

THE RECEPTION OF UPTON SINCLAIR'S WORKS IN HUNGARY

LEHEL VADON

1. When Upton Sinclair achieved international literary fame at the age of 27 with his novel *The Jungle*, he had already become a well-known writer in his homeland. His early works were not of high quality; trashy, dime-novels which he laboriously wrote for only an hourly wage in order to fend off his family's poverty. Of his early belletristic works the most important is *Manassas: A Novel of the War* (1904), a historical novel. It was the only early novel of Upton Sinclair published in Hungarian, translated by Pál Sándor and entitled *Rabszolgák* under the auspices of the Nova Publishing House in 1946. It created no literary stir.

2. It was *The Jungle* (1906) which made known the name of Upton Sinclair in Hungary. Just one year after *The Jungle* was first published in English, Károlyné Baross translated it into Hungarian, under the title *A posvány* published by the Pátria Corporation in 1907. This time, the attention of the reading public was directed toward this, the first Sinclair novel to be published in Hungarian, by three periodicals: *Havi Könyvészet*, *Corvina* and *Az Idő*.¹ Károlyné Baross also wrote an introduction to *The Jungle* in which she described the way Sinclair collected material for the novel in Chicago. In her opinion the importance of the novel was not its literary value, or even its exposure of what the author recognised as social wrongs, so much as its "social tendency".

In 1934 the Nova Literary Institute published *The Jungle* in a new translation by Soma Braun. Its new title was *A mocsár*. Three periodicals made mention of this new publication of *The Jungle*. The political and social periodical *A Hír* produced a review of the new publication soon after its appearance, the writer of which showed his appreciation for the achievement of the translator. After reviewing the content, however, the critic's evaluation of the novel was bombastic and superficial.² The periodical *Literatura* reminded the readers that the novel had been a best-seller at the time of its first publication in English-speaking countries, and had caused a stir in the political and economic life of America.³ In the opinion of the literary weekly *Gong*, *The Jungle* was the most important of Sinclair's works. "The book is the bible of that genre of literature of which Sinclair is the creator."⁴

Soma Braun, one of the best translators of Sinclair, included a preface to the second Hungarian publication of *The Jungle*. (1943) In this preface he enumerates those sections of the novel which are cruel, disillusioning, which disturb the peace of mind of the readers and which portray social antagonism.

In his opinion the novel revolves around two groups of characters: the Jurgis family and the industrial barons of Packingtown, who are the aristocrats of the canning industry. "Their conflict recalls the medieval trial by combat, the warrior armed to the teeth, his opponent naked and defenceless." All Sinclair's sympathy lies with the weak and downtrodden. Sinclair departs from the impartiality of the writer and adopts the stance of a protagonist.

In his study of Sinclair, written in 1946, Kornél V. Nagy examined the reactions of two social groups who were readers of Sinclair, taking into consideration the response to the first Hungarian publication of *The Jungle*. The bourgeois readers enjoyed the report-style of the novel, and referred to it as the "Chicago meat novel". From "a report from the war correspondent of misery from the starvation front", the bourgeoisie was interested only in descriptions and facts relating to the slaughterhouses. They were indifferent to the realities of suffering, the drama of human tragedy, and "refused to admit the heartbreaking lines into their souls." They felt the astuteness of the writer was in cruelly relating that which he had lived through himself. *The Jungle*, with its sheer bulk of content, broke away from all previous classified genres, and stood Sinclair apart from the other writers of his time. "There was nothing left, but to call him 'modern' (nowadays he would be called a destructivist or revolutionary) and left it at that."⁵ The novel was given a totally different reception by the literate working class readers. The proletariat greeted him with open arms, they considered him as their own writer, and this relationship solved the question of his identity: Upton Sinclair is a socialist writer. The novel's portrayal of misery, and the nobility and humanitarianism of Sinclair's heart gripped the interest of the reading working public. Sinclair empathises with his suffering heroes, but "his sympathy is not that of the sorrowful Dickens, nor the enraged clenched fist of Victor Hugo, nor yet the resigned apathy of Russian writers. Sinclair is a fighter whose desire is to bring aid to all those oppressed, all poverty-stricken, to free the whole class of exploited people and see them as human beings."⁶

In the opinion of Géza Hegedüs "*The Jungle* depicts the interest and unlimited voracity of monopoly capital. In all probability he was the first to describe with the tools of a writer the escalation of the process of the monopolisation of capital, to the serious detriment of the small enterpriser."⁷ Hegedüs' statement is really true; Upton Sinclair was the man who recognized fully the life of American Big Business. These years were a turning point in the history of capitalism evolving from classical to monopolistic, and consequently to imperialistic. For Sinclair capitalism indicated more than Frank Norris, Hamlin Garland, Stephen Crane or Jack London, who could only have understood the beginnings of monopoly capitalism; basically, their experiences derived from an era of free enterprise.

