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War as Proletarian Bildungsroman in Upton Sinclair's *Jimmie Higgins*

You workers in Ohio, enlisted in the greatest cause ever organized in the interest of your class, are making history today in the face of threatening opposition of all kinds—history that is going to be read with profound interest by coming generations.

– Eugene V. Debs, Speech in Canton, 16 June 1918

As the First World War wore on, collective acts of insubordination such as draft evasions, mass surrenders, desertions, strikes, and outright mutinies became increasingly common in all of the belligerent countries.¹ On the side of the Allies, the French Army Mutiny of 1917 is probably the best-known example of how the war experience imbued common soldiers with a growing political awareness.² Following yet another disastrous attack on the Aisne in April 1917, some 40,000 troops refused to be used up as cannon fodder. Word spread and soon fifty-four divisions, or nearly half the French army, disobeyed orders. Untold thousands deserted. The demands of the soldiers were diverse, ranging from an end to the offensive war, to immediate peace negotiations, to bread for wives and children, to a general improvement of living conditions. Initially, the French High Command attempted to crush the widening insurrection through courts-martial and on-the-spot executions. But as public support for the rebellious soldiers mounted and civilian protestors took to the streets of Paris, General Neville was hurriedly replaced by General Pétain, who managed to appease the troops by negotiating concessions.³

Although the French Mutiny of 1917, unlike the Petrograd Uprising of the same year or the Kiel Naval Rebellion of 1918, did not escalate into a full-scale revolution, it demonstrated that Western democracies too had become exceedingly vulnerable in the face of a rising wartime discontent among the masses. Accordingly, leftist writers such as Henri Barbusse were quick to capitalize on the signs of impending

social revolt. In *Clarét* (1919; translated as *Light*, 1919), his second and in America largely unknown Great War novel, Barbusse seeks to preserve the potentially explosive memory of the mutiny by using it as a backdrop for the politicization of his protagonist, Paul Simon.⁴ Plotted as a novel of education, *Clarét* traces Simon's move from passivity and self-indulgent individualism to an awareness of the exploitation of the laboring classes and eventually to radical social action. Near the end of war, an enlightened Simon, much like his creator, vows to devote his life to the propagation of humanitarian and socialist ideals.⁵ Outraged after visiting the new "musée de guerre," designed to venerate "la grande nation" as "le préserver l'ordre est de la liberté," Simon composes his first political pamphlet, "proclaim[ing] the inevitable advent of the universal republic:"

O you people of the world, you the unwearying vanquished of History, I appeal to your justice and I appeal to your anger. Over the vague quarrels which drench the strands with blood, over the plunderers of shipwrecks, over the jetsam and the reefs, and the palaces and monuments built upon sand, I see the high tide coming. Truth is only revolutionary by reason of error's disorder. Revolution is Order.⁶

Dissent, acts of insubordination, and desertions among the troops also figure prominently in the few American WWI novels deemed worthy of critical attention. Two of the main characters in John Dos Passos's *Three Soldiers* (1921), Joe Chrisfield and John Andrews, desert the army and go "underground." Having been thrown into prison for allegedly writing subversive letters, the unnamed protagonist in E. E. Cummings's *The Enormous Room* (1922) bitterly denounces government oppression in a parodistic fashion. And in Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), the desertion of 400,000 Italian troops, following the bloody defeat at Caporetto, triggers Frederic Henry's sudden recognition that he "was through" with war and that "it was not [his] show any more."⁷ But unlike in a number of European *romans de guerre* such as Barbusse's *Clarét* or Fritz Unruh's *Opfergang* (1919; translated as *Way of Sacrifice*, 1928), where the veteran emerges politically radicalized from the trenches, in these American war novels, acts of rebelliousness remain highly individualistic and subsequently dilute rather than distill possibilities for collective political action. Denied the sort of self-affirming heroism that reconstitutes Henry Fleming in the final chapters of Stephen Crane's *A Red Badge of Courage* (1895), for this generation of adventures doughboys, the "great show" proves to be one, protracted letdown. As a pattern, potentially explosive anger gives way to paralyzing disillusionment.

Perhaps understandably, then, one finds ample critical discussions of how young American soldier poets grew increasingly despondent, became alienated from “a botched civilization,” and eventually fashioned “the new literary tools the modern experience demanded.”⁸ What has gotten lost amidst these efforts to establish the literariness of American WWI writings, though, are ostensibly pedestrian literary representations of the more mundane but no less onerous, tumultuous, and conflicted working class experience on the homefront. “Alone among the combatants in WWI, Americans located the Great War’s significance, not in the trenches of France, but on the homefront,” historian Jeanette Keith notes.⁹ Yet one rarely, if ever, comes across critical considerations of literary works that depict the fierce labor unrests which rattled wartime America and represent strategies of labor opposition to the war “over there.” In an effort to call attention to alternative constructions of the modern memory of WWI, this article scrutinizes the ways in which Upton Sinclair’s *Jimmie Higgins* (1919) represents, reshapes, and memorializes the material as well as the ideological battles fought by and within the American laboring classes. Following a brief comparison of adaptations of the Bildungsroman format in war novels by self-consciously modernist and self-consciously Proletarian writers, this article offers a contextualized reading of *Jimmie Higgins*. As we shall see, the novel registers post-war disillusionment and projects a sense of modernist irony. But similar to Barbusse’s *Clarét* and Unruh’s *Opfergang*, Sinclair’s Proletarian Bildungsroman transcends a modernist concern for the individual by striving to create a collective working class memory of specific wartime conflicts and abuses that reasserts the need for concerted political action and social change. Challenging simplistic assessments according to which a hitherto “innocent” nation allowed itself to be cajoled into “The Great American Crusade,”¹⁰ *Jimmie Higgins* not only bears witness to persistent war resentment from “below,” but also testify to the possibility of oppositional activism during periods of severe government repression.¹¹ Begun in 1918 and originally conceived as a pro-war propaganda tool, Upton Sinclair’s *Jimmie Higgins* aims to deflect wartime labor dissatisfaction and to counter a radical rhetoric that equated the world war abroad with the class war at home. But despite its patriotic overtones, in representing the drawn-out conversion of the titular hero from labor activist to war hero to defender of the Bolshevik Revolution, *Jimmie Higgins* provides a forum for radical leftist positions that otherwise could not have been voiced and that by the end of novel appear to be in some measure confirmed.

I

Critics have described “the war novel as Bildungsroman” in terms of the young hero’s accelerated quest for wisdom. Almost invariably the hero is said to enter the story in a state of romantic innocence or blissful ignorance until the experience of warfare initiates him into the realities of modern life. “The process of education, irrevocable acts or irreversible decisions, instances of initiation and maturation, and moments of revelation,” Peter G. Jones writes, mark the American war novel from “Crane’s classic tale” to Dos Passos’s *Three Soldiers* to Joseph Heller’s *Catch-22*.¹²

In most “paradigmatic” novels of the First World War, the outcome of this wartime education is the individual’s realization that he is pitted against a cruel, debased, and at bottom absurd society. His direct confrontations with trench life, mechanized warfare, mass slaughter, and severe bodily as well as mental injury teach him not only that romantic notions of heroism are no longer tenable, but also that adversity, subjugation, and isolation are part of the universal human condition.¹³ “It seems to me,” John Andrews reflects toward the end of *Three Soldiers*, “that human society has been always that, and perhaps will be always that: organizations growing and stifling individuals, and individuals revolting hopelessly against them, and at last forming new societies to crush the old societies and becoming slaves again in their turn...”¹⁴ Hitting a similar note, a wizened-up Frederic Henry contemplates in *A Farewell to Arms*, “The world breaks every one and afterward many are strong at the broken places. But those that will not break it kills. It kills the very good and the very gentle and the very brave impartially. If you are none of these you can be sure it will kill you too but there will be no special hurry.”¹⁵

