

Landscape of Evils in Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*

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Abstract: In *The Jungle*, Upton Sinclair delineates the social evils in the early 20th-century America from such aspects as the evils of reification, banality and unscrupulous personality. He discloses the phenomena of reification appearing under the systematic force by highlighting the reification of political-commercial relation, capitalist-worker relation and interpersonal relation, denouncing the social trample on laborers' basic human rights and dignity from the perspectives of political corruption, politician-businessman collusion and capital monopolization. Moreover, he explores the anti-civilization, anti-socialness and anti-ethics of banality of evils through the revelation of evil-doings of scabs, manual laborers and real estate brokers. Finally, the unscrupulous personality finding expression in jealousy, avarice and lust brings to light the pleasure-seeking evil psyche harmful to social interaction.

Keywords: *The Jungle*, Upton Sinclair, Evil of Reification, Banality of Evil, Evil of Unscrupulous Personality

1. Introduction

Upton Sinclair (1878-1968) was a representative writer of "Muckraking Novel" in the early 20th-century America. He published nearly 100 novels and monographs. In the first half of the 20th century, he was well-known in American literary circles and won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1943. His works have been translated into 47 languages and published in 39 countries. His main works include *King Midas* (1901), *The Journal of Arthur Sterlings* (1903), *Manassas* (1904) and *The Jungle* (1906). Because of his fearless courage and powerful exposure of the seamy side of American society, he was called "Thomas Paine of the 20th century" by American academia.[1] He does not only pay attention to the problems of corruption at the political level in the United States, but adopts naturalistic style in his works which reveal the evils in the immigrant communities, making in-depth and meticulous descriptions to show the root causes of social decay, aiming at awakening the people from their numb consciousness and guiding them to comprehend themselves and social abuses objectively and rationally. Sinclair's "Muckraking Novel" is similar to China's "Corruption-Disclosing Reportage." China of the early 21st century and the United States of the early 20th century are in the period of social transformation with rapid

economic development, so they share many similarities in certain fields, such as food safety, moral and ethical issues and labor-capital relations. Rereading this novel is helpful to deepen our apprehension of some social problems in either China or America.

The Jungle, Upton Sinclair's representative work, exposes the labor conflicts and food hygiene problems in the meat processing industry in the United States, and arouses great public concern and outrage at the problems of food safety. President Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919) dispatched his agents to Chicago to verify the problems revealed in the novel and then urged the Congress to pass the *Pure Food and Drug Act* (1906) and the *Meat Inspection Act* (1906) in the year the novel was published. In this novel, Sinclair discloses political corruption, collusion between government and business, cruel exploitation of monopoly capital, miserable life of laborers, rampant counterfeit and inferior products, and criminal acts such as prostitution, gambling, fraud and alcoholism in social life. It shows a landscape of "evils" in American society, i.e. various manifestations of evils. Carl Jensen and Hugh Downs (2017) argue that *The Jungles*, setting in Chicago slums, reveals the plight of workers and the greedy nature of capitalists in the American food processing industry in the early 20th century. [2] Chinese academia began to pay

attention to the novel in the 1990s. Zhang Zhen [3] (1994) and Liang Yaping [4] (1995) argue that the rise of “muckraking fiction” marks the maturity of critical rationality in American society, and made a comparative study of Sinclair’s *The Jungle* and Chinese novels with the same theme, exploring the social value of Chinese and foreign scandal-revealing novels; Huang Lihua [5] (2000), Zhu Bin [6] (2011) and others explored the literary and artistic value of *The Jungle*, holding that Sinclair’s vivid documentary description exposes the illegal profit-making of trust enterprises in the highly developing period of the United States. Hu Biyuan [7] (2013) and Qin Dandan [8] (2016) discuss the logic of capital in modern American society in *The Jungle* from the aspects of consumption symbols, ecological consciousness and cultural differences, and interpret the humanistic crisis in the period of American social progressivism. Academic circles in China and America have studied the various seamy sides of American society revealed in the novel, and have achieved a lot of results, which laid a good foundation for this paper’s further study of this novel. However, the research on the novel has little investigation of the problems of evils in a systematic way. Therefore, this paper intends to explore Sinclair’s description of evils in *The Jungle* from the perspectives of reification, banality and unscrupulous personality, so as to unveil the social crisis in the early 20th-century America.

