of labor and . . . introduction of a ‘disassembly line’ had made meat packing the most

modern industry in the economy, at least so far as the organization of the labor process was concerned" (*Ibid.*, xv).

36. In *The Industrial Republic*, Sinclair is incredulous at the suggestion of destroying the trusts:

But surely we must destroy the trusts! You say. *Why* must we destroy the trusts? The trusts are marvelous industrial machines, of power the like of which was never known in the world before: they are the last and most wonderful of the products of civilisation [sic]—and we must destroy them! (Sinclair, *The Industrial Republic: A Study of the America of Ten Years Hence* [1907; reprint, Westport: Hyperion, 1976], 47.)

37. Bloodworth, *Upton Sinclair*, 63.

38. Whorton, "'Physiologic Optimism,'" 62.

39. Fletcher, *The New Glutton*, 142.

40. Whorton, "'Physiologic Optimism,'" 69.

41. Fletcher, *The New Glutton*, 146.

42. Fletcher goes on to relate a rather strange story in evidence of his claim. It concerns a writer under observation for his nutritional and excretory habits while plying his trade. He lives on a modest diet of "a glass of milk with a trace of coffee, and corn 'gems,' four of which he consumed" a day, and in really hot weather, the occasional glass of lemonade. Yet he produces an enormous amount of work:

That such an amount of work, with the maintenance of perfect health, could be accomplished on such a small quantity of food can be accounted for only on the assumption of a complete assimilation of the ingested material. As the degree of combustion is indicated by the ashes left, so the completeness of digestion is to be measured by the amount and character of the intestinal excreta. A conclusive demonstration of thorough digestion in Mr. —————'s case was afforded me. There had, under the *regime* above mentioned, been no evacuation of the bowels for eight days. At the end of this period he informed me that the rectum was about to evacuate, though the material he was sure could not be of a large amount. Squatting upon the floor of the room, without any perceptible effort he passed into the hollow of his hand the contents of the rectum. This was done to demonstrate human normal cleanliness and inoffensiveness; neither stain nor odour remaining, either in the rectum or in the hand. The excreta were in the form of nearly round ball, varying in size from a small marble to a plum. These were greenish-brown in colour, of firm consistence, and covered over with a thin layer of mucous; but *there was no more odour to it than there is to a hot biscuit.* (*The New Glutton*, 148-50)

43. Sinclair and Williams, *Good Health*, 2. Looking back on his life from the vantage of some fifty years later, Sinclair says of another of his health inclinations, his off-and-on vegetarianism, that he never engaged in it on the ethical principle that to eat animals is wrong, but rather that: "Most of my life I was looking for a diet that would permit me to overwork with impunity" (Sinclair, *My Lifetime in Letters*, 24). But despite this more cynical take on the matter, encapsulated in the idea that there can be "overwork," Sinclair had internalized during the years surrounding *The Jungle*, as did Fletcher, the notion of a nearly endless capacity for work in the properly-run human body.

44. By the time of *The Fasting Cure*, Sinclair had moved away from being a thorough-going Fletcherite. He is clear as to the debt, however, that he owed him:

All the physicians I had known were men who tried to cure me when I fell sick, but here was a man who was studying how to stay well. I have to find fault with Mr. Fletcher's system, and so I must make clear at the outset how much I owe to it. It set me upon the right track—it showed me the goal, even if it did not lead me to it. (*Fasting Cure*, 15)

45. *Ibid.*, 9.

46. Seltzer, *Bodies and Machines*, 5.

47. Derrick, "What a Beating," 88.

48. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 71.

49. *Ibid.*, 3.

50. *Ibid.*, 1.

51. As Susan Strasser points out, the origin of the word "recycling" does not lie, as one might think, in the environmental movements of the 1970s, but rather, as the *OED* points out, emerged in the context of production, specifically in the oil industry, in which "partially refined petroleum [was] sent through the refining cycle again to reduce waste" (Strasser, *Waste and Want: A Social History of Trash* [New York: Metropolitan Books, 1999], 72).

52. See Young, "The Pig that Fell into the Privy." Young details the significant impact of *The Jungle* on the legislation and examines the conflicted relationship between Sinclair and

Theodore Roosevelt. Although they worked together initially, ultimately neither one had much patience for the other's methods and politics. See also Jon A. Yoder. *Upton Sinclair* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1975): 41-44.