Obviously, such modernist adaptations of the 19th-century Bildungsroman form fly into the face of traditional definitions that “consider an accommodation between the individual and society an essential characteristic of the genre.”¹⁶ In his reading of what is widely considered the quintessential modern Bildungsroman—Thomas Mann’s *Der Zauberberg* (1924; translated as *The Magic Mountain*, 1924)—Martin Swales therefore recognizes a distinctive loss of all teleological underpinnings, noting that at the end of the novel there is not harmony but chaos and violence. Written “under the impact of the 1914-1918 war,” *The Magic Mountain* portrays Hans Castrop’s seven-year-long “journey into self-knowledge,” only to dismantle his dreamlike “vision of the wholeness of man” as he “finds himself plunged into the holocaust of the First World War.”¹⁷ Ultimately, Mann’s Hans Castrop, akin to Dos Passos’s John Andrews and Hemingway’s Frederic Henry, is trapped in a static world of the always-the-same, which reflects the stalemate on the Western Front and underscores the basic irony of his existence. As Georg Lukács

has argued in his betimes acrimonious critique of literary modernism, “the only ‘development’ in this literature is the gradual revelation of the human condition. Man is now what he has always been and always will be.”¹⁸

The novel of education, at least in its modernist application to the war novel, becomes what Swales terms a “parodistic” Bildungsroman that mocks society’s false hopes in boundless progress, democratization, and applied science.¹⁹ In doing so, however, the war novel as modern Bildungsroman tends to register changing social formations only insofar as they stifle or enslave the individual and reconfirm an always already limited human potential for concrete political action. Hence, in Mann’s *The Magic Mountain* and in Hemingway’s *A Farewell to Arms* the Great War is stripped of all its specificities, of all its historical causes and consequences. Turned into a universal metaphor of man’s existentialist struggle, the war appears to have “always been there” and “will go on and on” so that “[n]othing will ever happen.” No one is more aware of this elementary stasis than the “peasant,” whose inborn “wisdom,” lies in the fact that “he is defeated from the start.” Passive endurance is the peasant’s and, by extension, humanities unalterable fate, *A Farewell to Arms* posits, because no matter how “much courage” people bring “to this world the world has to kill them to break them.”²⁰

Generically, the modern or “parodistic” Bildungsroman “impl[ies] a restriction to the private sphere, to the inner life of the individual, his psyche, where the epoch and society play only the role of background and foil.”²¹ Consequently, in *Three Soldiers* and *A Farewell to Arms* the impact of war and its outcomes remain confined within the limits of the protagonist’s personal experience. “For Andrews war becomes a crime against the individual,” Stanley Cooperman notes, whereas for “Frederic Henry war becomes a threat to existence, virility, and love.”²² And although these “antiheroes” of the modern Bildungsroman attempt to devise “alternatives beyond withdrawal,” their individualistic actions, gestures, rituals only call renewed attention to the futility of man’s solitary struggle against the powers that be, further stressing the “Oh, wearisome condition of humanity,” lamented by the English Renaissance poet Fulke Greville.²³ “Now Catherine will die,” a fatalistic Frederic Henry thinks as he mulls over the absurdity of human existence:

That was what you did. You died. You did not know what it was about. You never had time to learn. They threw you in and told you the rules and the first time they caught you off base they killed you. Or they killed you gratuitously like Aymo. Or gave you syphilis like Rinaldi. But they killed you in the end. You could count on that.²⁴

That the (anti)hero's quasi-existentialist isolation, which Georg Lukács with reference to Martin Heidegger describes as a modernist sense of "thrownness-into-being (*Geworfenheit ins Dasein*)," is not so much a passive reflection as an active creation of modern postwar realities becomes clear when one takes a look at Upton Sinclair's *Jimmie Higgins*.²⁵ The adaptation of the Bildungsroman genre in this war novel works against the seemingly inevitable isolation of the representative (anti)hero. For even though the novel's protagonist also ultimately retreats into himself, the narrative entangles him and makes him part of an ongoing historical movement toward liberation from servitude. In *Jimmie Higgins*, like in most Proletarian Bildungsromans, the protagonists' "espousal of—or at least growth toward—revolutionary class consciousness embodies in microcosm the change that is occurring and must continue to occur on a larger scale, in the working class."²⁶ Before the backdrop of WWI and its attendant surge of reactionary nationalism, however, the working class protagonist finds himself especially hard pressed to (a) sustain and (b) act upon his revolutionary class consciousness in a consistent manner. Cajoled into believing that the fight against German Junkerdom will erase all class distinctions and miraculously democratize American society, Jimmie Higgins temporarily loses his identity-giving working class consciousness and becomes a soulless henchman for the reactionary forces. When history finally catches up with him on the icy planes of Siberia, forlorn Jimmie comes to the woeful realization that he has nearly betrayed himself, his comrades, and the revolution. The final image of his self-punitive martyrdom serves future generations both as a warning and an inspiration to carry on the inescapable class struggle.

Grounded in a Marxist view of history, Sinclair's adaptation of the traditional Bildungsroman format in *Jimmie Higgins* clearly goes beyond the concern for the individual and his tragic or ironic fate. For it is not the protagonist's personal failures and disappointments but the struggle "to correlate his/her particularity with the destiny of his/her class" that provides the central focus of these two stories.²⁷ According to John M. Reilly, "the subject matter of the [Proletarian] novel is not only individuals, but specific groups, represented by individuals acting in opposition to other groups, and, within the conflict, constituting history."²⁸ Applied to the Proletarian WWI novel—at least as represented by *Jimmie Higgins*—Reilly's observation must be expanded to include the ideological battles that took place *within* the working class and its leadership.

More than any other event, the Great War brought into ever sharper focus the ideological split of the aging labor movement into an accommodationist right-wing under AFL president Samuel Gompers and a confrontational left-wing

under SPA president Eugen V. Debs as well as “Big” Bill Haywood, nominal head of the IWW.²⁹ As patriotic sentiments swept across the nation and the Wilson government implement a carrot-and-stick approach toward labor, not only the strategic aims of unionists and socialists, but the very future of the entire movement appeared to be at stake. To Sinclair, writing, as it were, amid the fog of war, these internal battles between right- and left-wingers provided the central point of references, as he wrestled to map out an appropriate working class response to the Great War. As he told his readership when the first installment of *Jimmie Higgins* appeared in October 1918, “You cannot understand what is now happening in the world unless you understand what Socialism is and what sort of people Socialists are.”³⁰ Sinclair’s ambitious aim, then, was not merely to chart out *Jimmie Higgins* gradual conversion from misguided labor “propagandist” to staunch patriot, but to provide—from his own rather isolated standpoint of a pro-war Socialist—a detailed account of the conflicts within the labor movement concerning questions of internationalism vs. nationalism, strike vs. negotiation, revolution vs. reform, et cetera. And it is precisely this ambitiousness to reproduce the multitude of conflicting positions within the Socialist movement that not only lays bare contradictions within Sinclair’s own position, but along the way also undermines some of the conservative tendencies inherent in the classic Bildungsroman genre by stressing conflict over accommodation.

Foregoing, moreover, the traditional Bildungsroman’s drive toward closure, Sinclair has Jimmie Higgins realize too late that his embrace of jingoistic patriotism has seriously undermined the working class struggle for emancipation. Desperately seeking redemption, Jimmie assumes the role of isolated martyr. But in sharp contrast to *Three Soldiers* and *A Farewell to Arms*, the personal defeat of the titular hero in *Jimmie Higgins* does not signify “a universal *condition humaine*.” Instead, the novel emphasizes that “the fate of...individuals is characteristic of certain human types in specific social or historical circumstance,” because “beside and beyond their solitariness, the common life, the strife and togetherness of other human beings, goes on as before.”³¹ The time might not have been ripe, but the conflicts over and struggles for emancipation will continue, *Jimmie Higgins* persists, since individual experiences of abuse and defeat seep into the collective consciousness or memory of the working class, thereby heightening the urge for social change. Portends the omniscient narrator in *Jimmie Higgins*:

Poor, mad Jimmie Higgins will never again trouble his country; but Jimmie’s friends and partisan, who know the story of his experience, cannot be thus lightly dismissed by society. In the industrial troubles which are threatening the

great democracy of the West, there will appear men and women animated by a fierce and blazing bitterness.³²

Notably, the tactics employed by the thus “animated” working “men and women” in the “industrial troubles” to come, will be derived directly from the late war experience. Drawing conspicuous parallels between world war and class war, the narrator observes with respect to Jimmie’s last and lonely stand against his own “American troops, . . . made ready to join in . . . warfare upon organized workingmen:”

Just as once Jimmie Higgins had found himself in a strategic position where he had held up the whole Hun army and won the battle of Château-Thierry, so now he found himself in a position of equal strategic importance—on the line of communication of the Allied armies attacking Russia, and threatening to cut the line and force the armies into retreat! (280).