2. Evil of Reification

Starting from the early 20th century, American economy has developed from free capitalism to monopolistic capitalism. Reification has become a powerful force to dominate society, constantly penetrating into all areas of society and all aspects of individuals’ life.[9] Objectively speaking, reification means that under the condition of developed capital economy, the result of human activities or the creation of human beings becomes some kind of self-discipline and in turn controls and governs human beings; subjectively speaking, reification means the alienation of a person from himself and society. Therefore, “reification of laborers in commodity production is comprehensive, not only in economic aspects, but also in political and ideological aspects. The fetishism nature of capitalist commodity economy leads to reification, while the further development of capitalist commodity economy leads to the intensification of reification.” [10] In *The Jungle*, Sinclair describes various reified phenomena in the early 20th century in the period of rapid development of capitalism in the United States, revealing the ruthlessness and anti-civilization of capital’s evil. Therefore, this paper aims at the exploration of the problems of reification depicted in *The Jungle* from the perspectives of political and commercial relations, labor-capital relations and interpersonal relations.

First of all, the relationship between government and businessmen usually plays an important role in the political and economic development of American society. A good political environment creates a fair and reasonable social environment for economic development, and a good economic situation in turn will improve the political system. Generally

speaking, “the government plays the function of management, supervision and adjudication in the economic development of society, but if its function is out of balance, the government becomes the slave of capital, and then the losses suffered by society are catastrophic.” [11] In *The Jungle*, Sinclair describes the evil phenomena and consequences caused by the reification of political and commercial relations. Inspectors dispatched by the government are stationed at every factory in Chicago, but they have been bought over by the capitalists, so their supervision does not work well. According to the law, the meat of dead pigs, rotten beef or animal offal cannot be canned. In order to circumvent the law, capitalists have adopted two ways: one is to buy over government inspectors so that they would turn a blind eye to illegal production of food in factories; the other is to induce workers to work overnight in the production of meat cans that do not meet the food hygiene standards to avoid government inspectors. In addition, in order to reduce labor costs, capitalists employ a large number of children in canneries; these children do the jobs of adults, but their wages are less than half of the adult’s. Some of them receive only one third of the adult’s wages. According to the U.S. law, it is illegal to employ a person below the age of 16. Due to capitalists’ obstruction, government officials only go to factories once or twice a year to check child labor. Their usual way is to stop at will the seemingly younger workers on the road to inquire about their age. As long as the child laborer claims that he is over 16 years old, government officials will let him go and make no further investigation. In this novel, Sinclair also exposes the illegal acts of corporate capitalists to subvert the functions of government supervision. For instance, a doctor finds that a batch of beef tested by government inspectors with tuberculosis is wholesaled by slaughterhouse bosses to some stores and malls in Chicago. The illegal wholesaler has not been punished by law, but the doctor is dismissed from his job shortly after his report. The bosses of the slaughterhouses express their strong indignation at the meat inspection and even force the mayor of Chicago to dissolve the Food Inspection Bureau. Why are the government high-ranking officials so willing to cater to those evil businessmen? Sinclair, through the mouth of Jurgis, argues that “for tuberculosis beef, the amount of money used for bribery is as much as \$2,000 a week,” and the same amount of money was also used to bribe the officials and block the news about the pigs who died of cholera on trains.[12] Under the erosion of capital, Chicago’s government agencies and officials at all levels fail to have a really effective supervision of meat food production in Chicago. They are reified by capitalists as “health certificates” of “sick and dead pigs” and “licenses” for legitimate employment of child labor.

Secondly, reification of industrial relations refers to the fact that capitalists reify physical workers into parts of the “money-making machines.” In order to use this “machine” efficiently to make more money, capitalists constantly upgrade equipment and improve management methods. Sinclair describes that “they were continually inventing new devices to crowd the work on—it was for all the world like the thumbscrew of the medieval torture chamber. They would get