The last two concordant evaluations of *The Jungle* can be read in the reviews of *Világirodalmi Tájékoztató* in 1972, April and June in a view of lecture reports. The attitude of both lecturers was positive, both recommended that the novel should be published. But the book did not appear.

3. One year after the publication of *The Jungle*, in 1908, a new Sinclair book appeared on the Hungarian book-market. *A Captain of Industry* (1906) was translated into Hungarian by Károlyné Baross under the title of *Az Ipar-*

báró, and published by the Pátria Corporation. The critics did not react to the appearance of the novel, and it was only mentioned by the *Corvina* periodical in the newly published books column.⁸ *A Captain of Industry* was not successful in Hungary. In spite of this fact the novel was published on two more occasions by Athenaeum Publishing House in 1915 and 1919, translated by Béla Sárosi.

4. *The Moneychangers* (1908) is the second part of Upton Sinclair's second trilogy, a follow-on from the novel *The Metropolis*. The third part of the trilogy, a drama entitled *The Machine* is rather strange from the point of view of its literary genre. Only *The Moneychangers* became well-known in Hungary under the title of *Parázna pénz*, which was published by Kultura Publishing House in 1918 in the translation of Andor Halasi. The novel was republished in 1948 by Nova Publishing House under the title of *Mindenható pénz*.

5. In the United States *Samuel the Seeker* (1910) received a varied reception both from the critics and readers. Even those who had followed the writings of Sinclair differed in their opinions: Floyd Dell considered the novel to be Sinclair's worst,⁹ but the famous Danish poet and novelist Frederik van Eeden thought it to be his best.¹⁰

The reception of the novel in Hungary was unanimous. It was much enjoyed by the working class readers for a long time. Even those critics who condemned Sinclair for his unliterary style and lack of artistic depth, allowed this to be his most artistic achievement, in which he was able to rise to the heights of poeticism.

Samuel the Seeker was a best-seller in Hungary. The novel first appeared in the newspaper *Népszava* in 1913, translated by Dezső Schőner, in 96 episodes, each taking up half a page.¹¹ Following the success of the novel the Népszava Publishing House printed the novel again at the end of 1913, this time in book form.¹² The novel was reprinted altogether three times. In 1948 Klára Bihari dramatized the novel, but it did not reach the theatres.¹³ Márton Garas, an important figure in the age of silent movies, produced the film of the novel in 1919.¹⁴ The film was made within the cultural-political programme of the Hungarian Soviet Republic. This film adaptation of *Samuel the Seeker* is a measure of the importance of the novel, and of the evaluation of Sinclair in Hungary, especially if we take into consideration that other works of the writer were only filmed in the U.S.A. (*The Jungle*, All Star Feature Film, 1914; *The Wet Parade*, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1932.) and in the Soviet Union (*Jimmy Higgins*, 1928).

Although written in 1910, and translated into Hungarian in 1913, *Samuel the Seeker* did not meet with any critical appreciation until ten years later, only after its second publication, when a favourable critique appeared in *Népszava*.¹⁵ In spite of Sinclair's materialism, his novel is Christian-Socialistic, describing the cruel antagonisms of society through the disappointments and poor lot of its hero. Indeed, the writer of the review emphasized as of primary importance, the social injustices faced by Samuel during his life.

According to György Szántó "*Samuel the Seeker* epitomises the naive purity of the elemental, primordial searcher after all forms of truth in Christ-figure."¹⁶ Géza Hegedüs discovered an interesting relationship between Sinclair's Christian-Socialistic way of thinking and his artistic expression.

It cannot be denied that his Christian-Socialistic novels, or those similar to them, are the most beautiful and carefully constructed of his work. *They Call Me Carpenter* alongside *Samuel the Seeker*, which is most typical of his Christian-Socialistic novels, represent the apex of his artistic oeuvre. It is for this reason, that in spite of ideological misconceptions, he is able to draw deeper sympathy from the readers toward the oppressed, than in those novels which are less ideologically naive, but which are too wrapped up in reportage and event.¹⁷ Ferenc Botka associated *Samuel the Seeker* with the characteristic early period of socialist and workers' literature; as being similar in content. The hero of the novel after becoming aware of the miserable lot of the unemployed, and procuring a job from which he sees exploitation at work, comes into contact with the working class movement and the ideological aspirations of his age. He educates and commits himself to the movement. He proclaims that workers must unite and defend their own interests, to fight for a better more human quality of life. He reaches the highest peaks of socialist understanding attainable, without a conscious knowledge of marxist philosophy. However, Samuel's spontaneity of action, unrelated to a wider historical context, prohibits his further development.¹⁸