53. William Bloodworth notes a kind of separation, too, in the near-erasure of Jurgis's experience as worker in his conversion to socialism. To some extent, this is an effect of the narrative's religious tendency. As the novel comes to a close, it falls back, not unlike its model in Stowe, on a religious structure. This grafting of a religious ending on to a plot of naturalist tendencies, however, presents a problem of proportions. As Bloodworth puts it:

In the sequence of naturalistically depicted episodes preceding Jurgis's emotional conversion, Sinclair does not imply that the workers' own experiences will result in practical political action. The life of Jurgis Rudkis offers little foundation for radical politics. Sinclair's proletarians move directly from their naive dreams of success to degradation and anomie. In this way *The Jungle* suggests that the American working class at its lowest level is a vulnerable and easily destroyed culture. (Bloodworth, *Upton Sinclair*, 62)

Moreover, Jurgis's conversion, noticeably Protestant in nature, requires a radical break from his previous life. "The rhetorical technique by which Jurgis enters the Socialist movement," Bloodworth notes, "is that of Protestant evangelicalism. Little about it is proletarian; in fact, it depends largely on a rejection—a purging—of the proletarian experiences that came before it." And this rejection is attended with a feeling of guilt for his past (*Ibid.*, 63). Furthermore, what also stands to be lost here is the collective proletarian experiences of Jurgis's family, without whom he never could have survived after his injury on the killing bed. Granted, Jurgis does make some use of his past in his service as a kind of authentic exhibit brought in to testify informally to conditions in the packing plants in Tommy Hinds's discussions with cattlemen from out West. But by and large, Jurgis's previous experiences seem to just fall away as a kind of useless appendage to the new man.

54. As historian William Cronon notes, since the packers could not undersell the traditional butcher and still turn a profit on dressed beef alone, they turned their efforts to converting "waste" into commodities:

Only by selling by-products could the packers turn this losing transaction into a profitable one. Indeed, the income from such sales was crucial to enabling the packers to lower dressed beef prices far below those of ordinary butchers. As Swift and Armour saw it, they earned their profits on the margin largely from things that butchers threw away. (Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* [New York: Norton, 1991]: 252)

Indeed, waste, or that which would ordinarily go to waste, came to be the central means of profit for the packers, made available through an economy of scale. Philip Armour, who, in Cronon's view "had built his empire on waste" (253), extolled the virtue of such as only possible at the present historical moment of systemization and efficiency:

"There was a time," remembered Philip Armour at the end of the century, "when many parts of cattle were wasted, and the health of the city injured by the refuse. Now, by adopting the best known methods, nothing is wasted, and buttons, fertilizer, glue, and other things are made cheaper and better for the world in general, out of material that was before a waste and a menace." (quoted in Cronon, 250)

The crowning achievement of the system of the slaughterhouse, and the same might be said of the science of efficiency in general, is that, in the words of the immigrants' volunteer slaughterhouse tour guide near *The Jungle*'s beginning, "they don't waste anything here" (42).

55. Emma Lazarus, "The New Colossus," (*Sonnet Central* <<http://www.sonnets.org/lazarus.htm#100>> 25 July 2001): 12, 14.

56. The recycling trade really took off at the turn of the twentieth century. Strasser points out that scavengers had long been the main conduit for the collection and re-sale of refuse, but that the end of the nineteenth century saw the rise of an organized trade in waste, replete with its own weekly publication, *The Waste Trade Journal*, which began publication in 1905. Jacob Riis confirms this shift toward organization in *How the Other Half Lives*, where he recounts the organization of Italian immigrant under the auspices of a "padrone":

The discovery was made by earlier explorers that there is money in New York's ash-barrel, but it was left to the genius of the padrone to develop the full resources of the mine that has become the exclusive preserve of the Italian immigrant. (Riis, *How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York*, ed. David Leviatin [Boston: Bedford, 1996]: 93)

57. Albert C. Day, *The Garbage Question: A Profitable Solution* (n.p.: American Underwriting Company, 1902).

58. The brochure begins with the line, "the fortunes of the future will be made from the crumbs that fall from the world's table" (*Ibid.*, 1).

59. Moreover, the USGR seeks to make use of all the world's garbage in such a way. The pamphlet calls for a kind of sanitation imperialism that continues the project of Manifest Destiny in the economic field.

60. *Ibid.*, 4.