new pacemakers and pay them more; they would drive the men on with new machinery—it was said that in the hog-killing rooms the speed at which the hogs moved was determined by clockwork, and that it was increased a little every day. In piecework they would reduce the time, requiring the same work in a shorter time, and paying the same wages” (112). Capitalists earn more profits after increasing labor productivity, ignoring the increase in the actual workload of manual workers. Every invention of new machinery and equipment means that more manual workers are unemployed. When capitalists adopt a new machine for smoking and roasting sausages, only a small number of manual workers can do the jobs that were previously done by a large number of workers. In factories, manual workers are incessantly being driven away by new machines. In addition, in order to further reduce labor costs and defeat the strikes of manual workers, capitalists go to Europe to recruit new workers, who are easy to be baited by high-wage employment opportunities, making a lot of false propaganda, which leads to thousands of poor people's flooding into big American cities like Chicago. Durham, the owner of the Chicago Cannery, announces in a job advertisement that he wants to hire 200 workers. When more than 3,000 workers gather at the entrance of his factory, he only recruits dozens of the strongest workers. Durham's false advertisements expose the essence of capitalists' reification of physical workers. In Durham's mind, a strong worker is a good part of his “money-making machine.” A large number of workers who come to apply for the jobs seem to offer him a better choice of “good parts.” However, these manual workers, even they get their jobs now, would be dismissed mercilessly by capitalists if they were old or injured. Jadvyga, a physical worker at Durham Cannery, is a beef cutter. During his work, his fingers are often wounded, and eventually he is hospitalized with septicemia. As soon as he quits the hospital, he is dismissed from the factory. In addition, Jurgis is also discharged from the factory when he sprains his ankle at work. So he suffers the same fate as Jadvyga when he is discharged from hospital. In the eyes of capitalists, injured physical practitioners are just like damaged parts in the operation of machines, which should be naturally discarded when they can produce no surplus value. Thus, capitalists reify physical workers into “machine parts” and at the same time, they also reify themselves into “money” calculators.

Then, reification of interpersonal relationships refers to the situation in which actual interpersonal relationships is turned into cold pecuniary relationships. In *The Jungle*, Durham, the capitalist, sets his staff in his company on different levels, with the hierarchal ranks such as managers, workshop directors, foremen and ordinary workers. Like the gear drive of a machine, the personnel of the higher rank drive those of the lower rank to work, and extract the maximum workload of the staff of each level. At the same time, he also makes the people of the same level in a competitive state. He sets performance cards for every employee, which result in their worry that other people might be more efficient than him and he might face the fate of being dis-employed. In this way, the whole factory has become a melting pot of jealousy and hatred. Each

employee always wants to surpass others, keep his job longer and earn more money. In such a workplace, there is no honesty and trust between people. Durhams' employees are reified into money-making machine parts for the increment of capital and for their own survival, losing their normal enthusiasm and interest in their work. In this novel, Sinclair also presents the tragic fate of manual workers, such as Antanas, who have been reified by capitalists, in the freezer workshop of a cannery. He works perennially in a freezer full of frozen water with his hands and feet frozen, his toes corroded by chemicals in the frozen water. He coughs and pants for years, and finally dies in the freezer due to massive bleeding. While he is inflicted with a fatal disease, neither his family nor his workmates intend to send him to a hospital for treatment; after his death, the factory director refuses to deal with his funeral or his family members' difficulties in life. His family members fear that he might lose his job if he is hospitalized. His fellow workers fear that his workload might be added to them after his hospitalization, which would affect their individual interests. The indifference of interpersonal relationships eventually results in his death only at the age of 25.

Finally, from this novel, we can see that reification is a common and cruel phenomenon in Chicago canneries. The transformation of commodity relations into objectivity in capitalist society inevitably leaves a deep mark upon people's social consciousness, and the reified social structure gets more and more profoundly immersed in their minds. They consciously or unconsciously identify themselves with external reifying objects, and accept reification as their unavoidable fates, thus losing the desire or ambition to overcome their misfortunes. Under the discipline of systematic force of capital, reification has become the common fates of both capitalists and workers, so their minds are dominated by the consciousness of reification. The capitalists reify the physical workers into machine parts, but at the same time they also reify themselves into machines for capital proliferation.

3. Banality of Evil

In *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, Hannah Arendt (1906-1975) divides evil into two kinds: one is the “extreme evil” of totalitarian rulers and the other is the “banality of evil” committed by rulers or participants.[13] The banality of evil refers to the behavior of ordinary people who unthinkingly obey the evil orders of their superiors or authority and cause serious harm or crisis to society. It is a kind of passive obedience to external coercive force or other people's influence.[14] In fact, banality is normal in the life of modern people, so banality is not evil; “The reason why banality can result in evil is that banality has taken the path of ‘evil conscience’.” [15] In *The Jungle*, the evil acts committed by some ordinary people in the early-20th century American society are very similar to the banality of evil mentioned in Arendt's works. Thus, the author of this paper intends to look into the banality of evil in *The Jungle* from three aspects: the banality of strike-breakers' evil, the banality of physical

workers' evil and the banality of real estate brokers' evil.