6. *Love's Pilgrimage* (1911) appeared in Hungarian in three translations and four editions. The first translation of the novel was published in 1924 in Kassa, by the publishing house Munkás Könyvkereskedés with a literal translation of the original title: *A szerelem zarándokútja*. This translation by Jenő Fried was also printed in serial form in *Nőmunkás*, the political newspaper for the working women of Kassa in the same year.¹⁹

In 1958, the Táncsics Publishing House offered a new translation of Sinclair's novel into the hands of the readers under a more appropriate title, *A szerelem tövises útja*. Because of a strange capricious whim of the publisher, the two previous translations — *A szerelem zarándokútja* and *A szerelem kálváriája* — were able to appear in print only in a shorter, incomplete form; they excluded passages being exactly those most pertinent to the whole novel. The Táncsics Publishing House translation was the first complete edition. Tibor Lutter wrote a preface to the novel in which he stated that *Love's Pilgrimage* alongside *The Jungle* was the great masterpiece from Sinclair's early period in which "we receive both a fine portrayal of private life, and a broad and convincing view of society".²⁰ In 1959, in the bibliographical and literary periodical *Könyvbarát*, László Antal posed exactly the opposite point of view, saying that the novel was "inconsistent and ambiguous" as was the whole of Sinclair's literary career and socialist work, and that in this novel, after important best-sellers Sinclair declines into the immaturity of the young, inexperienced writer. "Humour, irony and every other attitude of epic superiority are here unhappily absent from the author's demeanour."²¹

7. *Sylvia* (1913) does not occupy a place among the more characteristic muckraking novels of Sinclair, that is why it is one of the least known of his novels abroad. In Hungary it was rather late to appear, published by Szikra Publishing House in 1949, in the translation of Mária Kilényi; and then at the last moment, because from the May of that year Hungarian critics commenced so strong a slanderous campaign against Sinclair that in the following decade only abusive critiques of the novelist and his work were permitted

to be published in Hungarian newspapers and periodicals. During this period not a single review of *Sylvia* was published.

8. The long short-story *The Convict* (1912 – 1913) was published in serial form in *Népszava*, in 1913, translated by Dezső Schöner.²² Prior to the publication of *The Convict*, *Népszava* printed a report of an interview with Upton Sinclair made by the London socialist party newspaper *Labour Leader*, from which the *Népszava* readers came to know that their newspaper had published the short-story immediately after its original serialization in the *Manchester Labour Leader*.²³ So far, this lesser known work of Upton Sinclair has never been published in the United States in any form. Literature on Sinclair only mentions the English publication of this work.²⁴ Its only translation has been into Hungarian. After the serialized edition in *Népszava* it appeared on two more occasions in Hungary in book form.

9. *King Coal* (1917) is one of the most translated of Sinclair's work. The Hungarian version was translated by Pál Bodó and László Sas, and published in 1920 by Kultura Publishing House.

No critiques or reviews have appeared in Hungary dealing only with this novel. However, there are some critical remarks in different articles appreciating the career of Upton Sinclair, which give us valuable data concerning the evaluation of *King Coal* by his contemporaries. For József Reményi *King Coal* is a "sociological document, but not a literary work of art. It is the mirror reflection of the inferno of American capitalism, but real life, composed art, psychological reliability can hardly be discerned in this work."²⁵ Reményi comments that the faults in the novel depend from Sinclair's lack of characterization his exclusive creation of typical figures. In contrast, György Szántó considers that it is exactly this creation of types and precise documentation that is his strength, and for this reason referred to *King Coal* as a "gargantuanly constructed" work. The novel is "the grandiose cross-section of American plutocratic society: the characters created are many, but each is sharply and adroitly defined; they are the limelighted projections of the peculiarities of their class, specie and of themselves. His novels are X-ray films, sometimes with a microscopic strength of sight, sometimes massive cooperating strength of the creative artist, but always exciting, never allowing our interest to let up."²⁶ In the judgement of Géza Hegedüs, *King Coal* is a "very adventurous novel, complete with romantic colour". The unrealistic basic situation of the novel incensed the critics, and many of the readers criticized the romantic plot of the novel in the name of realism. On the other hand, the devotees of romanticism held Sinclair to be too naturalistic.²⁷

10. Soon after *Jimmie Higgins* (1919) had been written, it became one of the best-known and most important works of anti-war socialist literature all over the world. It was translated into 29 different languages,²⁸ and in 1928 a film was made of it in the Soviet Union.²⁹ In Hungary there were two translations and three editions of *Jimmie Higgins*. It was dramatized by János Máczá, and the three-act play was performed by the Kassa Proletkult theatre group twice in Kassa: once on the 29 March 1923 on the occasion of the remembrance of the revolutions in 1848, 1871 and 1919; and once on the 4 September 1926, on the occasion of the XII International Youth Workers' Day.³⁰

