

# ADY MEMORIAL YEAR

## Someone Has Taken a Different Road... – ADY 100 Centenary with Series of Events, Illustrated Album, Exhibition



In 2019, we commemorated the centenary of Endre Ady's death. Being one of the most influential poets and publicists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, he brought a completely new poetic diction and forms of expression to the Hungarian literature and he is still considered a pioneer of Hungarian classical modernity. The National Széchényi Library, as one of the most important keeper institutions of the poet's legacy and as a special library in literary history and thus an active participant in Ady research, prepared various programmes for the anniversary. During these events unexplored or little known aspects of the oeuvre emerged, even though we would think that every detail of it has already been discovered in its large specialized literature. Guided by the Scientific Directorate of the NSZL, a rich professional programme was outlined, and we even managed to bring forward a topic that had received little attention in research, although it is of great importance for the entire oeuvre. Furthermore, many treasures preserved in our Manuscript

Collection have now been called attention to and made known to the general public for the first time, including ones that are not necessarily known even to literary experts or whose location was partly identified as unknown in the critical edition. The keywords of the series of programmes were 'travel', 'being on the road' and 'locations', through which we highlighted their role in shaping the identity and their significance in the tragically short life of only forty-two years, more precisely Ady's twenty years of creative work. We rarely think of how much Ady had travelled during these two decades (from 1899, the year his first volume was published, to his death, the end of January 1919) and how long he was on the road, spending months or even years away from his homeland. On the one hand, such frequent travel, domestic and European 'wandering' was not common at the time, while on the other hand, 'home' as such had not been present in Ady's 'toilsome life' for long, as he himself confessed in one of his autobiographies

in September 1913. Apart from his village and childhood home in Érmindszent (Ady Endre), home would only become reality for him after his marriage to Csinszka, partly in Csucs (Ciucea), but most of all in the apartment in Veres Pálné Street in Budapest. In light of the above, we outlined a commemoration in the framework of the memorial year that would focus on a new narrative on the figure of the poet on the road, wandering and searching for a way out, reflecting on all his external and internal tensions, this being one of the essential motives of Ady's universe of poems, too. The ways in which Ady experienced travelling, his inner searches for ways out, fears,



loneliness, struggles and longings, and then his return home influenced his personal life, as well as their effect of the history of ideas, offer a new side of interpretation to both literary experts and readers. In order to present the oeuvre from the aspect of topography and special poetics, we used the relics of the NSZL's Ady collection, as well as the literary historical reflections and his contemporaries' recollections based on these relics.

### Oeuvre – in relics

After the poet's death, the documents and artefacts related to his oeuvre were mostly taken to three public collections in the capital (the Manuscript Collection of the NSZL, the Manuscript Collection of the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and of the Petőfi Literary Museum), while a smaller part of these sources could be found around the country, for example in Nagyvárad (Oradea) and Debrecen. The NSZL has nearly 1,200 unique documents that are directly related to Endre Ady's life, poetry of and his journalistic activities. Most of the documents of various provenances kept in the Manuscript Collection (beyond the documents of the General Collection) was treasured by Ady's close friend and later one of his biographers, the former editor of *Népszava* [People's Voice], Béla Révész, who had been systematically collecting materials to explore the poet's life. Révész had amicable relationship with Léda (his muse) and her sister, Berta Brüll, from whom he also purchased several primary manuscripts, letters and photographs, and such rarities as the so-called relic box kept in the Léda's apartment in Paris. The items of this collection of documents had eventually ended up in several places. In 1936, our library purchased a 115-piece correspondence from Révész, which is the core of Léda and Ady's exchange of letters in Nagyvárad, Western Europe and Budapest. Another important source was Henrik Nádor, a well-known collector who also purchased material from Révész, and through whom a rich collection of newspaper clippings cut out and preserved by the poet himself was received by the NSZL, comprising selected press debates emerging around him. Another collection consisting of approximately 600 items originated from the family itself, primarily from Lajos Ady's widow, who, being afraid of these getting perished, during the Second World War in 1941 donated several documents (including a valuable collection of photographs) and smaller artefacts to the national library in hope of the establishment of an Ady memorial room. In addition, the national library also bought important pieces from the collections of Ady's contemporaries and friends,

including the widows of Aladár Schöpflin and Lajos Biró, and the heirs of Ady's secretary and friend, Nándor Steinfeld. Between 1919 and 1979, materials arrived in several waves through donations or purchases, but starting from the 80s, we could rarely count only on a few manuscripts of poems. Most recently, in 2015, we received the autograph of the poem *After a May Shower* (*Májusi zápor után*) from the United States as a gift. We have been organizing various events to present all these treasures. The rich series of professional programmes implemented with the support of the NKA (National Cultural Fund of Hungary) lasted until the end of the centenary year, and extended even beyond that.