The protagonist’s espousal of a rebellious course of action, then,—fleeting, haphazard, incomplete, conflicted, and incongruous as it may be—forebodes a growing commitment and sophistication among the working class as a whole to bring about social change, as the memory of both past failures and gross abuses is preserved.

II

In July of 1917, the radical *International Socialist Review* carried an article by one Jack Phillips that reported on strikes and antiwar protest inside the German Empire and discussed the possibility of a worldwide labor revolt. The article ended with a somber reflection on how an adventure-hungry working stiff is duped into war by official propaganda:

“See the World,” said the recruiting sign. And the hungry young workman eager for adventure walked in, passed the exam, and became an enlisted man in the United States army. Now he is with Pershing’s corps on the western battlefield. They will be shot off the horizon and form a pyramid of skulls. They will never understand just what the recruiting sign meant by “See the World.”³³

One month later, the mainstream *Chicago Evening Post* printed a staunch pro-war poem, entitled “*The Four Brothers*,” in which a Whitmanesque narrator sings the gathering workmen-troops off into battle with the German Empire by glorifying the national memory of the Civil War:

Cowpunchers, cornhuskers, shopmen, ready in khaki;
 Ballplayers, lumberjacks, ironworkers, ready in khaki;
 A million, ten million, singing, “I am ready.”
 This the sun looks on between two seaboards,
 In the land of Lincoln, in the Land of Grant and Lee.

I heard one say, “I am ready to be killed.”
 I heard another say, “I am ready to be killed.”
 O sunburned clear-eyed boys!
 I stand on sidewalks and you go by with drums and guns and
 bugles,
 You—and the flag!
 And my heart tightens, a fist of something feels my throat
 When you go by,
 You on the kaiser hunt, you and your faces saying, “I am ready
 to be killed.”³⁴

Both pieces had sprung from the pen of Carl Sandburg.

Sandburg’s commitments—similar to those of Upton Sinclair and Jack London—were manifestly split during the war. Convinced that the autocratic Hohenzollern regime represented a dangerous anachronism, he did not hesitate to crank out jingoistic pieces for the government, backed by the conservative Alliance for Labor and Democracy. Yet unwilling to abandon faith in more direct and radical labor action on the homefront, Sandburg continued writing for the antiwar *International Socialist Review*. Under the pseudonym Jack Phillips, he supplied scathing critiques of the government’s persecution of the International Workers of the World, “argued that the war should be supported not for patriotic or any other conventional reasons but because it promised to lead to a worldwide working-class revolution, and saw the overthrow of the czar by Russian workers in the spring of 1917 and then the Bolshevik revolution of October as portents of the wondrous world to come.”³⁵

Though Sandburg’s personality split may have been an extreme case, what Philip R. Yannella has called the poet’s “zigzags in wartime” are quite characteristic

of the political and ideological turmoil that had gripped many American intellectuals on the left. For example, in a 1915 letter to the Committee of the Anti-Enlistment League, Upton Sinclair insisted that he “hates militarism and all the trappings and symbols of militarism,” while pledging his unwavering support for the allies “until the last German soldier has been driven back from the soil of France, Belgium, and Russia.”³⁶ Three years later, Sinclair advertised his novel-in-progress, *Jimmie Higgins*, to Wilson’s chief propagandist, George Creel, as a literary means “to win and hold the radical part of labor,” but at the same time issued an angry open letter to the President, highlighting the absurdity of “helping to win democracy abroad, [while] we are losing it at home.”³⁷ Similarly, in a letter to John Malmesbury Wright, an aging Jack London expressed his belief that “War is a silly nonintellectual function performed by men who are themselves only partly civilized,” while elsewhere proclaiming the purifying effects of war. “The world war,” London wrote in his comment to *Pathe Exchange* (1916), “has redeemed [humanity] from the fat and gross materialism of generations of peace, and caught mankind up in a blaze of the spirit.”³⁸

During the early decades of the 20th century radical American literature was marked by an “equivocal commitment” to the tenets of international socialism and world revolution.³⁹ Such “equivocal commitments” on the radical literary front undoubtedly replicated many of the conflicts and contradictions within the Socialist movement as a whole. “While the socialist movement contained any number of tendencies and a variety of factions,” writes Francis Robert Shor, “it was riddled throughout with tensions over ethnicity and class and plagued by debates over evolution versus revolution, organizational alignments, and political versus direct action strategies and tactics.”⁴⁰ Hence, although both Upton Sinclair and Jack London had greeted the initial promise of the Russian Revolution of 1905 with enthusiasm, they grew increasingly fearful about the outlook of unchecked mob rule.⁴¹ Large-scale labor uprisings and revolts might furnish the historically mandated solution within backward countries such as Russia and Germany, they came to believe, but could prove disastrous within “advanced democracies” such as the United States. Alarmed, moreover, by the steady influx of foreign-born radicals, who, not assuaged by the experience of American democracy, might push labor down a violent path, many native-born intellectuals on the left advocated an “evolutionary socialism,” which was firmly rooted in the ideals of Franklin, Jefferson, and Lincoln and would mold the heterogeneous laboring masses into a distinctly American working class.⁴² And even younger American left-wing radicals like John Reed, Homberger argues, clung to the idea of American exceptionalism, according to which “the specific and exceptional

features of American economic and political life largely exempted America from the Comintern theses on the imminent collapse of capitalism in the West.⁴³

As a result, Socialist rhetoric of impending class warfare, tempered by the notion of American exceptionalism and kept in check through a strong dose of Nativist imagery, permeates quite a few literary responses to the Great War from the American left. Sandburg's successive invocations of "fighters gaunt with the red band of labor's sorrow" and "the pen of Tom Jefferson, the ashes of Abraham Lincoln" in *The Four Brothers*, exemplify attempts by left-leaning practitioners of literature to bolster the patriotism of the working classes so as to redirect its growing wartime discontent against a common enemy on the outside.⁴⁴ Karl Marx's "specter of communism," it seemed, had been temporarily subdued by the ghost of nationalism.

The apparent incongruities of many such statements by American left-wing literati did not go unnoticed, of course. Remarked the maverick commentator Randolph Bourne—yet another one-time Socialist—in June of 1917: "And when they declared for the war they showed how thin was the intellectual veneer of their socialism. For they called us in terms that might have emanated from any bourgeois journal to defend democracy and capitalist civilizations that socialists had been fighting for decades."⁴⁵ Bourne's sour remarks, to be sure, were directed for the most part against a relatively small intellectual circle within the Socialist Party of America (SPA), not the party as a whole. Because unlike its faltering counterparts in Germany, France, England, and Russia, the SPA maintained its antiwar stance even more vigorously after Wilson had urged Congress to endorse his declaration of war against Germany, thereby exposing the hollowness of his popular reelection campaign slogan, "he has kept us out of the war." During the hastily convened emergency meeting at St. Louis on April 7, 1917, the 193 SPA delegates overwhelmingly adopted the party's majority report, declaring,

The Socialist Party of the United States in the present grave crisis reaffirms its allegiance to the principle of internationalism and working class solidarity the world over, and proclaims its unalterable opposition to the war just declared by the government of the United States.⁴⁶