Kassai Munkás played an important role in bringing *Jimmie Higgins* to the attention of the public. In 1920 they published sections of the novel.³¹ In the same year a review was published of the German translation of the novel. The writer of the review recommended the book as "a large and lasting important cultural historical work", the artistic value of which is also of scientific significance because of its faithful reproduction of real life. *Kassai Munkás* Booksellers advertised the work on further occasions, as "a strong, dramatic, historical novel of the age, which carries socialism in its very womb".³² The advertisement was adopted by the sister-journal of *Kassai Munkás*, *Nőmunkás*.³³

In 1921, *Kassai Munkás* published another review of *Jimmie Higgins* which article stated the book to be the most up-to-date agitatorial novel of the "socialist propagandist writer". The novel's hero, who, through imprisonment, unemployment, loss of family and the trenches of the war, arrives in Siberia where he dies as a martyr to communism, is the symbol of the masses, "the compressed symbol of the many thousands of workers who drifted into the life of the socialist movement only as passive subjects, without any ideological clearheadedness of their own." The writer of the review drew comparison between *Jimmie Higgins* and *Samuel the Seeker*. The theme and the environment are the same, only the author has changed. *Samuel the Seeker* is a novel of pre-war times, when, mainly in America, socialist agitation was performed with weaker ideological tools, and the socialist movement had a less well-defined outlook. "Jimmie Higgins is the child of the latest age, visualized by Upton Sinclair through perfidy of war, the delirium of nationalism and the first victories of the Russian Revolution."³⁴ In the opinion of Zoltán Fábry, in *Jimmie Higgins* Upton Sinclair created "one of the most durable novels of the Great War, and the most effective piece of bolshevik propaganda in America."³⁵ György Szántó applauded the writer for his ability in portraying characters and creating types. From all of Sinclair's heroes Jimmie Higgins stands closest to the reader; the grey, unpretentious engine-fitter, the private in the battle for justice, "who is the most human human being, in spite of the fact that he is a very characterless type; he is the greatest hero, in spite of all his unpretentious greyness, when he has to fight and die for all that he holds true".³⁶ László Szekszárdi, in his essay on Sinclair, quoted the critical appreciation of Romain Rolland, which echoed his own opinion: "If, as I hope, a new, more just and brotherly world comes into being, your Jimmie Higgins, this sincere hero and martyr, will live longer in the memory of humankind than the legendary hero of a violated nation in times of oppression."³⁷ Géza Hegedüs considered *Jimmie Higgins* to be one of the best books of the author, because of its authentic picture of society and portrayal of character, in which work Sinclair came closest to the philosophy of maxism and a truthful, realistic approach to the social novel.³⁸

11. 100%: *The Story of a Patriot* (1920) was published in Hungarian for the first time in Kassa in 1924, serialized by the political daily newspaper *Munkás*.³⁹ It has appeared in book form four times in Hungary. It was edited in the translation by Kornél V. Nagy by Népszava Publishing House in 1927, and by Nova Publishing House in 1944, and in the translation of György Déri by Európa Publishing House in 1964 and 1978.

Attention paid to the new publications of this book by the reviews in Hungarian periodicals, consisted mainly of a synopsis of the plot plus a few lines of critical appreciation. *A Jövő Társadalma* considered it "a fantastic, unbelievable, wild, naturalistic American novel".⁴⁰ To the mind of László Gereblyés the book is the story of the "one-hundred-per-cent American chauvinistic bourgeois", "the Jimmie Higgins of the whites".⁴¹ In the opinion of *Literatura*, "this exciting and staggering book shows the reality of American life in its entirety, projected into the mirror of the judicial system".⁴²

In his essay on Sinclair, György Szántó rightly ascertained that not one of the other books by the author carries so much terrible reality. Sinclair created his hero with superior objectivity, brilliant humour, masterful reportage, and simple means of expression, "who is not the revolutionary type of truth-seeker, but not a blackhearted adventurer either. He is only an egocentric, average man, who drifting within the cyclone of life, has not even a second to deal with anything but himself and his base instinct for comfort, low-minded pleasures".⁴³

