

Upton Sinclair: California Socialist, Celebrity Intellectual.

By Lauren Coodley. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013. xviii, 237pp. \$28.95.)

In this engaging and ambitious biography Lauren Coodley takes a fresh perspective on the life of the zealous muckraker Upton Sinclair. Her book necessarily addresses many facets of Sinclair's life that would be familiar to historians (such as the publication of *The Jungle* and the passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act in 1906, Sinclair's End Poverty in California (epic) program, and his ill-fated gubernatorial campaign in 1934). This book really shines in its treatment of lesser-known aspects of Sinclair's socialism, such as his contemplations of historical Christianity and attempts to reconcile religion and socialism, and his scathing attacks on higher education.

Throughout her biography, Coodley effectively connects Sinclair's early life with later writings, particularly his underappreciated works. For instance, she links his father's alcoholism to Sinclair's teetotalism and publication of *The Wet Parade* (1931), which put him at odds with other socialist writers.

Coodley wisely avoids a detailed treatment of each of Sinclair's voluminous writings—which would go beyond the scope of any single biography. Instead, she effectively connects Sinclair to several important features of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century America, such as the boardinghouse, temperance, the saloon, the nickelodeon, settlement houses, utopian social movements, labor conflict and strikes, and machine politics. She also presents a tremendous cross-section of radicals, writers, socialists, and educators whose ideas influenced Sinclair during his extremely long literary career. Readers are introduced to the works of John Dewey, Jack London, H. L. Mencken, Eugene Debs, Max Eastman, and dozens of others. As such, Coodley's book goes beyond the straightforward "life and times" approach to biography and instead uses Sinclair's story as a lens through which to observe broader social trends and trace the intersections of prominent intellectuals and writers in American society.

This is particularly important in her treatment of Sinclair's many feminist allies and contemporaries. Throughout her book, Coodley persuasively documents how interactions with Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Margaret Sanger, Helen Keller, Mary Beard, Julia Ward Howe, and others sharpened Sinclair's thinking on socialism and writing. Noting "the centrality of female friendships in Upton Sinclair's life," Coodley places Sinclair's passion for social justice in this "history of American feminist radicalism" (p. 103). Her biography also links Sinclair, a committed idealist, to the swirling currents of American utopianism, through his founding of Halcyon House, his stay at two "single tax" communities (attempting to live out the ideals of the reformer Henry George), and his pamphlet "I, Governor of California" (1934), which Coodley compares to Edward Bellamy's futuristic utopian novel *Looking Backward* (1888).

In crafting her biography, Coodley employs a variety of published and unpublished sources, including Sinclair's tremendous range of papers and correspondence. She dedicates a great deal of attention to Sinclair's World's End series, published near the end of his career, and outlines the series' avid fan base. Coodley's biography should also be commended for attention to Sinclair's Cold War pronouncements and his posthumous legacy, which are both addressed in succinct chapters at the end of the biography. Coodley's book is a welcome resource both for general readers eager to learn more about Sinclair's life after *The Jungle* and for historians eager for new perspectives on an iconic (and iconoclastic) activist.

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