Although the "majority report" stopped short of calling for a general strike, it promised "an even more vigorous prosecution of the class struggle during wartime" and pledged "continuous active and public opposition to the war," including,

unyielding opposition to all proposed legislation for military and industrial conscription... vigorous resistance to all reactionary measures, such as censorship of the press and mails, restriction of the right of free speech, assemblage and organization, or compulsory arbitration and limitation of the right to strike.⁴⁷

In addition, the delegates endorsed an “extension of the campaign of education among the workers to organize them into strong, class-conscious and closely unified political and industrial organization.”⁴⁸

More than anything else, it was this call for a massive education campaign among the workers that prompted Upton Sinclair to write a Proletarian Bildungsroman of reeducation that would—“in the most easily assimilable form”—showcase the representative protagonist’s gradual conversion from labor activist to radical antiwar agitator to steadfast patriot.⁴⁹ Jimmie Higgins’ conversion to a patriotic pro-war stance was to undermine calls by the “Candidate” (Sinclair’s tag for Eugene V. Debs) to “let them organize and establish their own machinery of information and propaganda” (22). Even before America’s official war entry, dissenting pro-Ally Socialists such as Upton Sinclair, John Spargo, Phelps Stokes, Charles Edward Russell, and Jack London had started a counter-education campaign of their own. Publishing in the *Socialist Party Bulletin* and the *New York Call*, they contended “that the proper aim of Socialist world-politics at the present time is an alliance of the politically advanced nations for the defense of the democratic principle thruout the world” and urged all Socialists to abandon the fight against military preparedness.⁵⁰ When the majority report was ratified during the emergency convention in St. Louis, numerous dissidents—among them Sinclair—left the party, arguing that the SPA had become “un-American” and could therefore no longer represent the best interest of the working class. The predicted mass exodus of “rank-and-file” members did not occur, however.

Peter Buitenhuis has chalked up growing pro-war sentiments among American left-wing intellectuals and writers “as a yet another victory for British propaganda in the United States,” concluding that “in supporting the war and himself disseminating Allied propaganda, Sinclair indirectly contributed to the destruction of the Socialist Party in the United States and to the delaying of many of the social reforms for which he had fought all his life.”⁵¹ In 1926 Sinclair seemed to have admitted as much himself when he declared “that if at the beginning of 1917 I had known what I know today, I would have opposed the war and gone to jail with the pacifist radicals.”⁵²

Sinclair's belated pacifism aside, it remains noteworthy that *Jimmie Higgins*, though conceived as a pro-war propaganda novel, not only ends with an embittered denunciation of American military interventionism, but also provides a detailed record of the political struggles within the Socialist Party that constantly challenges and undercuts the work's dominant ideological thrust.⁵³ In the process of representing the titular hero's slow conversion to patriotic war doctrines, the novel provides an extensive platform for the arguments of the very "radical part of labor" Sinclair hoped to "win and hold." As shall shortly be shown in greater detail, while the narrator's interventions seek to mold the represented proletarian discourses into one great master narrative, the oppositional discourses resists such authoritative assimilation attempts and persistently slip away from it. The result is a heteroglot text full of contradictions.⁵⁴ Eventually, the novel's ideological edifice collapses under the weight of its own contradictions, when Sinclair, outraged about American military intervention in Siberia, has Jimmie die the martyr's death at the hand of a reactionary United States Army. Jimmie, to be certain, ends up as an ironic hero, but one whose death inextricably links the promise of American democracy with the defense of the Bolshevik revolution.

III

In line with Sinclair's intention to provide a snapshot of the divided labor movement as a whole, Jimmie Higgins' education proceeds along several intertwined pathways, leading him to associate with a chapter of divided "bona-fide Socialists" from various ethnic backgrounds, to spend an enlightening afternoon with the charismatic Candidate," and to join a band of radical "wobblie" organizers. Moreover, naïve Jimmie Higgins becomes tangled up in the nefarious schemes of German spies, makes friends with a patriotic Civil War veteran (who tries to teach him what it means to be a "true American") and, while recuperating in a British "war-hospital," even lectures the British Monarch, "Mr. King," on how to "get rid o' the profit-system" (209). Jimmie's chance encounter with the contrite and meanwhile thoroughly reformed heir to Leesville's "Empire Machine Shop" in the trenches was to finalize his education, affording him a glimpse into "the other side of the problem of riches and poverty" (243). Counter to the author's original plans, however, Jimmie Higgins' last mentor becomes "a little Jew" from New York, who has joined the Bolsheviks and once again radicalizes him in defense of the new Soviet and brings him face to face with Colonel Nye, an infamous Colorado "coal-strike" crusher who "had occupied himself in turning loose machine-guns on tent-colonies filled with women and children" (252, 274). The short "democracy of pain" turns out to be a chimera, as Jimmie must realize

that the techniques of oppression employed in the war abroad closely mirror those perfected in the class war at home (240).

In 1909, Upton Sinclair had defended his position that future wars could be prevented by sticking to the core principles of socialism; namely, “international solidarity and universal brotherhood.” “We cannot depart from it in any detail, nor under any circumstance,” Sinclair stated unequivocally, “without ceasing to be Socialists and abandoning our cause.”⁵⁵ A mere nine years later, writing *Jimmie Higgins*, he apparently tried to achieve that which by his own account was impossible. As Sinclair was at pains to explain in a letter to John Reed, this abrupt turnabout had sprung from his newfound insight that the “German menace” had to be subdued before “a free political democracy anywhere else in the world” could arise. At the same time, though, he harbored no illusions as to the “predatory” character of “American capitalism” and the corruption of “American politics.”⁵⁶ His challenge in writing *Jimmie Higgins*, then, consisted of maintaining the fundamental justness of America’s “war to make the world save to democracy” without ceasing to denounce the “predatory” character of American capitalism and the blatant deficiencies of the current democratic system. Obviously, this proved to be increasingly problematic, as US involvement in the war abroad not only curtailed democratic freedoms at home, but also highlighted ethnic divisions, aggravated domestic labor disputes, and, in the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution, even raised the fearsome specter of a violent social revolution.

The reader first meets Jimmie Higgins right around the outbreak of the European War in fictional “Leesville, U.S.A.,” where he puts in twelve-hour workdays at “old man” Granitch’s “Empire Machine Shops.” A rank-and-file member of the local chapter of the Socialist Party, Jimmie quickly finds himself embroiled in the divisive debates concerning the impact and consequences the war “over there” has on workers “over here.” Although according to official party line “the fountain-head of the war was world-capitalism, clamoring for markets, seeking to get rid of its surplus products,” it becomes apparent that the local chapter is split on the issue along ethnic lines (21). “[O]n the one side the Germans and the Austrians, the Russian Jews, the Irish, and the religious pacifists; on the other side two English glass-blowers, a French waiter, and several Americans, who, because of college education or other snobbish weakness, were suspected of tenderness for John Bull” (51).

The narrator’s sympathies lie with the latter faction, ably represented by the patriotic parlor Socialists Dr. Service and Lawyer Norwood. Cast as the voices of reason and moderation, in party meeting after party meeting Comrades Dr. Service and Lawyer Norwood seek to instill the workers with a faith in the American democratic system, arguing that it is necessary “to forgo revolutionary

agitation, until the Kaiser had been put out of business” (146). Recalcitrant Jimmie Higgins, however, still imbued with his creator’s erstwhile faith in “international solidarity and universal brotherhood,” firmly sides with the former faction of self-declared “anti-nationalists” (47). To him, the experience of continued repression and war-time profiteering outweighs the President’s lofty “appeals for justice and democracy” shrouded in “the beautiful language of idealism” (119). Contradicting Wilson’s vision of America as an essentially classless society, the class consciousness of Jimmie and his fellow workers actually increases as the war abroad sharpens the economic conflicts at home.

Initially, the switch from peace- to wartime production mollifies rank-and-file opposition to the war as employment opportunities abound. “Wages went up, almost for the asking; never did the unskilled man have so much money in his pocket, while the man who could pretend to any skill at all found himself in the plutocratic class” (39). But soon it becomes apparent that only the factory owners and “speculators” profit from the “boom conditions” (96). Inflation shoots through the roof and

...men discovered the worm in this luscious war-fruit; prices were going up almost as fast as wages—in some places even faster. The sums you had to pay to the landlord surpassed belief... Food was scarce and of poor quality; before long you found yourself begin asked to pay six cents for a hunk of pie or a cup of coffee—and then seven cents, and then ten (39).