In his essay following the 1964 edition of *100%*, Miklós Vásárhelyi thought the cause of the popularity of the novel in Hungary to be that there was similarity between the historic situations in America and Hungary. Sinclair raked over the ashes of the past, one of the darkest, most reactionary ages of American history, the events and atmosphere of the post-war years. In the beginning of the thirties, at the time of spreading fascism, the methods of the Horthy police were not unlike those of the Californian police force. The Hungarian workers came to learn at first hand the meaning of police terror. They suffered brutality and torment, they met with provocation, infiltration and false evidence. They knew from experience all the meaning of what they read in *100%*. Similarity merged into parity; they only had to alter the names of people and places, and the events may well have taken place in Budapest. "*100%* is the most symptomatic work of the ever-contentious Sinclair. The novel's documentation is durable, which is why it is always interesting, exciting and illuminating reading".⁴⁴

12. The novel *They Call Me Carpenter* (1922) was published twice in Hungary, in the translation of Kornél V. Nagy, first under the editorship of Népszava Publishing House in 1925, and again in 1946 by Nova Publishing House. In both the ideological and artistic way of expression it is most similar to *Samuel the Seeker*. Both novels relate the pure man's coming into antagonism with American society. Both novels are modern epics about the failure of justice.

Soon after the appearance of the novel the New Year's Day edition of Népszava included an essay about Jack London, in which may be read an evaluation of Sinclair: "The hard pen of the writer became softened, intimately and pathetically human, in the most mature work of Sinclair, *They Call Me Carpenter*. But only when his voice and emotions are involved and in order to generate feeling from the readers. The tempestuous rush of event, the plotting of the story always serving to surprise the readers, show Sinclair to be at the climax of his art."⁴⁵ Soma Braun, one of the best Hungarian translators of Sinclair, called this to be an insinuating novel. "*They Call Me*

Carpenter is insinuating, but not a piece of canvassing; the socialistic ideas stand out only to such an extent that they give the basic tone of the whole. As in all of his work, Sinclair wishes to impress with unusualness, particularity and the interest of the story."⁴⁶ Whilst Soma Braun saw the Christ-figure in the son of the carpenter, György Szántó found Sinclair's hero to be deeply human: he symbolizes the man who is seeking and fighting for justice.⁴⁷ In this progressive, modern, human interpretation of the Christ-figure Fritz Rosenfeld went furthest in his essay in *Munkáskórus* where he stated that the Christ-figure of the novel was representative of the proletarian revolutionary.⁴⁸

13. *The Millennium* (1924) was published in the translation of Soma Braun in *Népszava* in serial form.⁴⁹ The *Népszava* Publishing House printed the novel in the same year in book form. It was published again in 1946 under the editorship of Nova Publishing House. In 1928 two short reviews were made of Sinclair's book. *Könyvek Világa* called it the "novel of bankruptcy". In the opinion of *Literatura*, from this book of Sinclair is missing the anger, the embitteredness of the social reformer the critical vigour, and all that determines and characterizes the novelist's whole literary career.⁵⁰

14. Two performances in Hungarian are known of Sinclair's drama *Singing Jailbirds*, one in Hungary and one in America. The Budapest performance in 1928, directed by Ödön Palasovszky, was produced during the so-called Zig-Zag evenings at the Academy of Music. The venture was mainly successful because of its brave, progressive tone and innovative stage-craft.⁵¹ Sinclair's drama was performed in New York on the 27th April 1930, by the amateur group Előre Műkedvelő Kör, a group established with the claim of making known to Hungarian workers in America the outstanding works of Hungarian and world literature. *Singing Jailbirds*, performed by the Hungarian workers theatre group in New York, and translated by Martin Stone into Hungarian, served an agitational aim and may be said to be the intellectual product of the proletarian culture of that era.

15. *Mammonart* (1925) appeared quite late in Hungary in 1937 in shortened form, edited by EPOCHÁ Publishing House under the translation of Sándor Benamy. A second complete edition was published in 1944, also by EPOCHÁ.

The publication of the book in Hungarian received an important appreciative greeting in the national periodicals. In 1937 six reviews evaluated Sinclair's book. In the opinion of *Népszava* "in this literary history outstanding personalities of world literature and great cultural events appear in a surprisingly interesting, bravely critical new light".⁵² *Korunk* calls Sinclair's "masterful analyses" to be an indictment, an amazing work "in which Sinclair classifies with a sure hand; his conclusions are always precise and irrefutable".⁵³ The *Független Újság* maintained it to be propagandist writing "which nevertheless relates his own personal literary experiences and statements with an honest sincerity, without a great number of factual data".⁵⁴ *Könyvszemle* repeated the famous precept of Sinclair, that art is propaganda, "propaganda of money and moral, ethical, aesthetic values", and that with this brave precept and peculiar assessment Sinclair accomplished a whole series of iconoclasms and buildings of prestige. In *Nyugat* Lajos Nagy denied the

writer's aesthetic principles and the propaganda view of literature. He objected against the irrelevant statements of Sinclair "which are explained often forcefully and with hostile feeling, and with the reporter's zealous desire to expose at any cost". Nagy, "out of the many hundreds of blunders", pointed to a few logical and moral lapses in an ironic wording.⁵⁵ György Bözödi, in *Erdélyi Helikon* wrote that Sinclair's book cannot be regarded as a literary history and that his aesthetic evaluation is not acceptable.⁵⁶