61. William Rathje and Cullen Murphy, *Rubbish!: The Archaeology of Garbage* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992): 175-76.

62. Derrick, "What a Beating," 89.

63. Banta, *Taylored Lives*, 183, 184.

64. Barrett, Introduction, *The Jungle*, xxii. William M. Tuttle, Jr. offers a similar view of the composition of the union at the time of the 1904 strike: "racial jealousies and antagonisms crumbled . . . as the unskilled enthusiastically joined the union because of dissatisfaction with the prevailing wage. . . . and blacks joined as well as whites" (*Race Riot: Chicago in the Red Summer of 1919* [New York: Antheneum]: 116). Tuttle, however, also demonstrates that while "many of the 500 black workers in the Chicago yards" joined the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen (*Ibid.*, 116), this remarkable moment of solidarity was but that, a moment. The larger frame of events surrounding Chicago meat-packing strikes since the 1894 strike, when the packers began to make it a practice to bring in blacks to break strikes, had already dictated a conflation of the categories of race and "scab." By the end of the 1904 strike, "the words 'Negro' and 'scab' were . . . synonymous in the minds of numerous white stockyards workers; and, lest they forget, racist labor officials and politicians were present to remind them" (*Ibid.*, 119).

65. Barrett, Introduction, *The Jungle*, xxiii.

66. Sandra Gunning ties Sinclair's use of the black male as contaminant and contaminator to the black rapist myth, which served a role even in progressive writing: "the black rapist would become a staple of metaphor for social disorder and injustice, even for many white writers dedicated to changing the status quo." In the strike scene in *The Jungle*, "the figure of corrupting black male presence is made to validate class protest. . . ." (*Race, Rape, and Lynching: the Red Record of American Literature, 1890-1912*. [New York: Oxford University Press, 1996]: 24).

67. The idea that pollution boils down to "matter out of place" is most commonly associated with Mary Douglas, whose *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (1996. Routledge: London, 1996), out of this time-worn definition of pollution, develops a complex anthropological theory about what counts as pollution and what pollution means in different cultural contexts.

68. Iris Marion Young has observed that abjection as a process works well as a descriptive framework for fears of "the other," including a generalized xenophobia, phobia experienced in the context of racism and ableism and homophobia (*Justice and the Politics of Difference* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990]).

69. Houston A. Baker, Jr. and Dana D. Nelson in their preface to a recent special issue of *American Literature* observe that the ambiguous and free-floating geographical, yet largely conceptual, region known as "the South" serves a central role in figuring the nation through abjection. I would argue that Sinclair's politics are also imbricated in just this fashion: "'We the people' have of course never been whole. . . ; 'our wholeness' has long been constructed through the abjected regional Other, 'The South'" (Houston A. Baker, Jr. and Dana D. Nelson, "Preface: Violence, the Body, and 'The South,'" *American Literature* 73 [2001]: 236). Baker and Nelson point out that this becomes especially apparent when one considers the oxymoronic formulation "Civil War," which hides the decidedly uncivil failure to remark the death and dismemberment of the "scores of thousand who were not on the muster rolls—such as blacks trying to leave plantations and both blacks and whites who died as a result of guerilla actions":

Thus "The South" is thick with civilly disappeared history, the history of indigenous, black, Latino, and Asian laborers and their families, their joys and suffering largely effaced in this history of the Civil, under the mark of "The South" (*Ibid.*, 236).

70. Barrett, Introduction, *The Jungle*, xxiv.

71. Josiah Strong, *Our Country: Its Possible Future and Its Present Crisis*. (Rev. ed; New York: Baker & Taylor, 1891): 61. Strong first published this text in 1885 and published the second edition (from which I cite) after the 1890 census, incorporating some of the new census figures in the text, particularly when discussing immigration.

72. *Ibid.*, 92.

73. *Ibid.*, 89.

74. In my dissertation, I argue that Strong's self-enclosed body metaphor for understanding the nation gains some of its power precisely by submerging or repressing the question of elimination (J. Michael Duvall, "Processes of Elimination: Waste and Wasting in American Literature at the Turn of the Twentieth Century" [Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, 2003]). Elimination resurfaces in the well-worn trope of the immigrant-as-garbage, or "wretched refuse" as Emma Lazarus, in a recuperative mode, has it in "The New Colossus" (Lazarus, 12).