Before long, “the shops were seething with discontent” and Jimmie finds himself at the forefront of those who call for “strike!, strike!” (57-58).

In the following chapters, Sinclair shows how the government’s increasingly ruthless interventions on behalf of the “shop owners” play into the hand of Socialist antiwar agitators, who denounce the war as a scheme to further enrich the capitalists and to “rivet forever on the people of America” a “system of militarism and suppression” (147). Predictably, the strike at the Empire Machine Shop is crushed before it can gather momentum. The National Guard moves in, Jimmie and his comrades are viciously beaten and thrown into jail. Upon release, Jimmie and his fellow strike leaders find themselves “blacklisted” not just in Leesville but in nearby Hubbardstown and all the surrounding communities as well. Struggling to eek out a living by performing odd jobs, Jimmie loses the last shred of hope in the promise of American democracy. Having become too familiar with “the ways of American wage-slavery, euphemistically referred to as ‘industrial serfdom,’ “ Jimmie Higgins’ “sense of loyalty” is no longer “to his

country, but to his class which had been exploited, hounded, driven from pillar to post" (91, 119). Society's failure to care for those who produce its wealth, Sinclair underscores, has turned Jimmie and his fellow "wage-slaves" into *vaterlandslose Gesellen*—lads without a fatherland—whose shared experience of exploitation under international capitalism render notions of citizenship nominal.

Meanwhile, the seeds of armed rebellion begin to sprout. Under the influence of "Wild Bill," a radical Socialist of Irish extraction, Jimmie contemplates to renounce his pacifist stance in favor of taking up arms in the class war: "There were several things you could say. War gave the workers guns, and them to use them; how would it be if some day they turned these guns about and fought their own battles" (48)? In the wake of the worker's uprising in Petrograd as well as Wilson's post-election efforts to "sweep the country into war," Sinclair shows, such radical thoughts begin to take a wider hold among the laboring class (117). During a "great mass-meeting in celebration of the Russian Revolution," Comrade Smith, "editor of the 'Worker,'" draws a "clamour of applause from the audience" when he announces:

I am not a pacifist, I am not opposed to war—it is merely that I purpose to choose the war in which I fight. If they try to put a gun into my hands, I shall not refuse to take it—not much, for I and my fellow wage-slaves have long wished for guns! But I shall use my own judgment as to where I aim that gun—whether at enemies in front of me, or at enemies behind me—whether at my brothers, the workingmen of Germany, or at my oppressors, the exploiters of Wall Street, their newspaper lackeys and military martinets. (121)

Apparently, the danger Sinclair perceive here—namely that America's engagement in the world war may trigger an uncontrollable class war on the homefront—was indeed quite tangible. For in the years leading up to America's war entry, Smith's militant rhetoric resounded in the popular verse and prose of many IWW propagandists. Seeking to demonstrate the folly of allowing class loyalties to be supplanted by national loyalties, the IWW journal *Solidarity*, for example, ran a poem that admonished its readers in no uncertain terms to: "Unite! unite! for your own fight / You slaves of shop and mills, / How much better far such battles are / Than all the streaming ways of war / Where slaves fight slaves to kill."⁵⁷

To Sinclair, it seems, such talk of impending class warfare posed a challenge to his notion of an evolutionary socialism that grows out of the American radical

tradition and draws on images of Jeffersonian agrarianism, Jacksonian leveling, John Brown anti-slavery, and Lincoln Republicanism. Thus Sinclair attempts to style Jimmie into a homegrown, agrarian revolutionary by sending him “back to the bosom of his ancient Mother [Nature]” (92). Working as a farmhand, “six miles out in the country,” the “little Socialist” Jimmie regains some of his old “cheerfulness” as “all summer long he ploughed and harrowed and hoed, he tended horses and cows and pigs and chickens, and drove to town with farm-truck to be sold” (92). Most importantly, though, it is during his stint at the farm that he meets “old Peter Drew,” a jovial farmer who “had been in the first battle of Bull Run, and had fought with the Army of Northern Virginia all the way to Richmond” (93). The setting for Jimmie’s incipient Americanization is appropriately picturesque: resting “under the shade of an elm tree by the kitchen-door,” Peter Drew tells Jimmie of bygone days and lectures him on the historical achievements of his country. Impressed by the “kind, gentle, generous” manner of the Civil War veteran, “little by little” Jimmie senses “that there might be such a thing as the soul of America” and begins to wonder if “[p]erhaps there was really more to the country than Wall Street speculators and grafting politicians, policemen with clubs and militiamen with bayonets to stick into the bodies of workingmen who tried to improve their lot in life” (95).

Eventually, however, the halcyon days of summer, which afford Jimmie a nostalgic glimpse of a rural past that is fundamentally at odds with the 20th-century working class experience, are bound to come to an end. Once again confronted with the grim realities of a twelve-hour workday in the ammunition factory, Jimmie averts his eyes from the residual promise of liberation, represented by old Peter Drew, and looks hopefully toward the emergence of a “newer and broader kind of democracy,” represented by the “workers of Russia” (118). Though still sentimentally attached to the ways of old Peter Drew, who “had made his impression not so much by his arguments, which [he] considered sixty years out of date, as by his personality,” Jimmie cannot sustain his budding Nativist faith in the self-redemptory “American soul.” Reflecting Sinclair’s own sporadic doubts as to the feasibility of reforming the capitalist system from within, Jimmie and Wild Bill decide to “take the road” after the police had shut down yet another Socialist convention and carded off its keynote speakers to prison. Using language reminiscent of his abovementioned letter to Wilson, an obviously indignant Sinclair writes: “The two of them had to stand there and see the fundamental constitutional rights of American citizens set at naught, to see liberty trampled in the dust beneath the boots of a brutal soldiery, to see justice strangled and raped in the innermost shrine of her temple” (131).

Sinclair, it becomes apparent, is not blind to the arguments of the majority of antiwar Socialists, who, pointing to the “suppression of their papers,” wondered aloud about “the use of fighting for Democracy abroad, if you had to sacrifice every particle of Democracy at home in order to win the fight (147)?” Nor does he flinch from explaining how “a social system based upon oppression and knavery” induces the “radical part of labor” to promulgate acts of sabotage and violence (138). Thus, following his retreat into America’s rural past, Jimmie finds himself “in the front-line trenches of the class war” when he joins a band of “wobblies” (139). Just as old Peter Drew had impressed upon him the lessons of the American Revolution and the Civil War, “here around the campfires... the guerillas of the class struggle” instill Jimmie with the communal memory “of their sufferings and their exploits” (139). Although Jimmie, unlike Wild Bill, never fully espouses “wobbly” strategies, he comes to apprehend the suffering and pain that compels the “blanket stiffs” to militant resistance: “These men wandered about from one job to another, at the mercy of the seasons and the fluctuations of industry. They were deprived of votes, and therefore their status of citizens; they were deprived of a chance to organize, and therefore of their status as human beings” (139). Always susceptible to his surroundings, Jimmie not only perceives the elemental “justness of their cause” and learns “the all-precious lesson of Solidarity,” but also begins to identify himself with these outlaws, who at bottom “had kept their gentleness, their sweetness of soul” (140-41). Upon leaving the “wobblies,” Jimmie fancies himself “no longer a blind and helpless victim of a false economic system, but a revolutionist, fully class-conscious, trained in a grim school” (138).