### Series of events

After extensive phase of preparations on more than six months, the series of events began in September 2019 and lasted until the 101<sup>st</sup> anniversary of Ady's death. On 27 September 2019, at the Researchers' Night, the Ady programmes of the National Library began with two lectures and interactive programmes. In her lecture entitled *From My Rushing Train I Glance Out Tremblingly*, Zsuzsanna Rózsafalvi talked about places that can be connected to important stages of Endre Ady's life and career, and she also drew upon the junctions of internal searching for ways and identity formation. The world of Érmindszent, Zilah (Zalău), Debrecen, Nagyvárad, Paris, Budapest, Venice, Rome, Monte Carlo, Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca), Csucs, Rheinfelden, Ótátrafüred (Starý Smokovec) came to life through written postcards, messages, photos, dedicated works. The visitors could take a closer look at them not only in pictures projected during the presentation, but also at the accompanying mini exhibition. In her presentation *Journey to the Manuscript Collection*, Beatrix Visy discussed photographs taken of Ady belonging to the national library's collection, highlighting the moments perpetuated and locations frozen by these, the poet's surviving photographs, contemporaneous photography traditions and occasions, the meanings of the fashionable settings of the time and Ady's relation to photography. Those ready for further activities could take a selfie with Ady, have a picture taken in identical settings to contemporaneous photographs, and test their knowledge in an interactive game.

The second programme of the series of events, entitled *'Every Flame Has Split in Half' – Ady and the Half Moon* was connected to the founding anniversary of the national library at the end of November: those interested could listen to the presentations *Foreword to A Holnap* [The Tomorrow] by Ákos Herczeg and *The Sunken Roads – Success, Loneliness*



and *Searching for a Way Out in Ady's Poetry* by László Boka, which were accompanied by a screening, followed by a joint discussion. The first lecture gave a brief overview of Ady's early life and those processes partly from the aspect of literary and press history and partly from culture and society that allowed Ady to become the well-known, controversial figure he was by 1908, the time when the literary journal *Nyugat* [West] was launched and the *A Holnap* [The Tomorrow] anthology were published. The second presentation actually started from this point and built it further, aiming at the internal struggles that occurred in parallel with the successes, Ady's intensifying self-analytical attitudes, his desire and failures of seeking 'the Allness', the moments of experiences of fragmentedness that filtered into his poetry, more precisely how the inner paths of the self, self-seeking attempts, failures, desire for freedom manifest themselves in the existing verses, in the reflections attached to these, and most importantly in certain letters. Prior to the two lectures and the upcoming discussion, the participants were invited to give an account of their knowledge of the poet and the era in an Ady quiz. The game was compiled by Eszter Fekete and Krisztina Kádár, staff members of the Manuscript Collection.

The last event of the 2019 programme series on Ady took place on 10 December, when art historian Csilla E. Csorba

gave an exciting presentation entitled '*Give Me Your Eyes* – *Ady's Muses and the Seduction of Photography*' where she showed photographs of lovers who played a significant role in the poet's life (mainly Léda and Csinszka, but also other 'little female pikes'), including the question whether the character and identity of the person in the portraits could be captured, what the gaze seeking for the viewer, the other reveals. The discussion was led by literary historian Beatrix Visy.

The closing event of the series was scheduled for January 2020, combining the Day of Hungarian Culture and the end of the centenary year. For this occasion we inaugurated our exhibition '*I Race upon a Wobbly Car!* – *ADY 100/101*' (curators: László Boka and Zsuzsanna Rózsafalvi), which primarily aimed at displaying the unique Ady relics kept in the national library's Manuscript Collection. The exhibition's main attraction was the illustrated album published at the end of 2019 '*Valaki útravált... Az úton lévő és kiútkereső Ady Endre* [Someone Has Taken a Different Road... Endre Ady on the Road and Seeking a Way Out]. The volume, which was published in collaboration with the publishing houses of the NSZL and HAA (Hungarian Academy of Arts), was based on the idea and script of the author of the present lines. On the same day – also as part of a series of events – Krisztina Rita Molnár's writing workshop *Get Up and Be Free* took place and Zoltán Rockenbauer held the

lecture accompanied with a screening *'Paris, Paris' Ady and the Painters* drawing upon artists, painters and their works related to Endre Ady and his stay in Paris as well as artist networks in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### **External and internal roads, locations of a path of life.**

#### **Illustrated album and exhibition opening**

Our volume and the exhibition closely related to it were created with a double purpose. We aimed at displaying a group of document treasures, mostly undisclosed to the general public, which are of unparalleled source value, but at the same time we approached the oeuvre from the perspective of Ady's external and internal travels, various locations, scenes and stations. Spatial experience played an essential role in the development of Ady's personality, identity and oeuvre, as he himself perceived it accurately. He had spent much of his life on the road, traveling, away from his homeland. This is why the notion of home and the long-awaited certainty of having been arrived had remained alien for a very long time in his poetic manifestations. Transience became more powerful, along with the experience of temporary accommodations and guest rooms, and through them the so-called experience of living out of a suitcase.