Strike-breakers are those who mix into the workers and act as capitalists' secret agents. Their duty is to monitor the actions of workers, especially those who organize or participate in the strikes, and sell to the capitalists such information as workers' strike plan, the names of participants or the organizers of the strike, or the bottom line of the strikers' appeals at negotiation, so as to gain the appreciation and rewards from capitalists. In fact, most of the strike-breakers are manual workers, and their betrayal to their fellow workers can be divided into two types, namely, voluntary betrayal and forced betrayal. In *The Jungle*, Sinclair tells a story of an ordinary manual worker who finally becomes a scab. Jurgis, a poor immigrant from Lithuania, works hard in a cannery. Later, he finds that it is difficult to get a promotion in his factory through diligent work, but the people who work as spies for capitalists can gain favor from the capitalists. Jurgis feels that he cannot find his place in such a social environment, and thus experiences a serious psychological imbalance. The rise of the strike provides him with an opportunity to gain his sense of "existence" and "sense of value." So he becomes a scab under the lure of capitalists. In order to obtain the reward of capitalists, he constantly sells the information of his fellow workers on strike, which seriously frustrates the strike struggle. After he becomes a scab, he has never considered what is right or wrong in his mind. He unconditionally obeys the instructions of capitalists, doing a lot of bad deeds or committing serious errors at the loss of his subjective initiative. In fact, some of his relatives are also victims of scabs. Marija, his wife's cousin, works in a Chicago cannery, but she loses her job when a scab tells her boss about her involvement in a trade union. Personally, the scab has no personal grievances with her. His act is to mechanically obey the capitalist's instructions and expose all the physical workers who have participated in the trade union. His betrayal does not only deprive Marija of the financial foundation for her marriage, but also plunges her into a crisis of starvation.

In this novel, Sinclair especially presents the banality of evils committed by physical workers. In order to earn ill-gotten gains, capitalists order their manual workers to incorporate unqualified materials like dead pork and sick beef into meat processing, ignoring the food safety and becoming the producer of fake and inferior food. The author also mentions that capitalists instruct manual workers to kill the cows after or before delivery, and mix these beef with qualified one to make canned beef. In addition, the manual workers are often ordered to put the internal organs of cattle into a mixing machine to make sausages. Even though they know that according to the federal food safety laws, these stuffs cannot be mixed into normal beef in the production. However, they still obey the instructions of capitalists, giving up their subjective initiative.[16] Sinclair also describes some disgusting incidents in the novel. For example, during the production process, manual workers often shovel dead mice and toast with rat poison into the conveyor belt to get them into the funnel of the mixer. "Those rats were nuisances, and the packers would put poisoned bread out for them, they

would die, and then rats, bread, and meat would go into the hoppers together"(136). Manual workers only work mechanically according to the instructions of capitalists, and do not regard food hygiene and safety as their own responsibilities. In addition, physical workers also obey the instructions of capitalists to participate in the specific work of counterfeiting, disguising goat meat as canned mutton, dyeing sausages with chemical liquids, such as borax and gelatin, into "brown" and decorating them as smoked sausages to meet capitalists' desire to cut costs in production. In this novel, Sinclair also describes the story of Marija's obedience to capitalists' instructions to process sick beef into canned and smoked sausages. She earns a higher salary, but does great harm to the health of consumers. Christoforas, Teta's youngest son, dies after eating poisoned sausages made in her cannery. These manual workers in the production of toxic and unclean food are not fundamentally or born evil people in nature. Like other normal persons, they also have their own wives, husbands or children to care for, but blindly obey the orders of their bosses in the production process, give up their subjective initiative, and never mind what might be caused by their irresponsible work. As a result, poor physical workers exploited by capitalists have become accomplices of capitalists in the banality of evil, endangering the public food safety in America. Indeed, it is a tragedy caused by the evil of capitalists and the evil of workers' banality.