As it turns out, Jimmie’s new life as radical labor agitator in wartime America is fraught with dangers. Labeled a “traitor” and a “criminal” by the “capitalistic press,” Jimmie on several occasions only narrowly escapes the patriotic wrath of vigilante groups, threatening to lynch him on the spot. His wobbly associates fare even worse. Shortly after Jimmie’s departure, local militiaman “surround the camp,” shoot one of the wobblies, and load the rest of them “into half a dozen automobiles” (141). But these and other incidents of governmental oppression—such as the increasingly “fashionable” arrest of Socialists and the jailing of “conscientious objectors”—merely reinforce Jimmie’s resolve to wage “war on the country” (138). Feeling “more than ever a part of society,” Jimmie grows “fairly happy again—happier than he had thought he could ever be” for “he had the greatest thing in the world to live for, the vision of a just and sane society” (144).

“The second revolution, the uprising of the Bolsheviki” in November of 1917 further strengthens Jimmie’s conviction that an international revolution is afoot and that the hour of the American workmen has struck (153). Having joined a “Socialist local in Irontown, still active and determined, in spite of the fact

that its office had been raided by the police,” a jubilant Jimmie celebrates “the first proletarian government in history” with his comrades (151, 153). Anticipating that the “German proletariat” would follow the lead of the “Russian proletariat,” Jimmie and his comrades call for another strike, denouncing “the capitalists, making fervid speeches about patriotism, but refusing to give up the whip-hand over their wage-slaves” (158).

Sinclair might have harbored similar hopes that the Russian Revolution signaled the internal collapse of the European War. But when the German government not only crushed a series of solidarity strikes within its own country, but send its troops deep into the territory of Bolshevik Russia, his view that the “German menace” had to be overcome before “a free political democracy anywhere else in the world” could come to pass, seemed to be reconfirmed. Moreover, Wilson’s overtures toward labor appeared to validate John Spargo’s plan to “seize upon [the war’s] opportunities to extend our collectivist program, and demand the representation of labor upon all boards and governing bodies formed during the war.”⁵⁸

So Jimmie’s conversion from an anti- to pro-war stance occurs at the height of both his class consciousness and his commitment to the international revolution. Stunned by the willingness of the German workers to force the punitive peace treaty of Brest-Litovsk upon their brethren, Jimmie’s mind is “literally torn in half; he found himself, every twenty-four hours of his life, of two absolutely contradictory and diametrically opposite points of view. He would vow destruction to the hated German armies; and then he would turn about and vow destruction to the men at home who were managing the job of destroying the German armies” (157). Cast as a simplistic either-or proposition, Jimmie’s decision to “take the plunge” and to join the army as a machinist is a foregone conclusion, especially since the national war effort appears to miraculously erase all class distinctions and antagonisms at home (176).

Returning to Leesville, Jimmie first encounters a platoon of marching recruits, among whom he spots “a son of Ashton Chalmers, president of the First National Bank of Leesville, being order about and hauled over the coals by an ex-blacksmith’s helper” (162). Next, he learns from his old friends and comrades that “the government sent an arbitration commission” that “broke old Granitch down—made him recognise the union and grant the basic eight hour days” (167). And finally, Comrade Emil, who had already been converted, hands Jimmie a speech by Ashton Chalmers in which he admonishes his fellow bankers: “We face a new era, when labour is coming into its own. If we do not want to be left behind as derelicts, we shall have to get busy and do our part to bring in this new era, which otherwise will come with bloodshed and destruction” (167). Jimmie’s

last impulse to resist “unthinking militarism” is broken when even Comrade Stankewitz, a self-declared “anti-nationalist,” flatly states that “the revolution kin vait” and announces his plans to enlist (159, 177).

Predictably enough, Sinclair’s subsequent descriptions of Jimmie’s heroic feats in the fight against the “Huns” read like a condescending version of Arthur Guy Empey’s best-selling potboiler *Over the Top* (1917). Having witnessed all sorts of German atrocities, including submarine and gas attacks as well as the crucifixion of an English sergeant, Jimmie, volunteering as a motorcycle dispatcher, single-handedly staves off the German advance at Château-Thierry.⁵⁹ Swept away by patriotic frenzy, Jimmie, at least for the moment, forgets both the lessons of the “class-war” he had learned among the wobblies and his earlier fears that “the system of militarism and suppression” might be “riveted forever on the people of America” (147). To him, as well as to Sinclair, the war appears to be a purifying, redemptory event that “would lead to vast changes in the world” (187). Having crushed the Prussian Junkerdom, Jimmie foresees, “the people would nevermore let themselves be hoodwinked and exploited as they had” (187). Brought together in a “Great Crusade” to purge the world of the last autocratic monarchy on the continent, old class distinctions will diminish so that the American people can finish their historical task of building Lincoln’s egalitarian republic.

To underscore this point, Sinclair has Jimmie run into his former nemesis, Lacey Granitch, “young lord of Leesville” (240). What follows is a sentimental scene of class reconciliation in the trenches. War, due to its close association with death, the great equalizer, had meanwhile taught this once “proud, free, rich, and young aristocrat” the meaning of suffering and imparted him with “respect for his fellowmen” (240). Thus, when Jimmie tells him “about starvation and neglect, about overwork and unemployment, about strikes and jails, and manifold oppressions,” Lacey is first “moved” and then begins to recognize the inherent flaws within the capitalistic system (241). Gaining insights into each other’s “side of the problems of riches and poverty,” the two men “from opposite poles of social life” become fast friends (243, 239). In parting, Lacey, apparently on route to becoming a moderate Socialist himself, promises his new friend “to read” all of the recommended “books,” leaving Jimmie with “a vision of the Empire Machine Shops turned over to the control of the workers” (246).

But Jimmie’s wartime education does not end with these sanguine images of peaceful collectivization and amicable class reconciliation. In yet another reversal, the final three chapters of *Jimmie Higgins* seem to bear out Marx’s prediction that “the growth of the international character of the capitalistic regime” will worsen “the mass of misery, slavery, degradation.”⁶⁰ Shipped off to Archangel in Northern Russia, the “little Socialist machinist from Leesville, USA,” who just

a few months ago had changed the “whole course of the world’s history,” must suddenly discover that he been made part of a reactionary coup d’état to turn back the clock of history, when he learns that the goal of “this expedition” was not “to fight the Germans... but to fight the Bolsheviki!” (234).

Recognizing that Wilsonian internationalism had turned into a ruse to bolster the capitalist system of “wage-slavery” worldwide, Jimmie’s subdued hatred for “corrupt politicians” in cahoots with “greedy capitalists” reemerges ever more vehemently, revealing not a little of Sinclair’s own sense of betrayal:

He had swallowed their propaganda, he had filled himself up with their patriotism, he had dropped everything to come and fight for Democracy... And now they had broken their bargain with him, they had brought him here and ordered him to fight working men—just as if he had been a militiaman at home! Democracy indeed! (251)⁶¹

The bitter irony of Jimmie’s situation, fittingly revealed in the “wilderness of ice and desolation” under the “Arctic Circle,” could not be any clearer (252).⁶² Having shut out his class consciousness, ignored his experience, and disregarded the advise of his “irreconcilable” comrades, Jimmie sees his greatest fears come true as “bound and gagged, lashed to the chariot of Militarism” he “was to take part in destroying the first proletarian government in history!” (250).

Before Sinclair has his self-ensnared protagonist “escape” into sheer madness, however, Jimmie makes one last and desperate attempt to reaffirm his dedication to “international working-class solidarity” (281, 256). Painfully aware that the “fight for democracy” had further curtailed his “rights as a citizen,” Jimmie recalls the pain of suffering inflicted upon his class. Stirred by mental recollections of police beatings and unscrupulous “shop owners,” he reassumes his role as a “soldier” in the “class-war that had been going on for ages,” vowing to put up “a struggle” (140, 248). When he meets a radical “little Jew” from New York in Siberia, Jimmie therefore eagerly seizes the offered opportunity to distribute leaflets among the American troops, calling on them to cross the lines and to join the Russian Revolutionary Army’s “march to the victory of freedom” (256).

Jimmie’s revolutionary propaganda falls on fertile ground, but before long his activities raise suspicion and he is thrown into jail. There he comes face-to-face with Colonel Nye, an infamous Colorado coal strike crusher, who subjects Jimmie to the “water cure” and other such tortures regularly employed by American “police-authorities in small town and villages” (270). In spite of horrendous pain, Jimmie does not break and stalwartly refuses to divulge the names of his co-conspirators.