It is worth quoting some eminent Hungarian literary historians' opinions of Sinclair's literary history, who — though not devoting an analytical study to his book — referred to it in their writings, and undertook concise evaluations of the work. According to Antal Szerb Sinclair had written the popular literary historical point of view of historical materialism in "a grandiose, foolish book", following the whole course of development of literature, and pointing to the financial factors as the only determiner of its route.⁵⁷ In the opinion of László Szekszárdi this literary history was an unsuccessful experiment in the creation of a socialist art history: "one of the worst experiments of this kind. He falls into the same mistakes as his bourgeois predecessors have fallen; he states without proof, he evaluates without outlining socio-economic background".⁵⁸ In the article written by Géza Hegedüs on the occasion of the news of Sinclair's death, he remarked that *Mammonart* was "very nearly the parody of the vulgarisation of historical materialism".⁵⁹ The opinion of Tamás Ungvári was similar: "his literary history is the most vulgar written in centuries. He reduced all art to direct economic interests; rarely was an artist so anti-artistic".⁶¹ István Vass described the book as "famous and disreputable", trampling down world literature with a thoroughly Americanized marxism.⁶¹ Charlotte Kretzoi considered that Sinclair had adopted the point of view of historical materialism in his literary history, but the classification of writers was contradictory to the real mentality of historical materialism. Sinclair viewed literature in a very one-sided way, the measure of value depended almost solely on the class-position, ideology and the choice of theme of the given writer.⁶²

16. Sinclair adopted the same methods as in *Mammonart* in his literary history *Money Writes!* (1927) when writing about American literature at the turn of and in the twentieth century. Due to administrative measures, the book was forbidden to be published in Hungary and consequently did not become known. On the 29th July 1933, an order from the Hungarian Minister of Commerce was published in the Official Regulations for the Royal Post, decreed that the German translation of the book *Das Geld schreibt*, published by Malik Verlag, was pronounced to be prohibited printed matter, and the right of its transportation was withdrawn.⁶³ Pursuant to the decree of *Nyomozati Értesítő*, which was an archival document of the Ministry of the Interior, another publication for the Royal Hungarian Police put the German publication of the book on the list of confiscatory and prohibited printed matter.⁶⁴

17. Both American and Hungarian critics placed *Oil!* (1927) among Sinclair's most important novels. It was a bestseller not only in the United States, but all over the world; it was translated into twenty-nine languages.

This book, after *The Jungle*, is the most translated of Sinclair's work. *Oil!* came to the hands of the Hungarian reading public in a very short time. *Népszava* had already begun to publish it in serial form by the January of 1928 in Soma Braun's translation from the unabridged original version in English.⁶⁵ The book's important success in Hungary can be seen from the fact that Népszava Publishing House edited the book twice that year, and that in all it enjoyed seven publications.

The theme of the novel is Big Capital, its main characters the grabbing capitalists. Sinclair the "muckraker", as on so many occasions, all over the oil-well districts during the time of writing the book, and collected accurate evidence in order to authenticate his statements. As a result, the Boston censorship office, wanting to defend the oil-kings, prohibited the publication of certain pages of the novel. Sinclair overprinted fig-leaves onto the "objectionable" pages, and when the right of distribution of the book was withdrawn, donned a bill-board and in one of the busiest streets in Boston, outside the stone shelter of the traffic police, sold the sensation-creating fig-leaved copies of the book. Most Hungarian periodicals wrote about the resounding success of the fig-leaved *Oil!*, and *Literatura* produced a photograph of Sinclair selling his book.⁶⁶

The official circles of the government and politics did not give a kind reception to the distribution of *Oil!* in Hungary. In *Figyelő*, the literary supplement of *Népszava*, we can read that the Royal Hungarian Minister of Commerce had announced to the post-offices that he had withdrawn the right of transportation from the Berlin Malik Verlag publication of the book, and that it should be treated as prohibited printed matter.

18. Most of Sinclair's literary work can be read in Hungarian translation. • For that very reason, it is remarkable that one of his most read, most exposing novels, *Boston* (1928), has not been published in Hungary. Nevertheless, at a time when the whole world was enraged by the judicial murder of Sacco and Vanzetti, the Hungarian press and public opinion followed their lot for years with attention, and the English and German publications of Sinclair's novel about the lawsuit was received with a greater attention than usual by Hungarian critics.