The banality of the evils committed by real estate brokers also result in disaster to the common workers in Chicago's Cannery Town. Under the instruction of the real estate owner, the real estate brokers lure the poverty-stricken migrant workers into buying houses with sweet words. They sell their houses to manual workers in installments, and stipulate that once the mortgage of manual workers is cut off, even if the mortgage will be paid off in a month, the property rights of the whole house will be recovered by the real estate company. Physical workers who have just arrived from Europe in the United States are eager to have a home, but their jobs in cannery towns are not stable, so most of them may lose their houses and their previous installments will be swallowed up by real estate companies. In the novel, Jurgis is sentenced to prison for beating up Phil Connor. He loses his job, the house he bought on installments is taken back by the property company, and his wife and children are evicted by the staff of the property company. After the real estate brokers take back their houses, they soon sell them to other newly-arriving migrant workers and start a new round of fraud. The real estate brokers act in accordance with the rules laid down by their bosses, ignoring the serious harm they have done to the poor physical workers. The real estate brokers have no reflection and self-blame on their actions. Their behavior is a kind of blindly obedient evil in that they have given up their moral judgment, not distinguishing right from wrong, evading their ethic responsibility and helping their bosses rob the poor immigrants of their hard-earned money. The social harm caused by this banality of evil is no less than the radical evil of social system, and it will also bring disaster to the lives of the poor. "Overriding absolute authority over individual virtue,

whether it is the terrorist essence of the shallow evil of the individual, or the collective unconscious gangsters who stand aloof and indirectly encourage the execution of the crime, all exist in disguise on a large scale as before.”[17] The perpetrator of the banality of evil seeks his own way of survival under the guise of blind obedience to authority or superior.

Therefore, the banality of evil in *The Jungle* is a recessive cancer that is hard to be eliminated during the period of economic transformation in the early 20th century, and it is also a concentrated reflection of the moral crisis of modern American society. The perpetrators of the banality of evils blindly obey the orders of their superiors or authoritative bodies, but in fact their subjective initiative and loss of right and wrong judgment are “willing acts” rather than “forced acts” because their blind obedience is based on safeguarding their own interests. Thus, the banality of evils is extremely selfish, amoral and asocial.

4. Unscrupulous Personality

Unscrupulous personality refers to a kind of personality formed in a certain social environment in which a person obtains pleasure or satisfaction at the cost of others' interests. Mainly characterized by jealousy, greed and lust, it is a manifestation of evils of anti-society, anti-legal system and anti-ethics. It usually brings crises to normal interpersonal relationships and causes various social contradictions. A person with an unscrupulous personality is used to finding a grand excuse for all his unconventional acts, always claiming that he is the victim himself, so he tries to satisfy his vanity and jealousy by doing harm to others.[18] This type of persons tries to find seemingly impeccable reasons to conceal their evil deeds. They take pleasure in injuring or ruining others, even though they would get no benefits from their evil acts. Sinclair presents three types of unscrupulous personality in *The Jungle* from the angles of jealousy, greed and lust for women.

Jealousy-type unscrupulous personality is a negative personality in human society, which makes interpersonal relationships trapped in a state of estrangement, alienation and hatred. In *The Jungle*, Sinclair describes two kinds of jealousy-type unscrupulous personality which are harmful to others but with no good to himself: jealousy of other's personality and jealousy of other's talent. Henderson is a forewoman at the Chicago Cannery. In the 20th-century American society, patriarchy was still prevalent. Women were generally considered inferior to men in status, intelligence and ability. Even so, Henderson is promoted to be a forewoman, not because of her wonderful ability at work, but because she is the mistress of the workshop superintendent. She lives a dissipated life and treats the pursuit of pleasure as her sole goal in life, so she is very dissatisfied with Ona, who is clean in life and faithful to her husband, and always bothers her by finding her faults. She wants to lure Ona into fooling around with men. Her motive is not to do good to Ona, but to ruin her purity. In her inner world, Henderson wants all women to be

like her, fooling around with men every day, so that she would feel more at ease for her acts. In addition, Sinclair describes the plot of envy and talent. Marijia is responsible for the manual drawing of canned label drawings in the cannery. Her work is fast and of good quality. Devoted hard to her piecework, she has earned a high income. Her talent arouses the jealousy and discontent of the piecework calculator, so she deliberately miscalculates Marijia's workload to reduce her income. Her calculation errors are not caused by negligence, but by jealousy. In fact, there is no personal grievance between her and Marijia. The reason why she does so is that she cannot tolerate a person who can be more capable. The injury of other people can bring pleasure to her and enables her to reach a certain narrow-minded self-psychological balance.