Hung up by his thumbs in a damp prison cell, Jimmie's private suffering takes on a larger, symbolic meaning when he hears a "feeble whisper" shortly before his mind cracks: "You are the revolution. You are social justice, struggling for life in this world. You are humanity, settings its face to the light, striving to reach a new goal, to put behind it an old horror" (269). Jimmie, in short, is turned into a Christ-figure for the Socialist movement.

Jimmie Higgins might have lost his lonely struggle, but his personal suffering, endured on behalf of untold thousands of revolutionaries, becomes an indelible part of the collective working class memory of WWI, Sinclair insists in these final pages. "Not man or men but the struggling, oppressed class itself is the depository of historical knowledge," which "appears as the last enslaved class, as the avenger that completes the task of liberation in the name of generations of the downtrodden," Walter Benjamin would later write in his "Theses on the Philosophy of History."⁶³ Sinclair's view of the transmission of "historical knowledge" toward the end of *Jimmie Higgins* is strikingly similar. The "story of [Jimmie's] experiences" will not just be remembered, the narrator promises, but the shared memory of his representative plight will in due course spark revolutionary action. "There will appear men and women animated by a fierce and blazing bitterness," ready to seize "all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil" and to repay "every drop of blood drawn with the lash" (282). Ending *Jimmie Higgins* with a quote by Lincoln, Sinclair, not unlike Lenin in his three letters to the "American Workers," hitches the stalled wagon of American self-emancipation onto the steam gathering locomotive of the Bolshevik Revolution, which is "leading the way for mankind to a newer and broader kind of democracy" (240).

To be sure, *Jimmie Higgins* might show Upton Sinclair to be one of Lenin's

...craven, half-hearted "socialists" who are thoroughly imbued with the prejudices of bourgeois democracy, who yesterday defended "their" imperialist governments and today limit themselves to platonic "protests" against military intervention in Russia.⁶⁴

Still, all told, Sinclair's misguided foray into jingoistic nationalism might have actually brought him closer to Lenin's view that "bourgeois parliamentarism" can no longer serve the workers' interests in the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution.⁶⁵ Assessing the success of Bolshevik strategies to establish a Russian "dictatorship of the proletariat" in the January 1919 edition of his journal, Sinclair suggested that even within "advanced democracies" such as the USA violent revolutions might

become necessary, unless the government sees to the “speedy and ungrudging concession of the workers’ demands for the full product of their labor and full control of the conditions of their labor.”⁶⁶

“Those Socialist who had been trapped into supporting the President’s war programme would wake up some morning with a fearful dark-brown taste in their mouths,” Jimmie had augured in chapter XIV (148). In the wake of the Palmer Raids and the ensuing Red Scare of 1919, the “dark-brown taste” in Sinclair’s own mouth must have seemed almost unbearable. “Retrospectively,” Mari Jo Buhle judges, 1919 marked “the close of a distinct era in the history of American radicalism.”⁶⁷ And indeed, by most accounts, the worker’s movement lay dormant throughout the 1920s as Harding’s administration returned to a politics of “normalcy” and negated many of the gains labor had achieved during wartime. Moreover, amidst the hedonistic and self-absorbed “flapper culture” of the “Roaring Twenties,” youthful rebelliousness was directed inward and the “story of [Jimmie’s] experiences” quickly fell into oblivion. “Look,” Dos Passos’s John Andrews explains his decision to go A.W.O.L., “it’s a purely personal matter... I just want to get away.”⁶⁸ It took another decade before “men and women animated by a fierce and blazing bitterness” would again rally around the battle flag of socialism that had held such promise yet was so battered during the First World War.

Not quite unexpectedly, it was Upton Sinclair himself who had a hand in rallying the next generation of radical political activists. In 1934, the old muckraker turned politician swept the Democratic primary for governor of California, frightening a comfortably entrenched establishment with the prospect of a Socialist governor of the nation’s most volatile state. Noting how quickly Sinclair’s grass-roots campaign had gathered momentum, the *New York Times* called it “the first serious movement against the profit-system in the United States.” And even though Sinclair, like “the Candidate” Debs before him, was in the end defeated at the ballot box, his bid, as Greg Mitchell points out, both “energized” and “radicalized a whole generation of activists, many of them artists, performers, intellectuals, and writers.”⁶⁹

Notes

1. See, for example, Gloden Dallas & Douglass Gill, *The Unknown Army: Mutinies in the British Army During World War 1* (London: Verso, 1985); Daniel Horn, *The German Naval Mutinies of WWI* (Rutgers UP, 1969); and Leonard Smith, "War and 'Politics': The French Army Mutiny of 1917," *War in History* 2 (1995): 180-201.
2. Leonard V. Smith highlights the French soldiers role in setting the war's moral limits by politicizing them. "By definition, the citizen-soldier will not entirely relinquish the rights of the citizen," Smith writes. "Authority and obedience will be thus constantly subject to questioning and negotiation from below," *Between Mutiny and Obedience: The Case of the French Fifth Infantry Division* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1994), 11.
3. "Leave was doubled, army food was improved. Above all, Pétain conveyed the assurance that there would be no other great offensive," A. J. P. Taylor writes. "In the end, "over a hundred thousand soldiers were court martialled. 23,000 were found guilty, though only 432 were sentenced to death and only 55 were officially shot. A good many more were shot without sentence," *The First World War: An Illustrated History* (New York: Perigee, 1980), 177.
4. In the United States, the first and only English translation of *Clarét* was published in 1919 by the small New York publishing house E. P. Dutton & Company. The novel has long since been out of print.
5. In October of 1919, Henri Barbusse, Raymond, Lefebvre, Paul Vaillant, and other French intellectuals founded "Clarét: The Intellectuals' International," an organization dedicated to putting the arts into the service of pacifism, internationalism, and socialism. The group's first international steering committee included such luminaries as Charles Gide, Thomas Hardy, Upton Sinclair, H.G. Wells, and Stefan Zweig. Closely associated with the Third International, the group split in 1921 when its left-wing under Barbusse endorsed violent revolutionary tactics. Plagued by financial problems, Clarét was officially disabanded in 1923. See Nicole Racine, "The Clarét Movement in France, 1919-1921," *Journal of Contemporary History* 2.2 (1967) 195-208.
6. Henri Barbusse, *Light*, trans. Fitzwater Wray (New York: Dutton, 1919), 273-74, 295.
7. Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* (New York: Scribner, 1995), 248.
8. Ann Douglass, *Terribly Honest: Mongol Manhattan in the 1920s* (New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 1995), 199.
9. Jeanette Keith, "The Politics of Southern Draft Resistance, 1917-1918: Class, Race, and Conscription in the Rural South." *The Journal of American History* 87.4 (2001): 1336.
10. See, for example, Stanley Cooperman's explanation in *WWI and the American Novel* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1967) as well as Meirion and Susie Harries's assessment in *The Last Days of Innocence: America at War, 1917-1918* (New York: Vintage, 1997).
11. For a somewhat dated but concise overview of anti-WWI activism in the United States, see James Weinstein, "Antiwar Sentiment and the Socialist Party, 1917-1918," *Political Science Quarterly* 74.1 (1956) 215-39.
12. Peter G. Jones, *War and the Novelist: Appraising the American War Novel* (Columbia: U of Missouri P, 1976), 21.