In 1929, evaluations of *Boston* could be read in many periodicals. In *Nyugat* Róbert Braun called into doubt Sinclair's impartiality and justness. József Nádas, in the periodical *Szocializmus*, classified *Boston* as being among the best of Sinclair's novels. Nádas wrote that there could be no remaining doubt that the legal proceedings were a tragedy, the outrageous deed of American capitalism. He evaluated the book as a historical novel, a characteristic and faithful representation of an epoch, which "is an exact copy of all that which occurred in America for seven-and-a-half years, in, behind and during the law-case of Sacco and Vanzetti".⁶⁷ In *Új Szó* István Szende appreciated the historical documentary value of the book. In his opinion *Boston* was not a novel but a historiography.⁶⁸

In the opinion of Zoltán Fábry, "the novel has only one hero: Justice". In his book Sinclair formulated the ethics of American jurisdiction: "who is poor and a stranger, is guilty, and who rids society of these elements, has acted in an ethical and legal manner". The most important merit of the book

is that "simply by telling the facts, valid recording of evidence and puritan chronicling, he contrives the unbelievable sufferings of Sacco and Vanzetti into an arraignment of the age. . . Sinclair's book, taking upon itself the responsibility of the age, is the first gospel of a new Golgotha. It is a report, a rectification in the name of truth: the truth itself! Not a novel!"⁶⁹ For György Szántó Sinclair's novel also represented the vision of Golgotha. "It is the exact and valid chronicle of the Calvary and electric-chair Golgotha of Boston's Sacco and Vanzetti. . . it is already not a novel, but a Greek tragedy of fate which carries in itself the unavoidable, immutable downfall of its heroes".⁷⁰

19. In 1930 Upton Sinclair informed Népszava's booksellers of the completion of his novel, *Mountain City* (1930).⁷¹ The Publishing House undertook the leading part in popularizing the novel in Hungary. In 1930 and 1931 five reviews appeared in the daily newspaper *Népszava*, and each appreciated it as an important literary work, though confining their criticism to a review of the content of the novel. The novel could first be read in Hungary in *Népszava*. The daily newspaper printed the novel in serial form, in the translation by Soma Braun, in 1931, with the title *Hajrá, Jed!*⁷² In 1933 and 1943 it was published by Nova Publishing House in book form, with the title *Hajsz a pénz után*.

20. *Roman Holiday* (1931) was received with unusual indifference by Hungarian critics. Only *Népszava* informed its readers of the first American publication of the novel. The review printed in 1931, praised only the interesting plot and up-to-dateness of the theme.⁷³ Nova Publishing House edited the novel in 1934 and 1944 under the translation of Emmy B. Karinthy. Criticism was very noncommittal at the time of the Hungarian publication.

21. In his novel *The Wet Parade* (1931), Upton Sinclair wrote of the reign of the alcohol barons, of the fight between the "drys" and the "wets". The book was published in Hungary by Nova in 1933 and 1943, in the translation of Emmy B. Karinthy.

22. The autobiography of Sinclair was published twice under the translation of Sándor Benamy by Epoque Publishing House; first in 1938 with the Hungarian title *Upton Sinclair Önéletrajza* and for the second time in 1947 with a literal translation of the original title: *American Outpost* (1932). Only one review evaluated the Hungarian publication of the book. Imre Robotos in *Korunk* definitely condemned the book: "Nowhere does Sinclair's autobiography exemplify the worldly wisdom and moderateness of great, settled spirit."⁷⁴ Only *Irodalmi Szemle* called attention to the second publication of the autobiography in a short, informational notice, quoting the evaluation of H. L. Mencken, who considered it to be Sinclair's best work.⁷⁵

23. *The Gnomobile* (1936) was published in Hungary by the Móra Publishing House, under the translation of Dezső Tandori, in 1973. The periodicals *Új Könyvek*, *Érdekes Könyvújdonságok* and *Könyvbarát* briefly reviewed the content of the novel-length tale and praised the publishing house for having undertaken its publication, thus providing for the younger generation a new amusing, edifying and adventurous book.⁷⁶ In 1976 Ilona Vadász adopted the book into a radio play which was broadcast on Kossuth Radio on the second, sixth and seventh of July, 1976.⁷⁷

24. The lesser-known novel of Sinclair, *Co-op* (1936) was translated by János Sándor and Kornél Tábori, and published by Nova Publishing House in 1944. The book did not enjoy a critical reception in Hungary.

25. *The Flivver King* (1937) came to be published in 1944 by Fővárosi Könyvkiadó in the translation of Jenő Vértes. There was no critical response.

26. Nova edited *Little Steel* (1940) in 1944, translated by János Sándor and Kornél Tábori. Hungarian periodicals published neither review or criticism.