Sinclair makes a wonderful description of unscrupulous personality of avarice. This kind of personality is the manifestation of greed in a certain situation, and can be divided into three categories: the petty-advantage-coveting, the bribery-requesting and the prostitution-leading. In *The Jungle*, when Lithuanian immigrants Jurgis and Ona are having their wedding ceremony, many relatives and friends come and bring along gifts, but there are still some people, coming without anything, but stealing. These persons' petty-theft is a manifestation of their unscrupulous personality. They often use the excuse of “if they don't steal, others might also do” to comfort their mind occupied by unscrupulous personality. In addition, when Jurgis checks out at the bar, he gives the bartender 100-dollar note, but the tender only gives him 95 cents, pretending that he has received only one dollar instead of 100 dollars. The bartender's attempt to embezzle Jurgis' money while he is drunk is an evident manifestation of his corrupt and defiled personality. In addition to ordinary people, officials and police may also unveil their corrupt and dirty personality when their powers are not under supervision. When Jurgis is in charge of the delivery of strike relief, he finds that a worker falsely claims a \$5 subsistence allowance as his own, so he intends to detain him. If verified, the worker will be expelled from the trade union. To escape punishment, the worker takes out \$10 and hands it to him, begging him to forgive him. Jurgis sees nobody around, so he accepts the bribed money. This is an example of Jurgis' abandonment of his duty due to his avarice. Driven by earning more money, some police in society may also have the attempt at receiving or requesting bribery. Sinclair mentions many times in his novel that some policemen charge a large sum of “protection fees” in the areas, such as brothels, bars, casinos, quack clinics and fake shops, which presents a social chaos of “police-bandit families,” in which the police collude with the criminals in some events to chase money. Finally, the brothel boss is also one of the representatives of the corrupt and unhealthy personality. In order to motivate prostitutes to sell themselves more, the old brothel boss tries every means to induce prostitutes to take drugs, and then sell drugs to them, so that the drug-addicted prostitutes can never pay off the debt of drug consumption, thus becoming a cash cow for the brothel and bad police. Thus, the greedy personality is an evil personality based on the damage, bullying and exploitation of

others.

Moreover, lust for women is one of the three important unscrupulous personalities exposed in the novel. The factory owner has absolute decision-making power in the work and personnel arrangement of employees, so he has a specific deterrent to them. In a common sense, the appointment and promotion of employees should depend on the ability of an employee and the specific needs of the job. In this novel, Sinclair describes the lust of Phil, boss of a factory. When Phil sees that Ona, one of his employees, is good-looking, he constantly harasses, threatens and lures, and finally forces Ona to be his lover. He makes full use of his advantages as a boss by exchanging his small favors for her body, and in this way he has coerced many female employees to satisfy his lust. He is characterized by his dual personalities as an angel and a devil. Therefore, the sexual exploitation of women by power is a manifestation of moral corruption and unscrupulous personality in the unreasonable society.

Sinclair's description of the unscrupulous personality of officials, bosses, businessmen and ordinary people reveals the dark and evil sides of individual personality, and discloses the evil of satisfying one's vanity by ruining the happiness of others. Therefore, unscrupulous personality is an asocial personality which is alienated from justice or conscience.

5. Conclusion

In *The Jungle*, Sinclair describes the evils of capital under the systematic power. The comprehensive reification of social reality subverts the social public rights, tramples on the industrial and commercial ethics, worsens the relations between workers and capitalists, and plunges the society into an alienated icy world. While attacking the radical evils of capital, the author also criticizes the banality of evils committed by ordinary physical workers, scabs and real estate brokers. He holds that the unconscious or passive behavior that seemingly obeys the order of authorities is one of the ways of self-interest protection in his inner world. Therefore, the banality of evil cannot be taken as an excuse or a shield for the perpetrators to escape punishment or condemnation. The banality of evil is not "banality," but a hidden internal evil, which does not only harm to others, but themselves. The evil of unscrupulous personality is intertwined with the radical evil of capitalist society and the common evil of citizens, which constitutes the basic social form in the period of American social progressivism in the early 20th century. Sinclair's novel reveals the "evil" in that period, which is conducive to a view of the seamy side of American society and a revelation of the "ugliness" that many people in American society are unwilling to face or mention. Instead of venting his indignation at American society or increasing the literary charm of the novel, the exposition and criticism of the "evils" is to arouse readers' insight into the "evils" appearing in the development of social civilization. He wishes that the current government could take measures to eliminate these evils, and our human world could avoid the repetition of the same evils in different societies and times, so that people could purify

their souls, sublimate their morality and live a happy and sufficient life.

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