13. Stanley Cooperman describes the learning curve in this way: "the antihero enlists for a Cause; becomes bitterly conscious of the futility of the Cause; carries on the job as job until by its own absurdity the Cause rejects the antihero and forces his physical no less than emotional withdrawal," *WWI and the American Novel*, 189.
14. John Dos Passos, *Three Soldiers* (Garden City, NY: Sun Dial Press, 1937), 421.
15. Hemingway, 249.
16. James Hardin, introduction to *Reflection and Action: Essays on the Bildungsroman*, ed. James Hardin (Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 1991), xxi.
17. Martin Swales, "Irony and the Novel: Reflections on the German Bildungsroman," in *Reflection and Action: Essays on the Bildungsroman*, ed. James Hardin (Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 1991), 58.
18. Georg Lukács, *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*, trans. John and Necke Mander (London: Merlin Press, 1963), 21-24. According to Lukács, the development of character in much modernist literature is restricted in two ways. "First, the hero is strictly confined within the limits of his own experience." Secondly, he is depicted "as a solitary being, incapable of meaningful relationships." Applied to *Three Soldiers* and *A Farewell to Arms* this seems to hold true indeed.
19. Swales elucidates, "I have in mind the self-consciousness of the Bildungsroman, its discursiveness and self-reflectivity, its narrative obliqueness, its concern for the elusiveness of selfhood, its dialectical critique of the role of plot in the novel," "Irony and the Novel," 63.
20. Hemingway, 178, 179, 249.
21. Hartmut Steinecke, "The Novel and the Individual: The Significance of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* in the Debate about the Bildungsroman," in *Reflection and Action: Essays on the Bildungsroman*, ed. James Hardin (Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 1991), 94.
22. Cooperman, 175.
23. Cooperman, 175; Baron Brooke Fulke Greville, *The Tragedy of Mustapha* (London: [J. Windet] for N. Butler, 1609).
24. Hemingway, 327.
25. Lukács, 20.
26. Barbara Foley, *Radical Representations: Politics and Form in U.S. Proletarian Fiction* (Durham: Duke UP, 1993), 327.
27. Foley, 359.
28. John M. Reilly, "Images in Gastonia: A Revolutionary Chapter in American Social Fiction," *Georgia Review* 28 (1972): 512.
29. This is without doubt an overly simplistic account of the conflicts within labor during the war. The rifts over wartime policies went right through the AFL, SPA, IWW and many other labor organizations. For a fuller account, see Phillip S. Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the United States, Vol. VII: Labor and WWI, 1914-1918* (New York: International Publishers, 1987).
30. *Upton Sinclair's* 1 (October 1918): 2.
31. Lukács, 20.
32. Upton Sinclair, *Jimmie Higgins: A Story* (Racine, WI: Western Printing, 1919), 282. Hereafter cited parenthetically within the text.

33. Qtd in Phillip Yannella, *The Other Carl Sandburg* (Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 1996), 94.
34. Qtd. in "Sandburg and WWI," ed. Cary Nelson, *Modern American Poetry: An Online Journal and Multimedia Companion to Anthology of Modern American Poetry* (Oxford University Press, 2000) <http://www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/poets/s_z/sandburg/war.htm> (accessed Nov. 20, 2002).
35. Yannella, 92.
36. Qtd. in John Laslett and Seymour M. Lipsett, *Failure or Dream?: Essays in the History of American Socialism* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1984), 304-5.
37. Qtd. in Leon A. Harris, *Upton Sinclair: American Rebel* (New York: Crowell, 1975), 224-26. George Creel, by the way, politely rejected Sinclair's propaganda novel.
38. Qtd. in Michael F. Hanlon, "Jack London on the Great War," *Trenches on the Web*, ed. Mike Iavarone, <<http://www.worldwar1.com/sflondon.htm>> (accessed Nov. 20, 2002).
39. Eric Homberger, *American Writers & Radical Politics, 1900-39* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), 176.
40. Francis Robert Shor, *Utopianism and Radicalism in a Reforming America* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1997), 85.
41. These anxieties are evident in Jack London's novel *The Iron Heel* (1907), when the Chicago Commune mistakes the converted heroine for an agent of the enemy, suddenly turns into a "fiendish" mob, and temporarily loses its moral superiority to the reactionary caste of Oligarchs.
42. Peter Buitenhuis, "Upton Sinclair and the Socialist Response to WWI," *Canadian Review of American Studies* 14.2 (1983): 127.
43. Homberger, 117.
44. "Sandburg and WWI."
45. Randolph Bourne, "The War and the Intellectuals," *The Seven Arts* (June 1917): 140.
46. Qtd. in Phillip S. Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the United States, Vol. VII: Labor and WWI, 1914-1918* (New York: International Publishers, 1987), 33.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. *Upton Sinclair's* 1 (October, 1918): 2
50. Qtd. in Foner, 29.
51. Buitenhuis, 129.
52. Qtd. in Floyd Dell, *Upton Sinclair: A Study in Social Protest* (New York: A. & C. Boni, 1930), 150.
53. "Unfortunately," William Bloodworth assesses "the story shifts too often with the shifting attitudes of its author and too often suggests his intrusive presence between reader and experience," *Upton Sinclair* (Boston: Twayne, 1977), 96.

54. The term 'heteroglot' here is used in the Bakhtinian sense as signifying the contradictory coexistence of different social discourse within a single text. Michael Bakhtin explains, "at any given moment of its historical existence, language is heteroglot from top to bottom: it represents the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between differing epochs of the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles and so forth, all given bodily form. These 'languages' of heteroglossia intersect each other in a variety of ways, forming new socially typifying 'languages,'" *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Austin: U of Texas P, 1981), 347.
55. Upton Sinclair, "War: A Manifesto Against It. An Appeal to the Socialist Movement," *Wilshire's Magazine* (Sept. 1909): 7.
56. Qtd. in Bloodworth, 90.
57. Ralph Chaplin, "Slaves, to the Slaughter!" *Solidarity* (Aug. 1914): 2.
58. Qtd. in David A. Shannon, *The Socialist Party of America: A History* (New York: Macmillan, 1955), 97.
59. As Paul Fussell has shown, rumors that the Germans crucified enemy soldiers were widespread among Allied troops and often represented as fact in newspapers. On the front, Fussell explains, the "troops readily embraced the image as quintessentially symbolic of their own suffering and 'sacrifice,'" while on the homefront the crucifixion story became an emblem for the "Great Crusade" against the barbarian Huns, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (London: Oxford UP, 1975), 118.
60. Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol 1, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 929.
61. On August 20, 1918, in an open "Letter to American Workers," Vladimir Ilyich Lenin made a similar point, writing that "the American people, who set the world an example in waging a revolutionary war against feudal slavery, now find themselves in the latest, capitalist stage of wage-slavery to a handful of multimillionaires, and find themselves playing the role of hired thugs who, for the benefit of wealthy scoundrels, throttled the Philippines in 1898 on the pretext of 'liberating' them, and are throttling the Russian Socialist Republic in 1918 on the pretext of 'protecting' it from the Germans," "Letter to American Workers," *Collected Works*, 4th ed., vol. 28, ed. George Hanna (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1966), 441.
62. Northrop Frye describes the "ironic mode" at length as "the mythos of winter," *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1990), 223-39.
63. Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken, 1969), 260.
64. V. I. Lenin, "Letter to the Workers of Europe and America," *Collected Works*, 4th ed., Vol. 28, ed. George Hanna (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1966), 466.

65. On January 21, 1919, Lenin proclaimed then end of parliamentary cooperation: "The socialists, the fighters for the emancipation of the working people from exploitation, had to utilise the bourgeois parliaments as a platform, as a base, for propaganda, agitation and organisation *as long as our struggle was confined to the framework of the bourgeois system*. Now that world history has brought up the question of destroying the whole of that system, of overthrowing and suppressing the exploiters, of passing from capitalism to socialism, it would be a shameful betrayal of the proletariat, deserting to its class enemy, the bourgeoisie, and being a traitor and a renegade to confine oneself to bourgeois parliamentarism, to bourgeois democracy, to present it as "democracy" in general, to obscure its *bourgeois* character, to forget that as long as capitalist property exists universal suffrage is an instrument of the bourgeois state," "Letter to the Workers of Europe and America," 458.
66. "What About Bolshevism?," *Upton Sinclair's* 9 (Jan. 1919): 4.
67. Mari Jo Buhle, *Women and American Socialism, 1870-1920* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1981), 318.
68. Dos Passos, 393.
69. Greg Mitchell, *The Campaign of a Century: Upton Sinclair's Race for Governor of California and the Birth of Media Politics* (New York: Random House, 1992), 124.

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