27. In 1939 Upton Sinclair began a novel-cycle, which was planned to be one of the longest in world literature. This was the 11-volume, 7364-page *Lanny Budd* which reached a very large circulation and achieved durable success on the bookmarket the world over. As a literary work it was worse than the best of Sinclair's art, but in spite of this, the readers greedily devoured the newest, massive volumes, which appeared annually and which were written on the basis of historical facts. Important periodicals, famous critics and writers praised and devoted considerable space to the evaluation of the novel-cycle.

The *Lanny Budd* books were very successful in Hungary, too, but criticism was either very non-committal or aggressive from first to last. The Hungarian groups of nazi-sympathizers considered the book to be anti-nazi, which is why during the German invasion censorship savagely pruned much of the cycle. However, during the fifties because Sinclair had attacked Stalin and his policies both the cycle and its author pronounced to be anti-soviet and reactionary. Literary criticism of those days, which very much served political aims, evaluated the novels with very contrary and superficial statements. An analytical essay has not been written about the cycle in Hungary up to this day, and altogether only four reviews have appeared in our newspapers and periodicals. But the *Lanny Budd* series is known in Hungary today, and is one of the pieces of literature in most demand on the Hungarian bookmarket.

Népszava reviewed three of the books in the cycle: *World's End* (1940), *Wide Is the Gate* (1943), *Presidential Agent* (1944). The articles discussed mainly the content, appreciating the novels as very successful, important works, chiefly because of the choice of theme and Sinclair's literary skill.⁷⁸

In *Irodalmi Szemle*, in 1947, we can read that in *Lanny Budd* Upton Sinclair created the most monumental novel of his age.⁷⁹ In the same year, István Elek wrote of the American success of the newest volume of the world-popular cycle, the title of which was *Presidential Mission* (1947).⁸⁰ In 1948 Tamás Aczél published in *Irodalmi Szemle* the results of a test which examined the literary tastes of Hungarian intellectuals. The test was carried out in library of the Free Trade Union of Hungarian Employees of Private Enterprises. According to the data compiled from the test, Anglo-Saxon literature was the most popular, and in the enumeration of favourite books, *Lanny Budd* occupied the top place.⁸¹

In 1948, Vilma H. Boros wrote about the *Lanny Budd* series in the catholic periodical *Vigilia*. In the article it was stated that in the later novels of the cycle, Sinclair invariably repeats himself, and that the interesting report series becomes progressively pale and lifeless.

Géza Hegedüs referred to the Lanny Budd series as a historical report novel of the world, which was the completion of the persistent document-collecting and -publishing of Sinclair's career. Its factual contents are of authoritative value. "As a literary work it remains below the level of not only his best and most artistic writing, but his passionate and witty novels of exposure as well. His viewpoint is more confused and contradictory than any of his previous writings; there is in this cycle all the mist which obscures the historical truth of our age from the eyes of the American petit-bourgeoisie."⁸² Most conspicuous in this novel is that Sinclair does not look to be implacable oppositionist. The old "muckraker" could not see the new muck.

László Országh voiced a similar opinion in his *History of American Literature*: "The passionate, attacking energy and satirical voice characteristic of his earlier novels is in opposition to this cycle of Sinclair's old age, which was written with the simple technique of a bestseller and which accepts the important elements of the American way of life."⁸³

The Hungarian critical reception and publication of the volumes of the world-famous *Lanny Budd* series depended on the great changes occurring in Hungarian political life. The first novel of the cycle, entitled *World's End*, was the greatest ever Hungarian bestseller. Within a short one-and-a-half years Renaissance Publishing House edited it six times, and there was another shortened, illustrated version as well. Renaissance threw it into the market at the beginning of March 1944, at the last moment; from the 19th March 1944, the beginning of the German invasion of Hungary until the liberation of the country in 1945 no volumes of the cycle could appear in Hungary, because they judged and did harm to Fascist Germany. In the years after the liberation another six of the *Lanny Budd* novels were published in Hungary: *Between Two Worlds* (1941) in 1948, *Dragon's Teeth* (1942) in 1946, *Wide Is the Gate* (1943) in 1947, *Presidential Agent* (1944) in 1947, *Dragon Harvest* (1945) in 1948, *A World to Win* (1946) in 1949. The last volume of the series to be published in Hungary was *A World to Win*. From the May of 1949 Hungarian criticism, wearing the signs of sematism and dogmatism, attacked Sinclair with strong and false accusations. During the years of the Cold War Period none of Sinclair's books could be published here, and so the remaining volumes of Sinclair's *Lanny Budd* were unable to be published either. But after 1956, the volumes of the *Lanny Budd* series could once more make their way to the library shelves of Hungary.

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