Ady's travels and wanderings around Europe and the Carpathian Basin, his frequent physical relocations are a symbol of something more, a search resulting from dissatisfaction, a losing of the self, an individual who is out of place, and partly also that of eternal hope. Ady was notoriously longing to leave behind his close environment, the realities of his society, but he was never able to break completely away from it. In the first decades of his life he was attracted to everything new, to Life with capital L, to the Allness he desired to experience, often his individual happiness, his future, the worldly raptures, the fulfilment of Love with capital L towards Léda he believed to be destined, his tranquillity and connection with God despite his shaken faith, calmness in his troubled life; in short: he expected the achievement of his professional and private goals from these travels, from relocation itself. These travels, however, were often escapes as well: departures of the fighter and polemicist Ady 'pursued' by his enemies, but also projections of the longings of an individual often struggling with not being understood by his narrower circles of friends and private relationships. However, the 'lad drifted apart from the Muddy Ér River' who, as he himself wrote in the lines of *Élet helyett órák* [Hours Instead of Life], received and experienced only happy moments could not help but get disappointed at the end of most of his travels. He did not find the relief he expected, became increasingly solitary, and often





felt that he was unable to find a way out of his destiny. In spite of his professional successes flourishing in the middle of his life, he often spoke of a life running aground in his self-reflections. Meanwhile, a possible reversal or a hypothetical change had also become impossible, and through these internal dispositions, the paths leading to the formerly sheltering childhood home finally 'sank' in his poetical universe as well. However, in this dual space and in Ady's self-analysis after 1908, transience and uninterrupted search stayed even more pronounced. Thus, this is how in his poetry, the initially attractive journey full of tempting novelties turned into wandering and condemnation to eternal search.

Real or indirect travel motifs are especially important in Ady's world of poetry because in his images expanded into visions, in his vividly descriptive lines, and later in symbols that became his trademark, the audience of his own times had already thought that the lyrical subject speaking in the poems was directly identifiable, and even identical to Endre Ady. As mentioned at the opening ceremony, according to his contemporary and paternal friend Aladár Schöpflin, Ady instinctively expressed everything that had impression on him in poems, 'every line, every word written by him stemmed directly from the experience, every image was an aspect, a memory, something he indeed went through', thus 'his biography is only important to the reader if it relates to

his poems, if it conveyed material to the poetic intellect living within.'

Certainly, the inner dispositions of the self can hardly be displayed in an exhibition, the identity-forming effect of the spaces could be emphasized instead. Especially in the case of Érmindszent, Nagyvárad, Paris and Budapest, where the poet returned to multiple times, we were able to draw from these 'oscillating' movements, from the reflections on them, and to record the inconsistent attitudes and moods of the self. 'According to geography, I came from Szilágyság (Sălaj), the old Partium, so neither from Transylvania nor from Hungary. As my family is concerned, neither from above, nor from below, but from a struggling, noble, modest family that had solely survived for a thousand years,' – Ady began his recollection for the *Nyugat* in 1909. Just like here, in his recollection of 1913 the *Az Érdekes Újság Dekameronja* [The Decameron of the Interesting Newspaper], he based his autobiography on a list of dwelt and visited locations that offered human and poetic enrichment, although – after important personal, health and professional changes – Ady concluded it as follows: 'I travel less in the locations of my earlier wanderings: in the triangle of Vienna, Paris, and Rome, but unfortunately I have to go to a sanatorium more often to patch up my health. [...] I am almost thirty-six years old, still bachelor, I have been writing a volume of poems every year for nine years,



The participants of the roundtable discussion: Zsuzsanna Rózsafalvi, László Boka, Csilla E. Csorba, Zoltán Rockenbauer, Györgyi Pécsi, Márton Falusi

I mostly live in Budapest and in my village, and it is natural, as well as a little sad, that I do not really own a home or an apartment.’ Therefore, in addition to specific locations, we also paid attention to other rather important places, schools, editorial offices, cafes and inns, temporary accommodation and hotel rooms, and from the 1910s onwards to the more and more frequently visited sanatorium sites.

The exhibition, also supported by the NKA, featured not only the poet’s manuscripts, photographs, letters, dedicated volumes, autobiographies and postcards, as well as smaller artefacts related to his person and travel motifs, but we also invited the audience to enjoy Béla Reinitz’s Ady songs and Ady poems performed by Tamás Cseh and János Novák. Visitors could also gain insight into a footage about the poet’s last journey, his funeral procession held one hundred years ago. Many staff members contributed to the creation of the exhibition, but it would be impossible to list all of them here, thus, it is necessary to name Gábor Szita, Lilla Sebestyén, Szilvia Kóbor, Judit Vincze and Borbála Mariska, the latter of whom provided enormous help as graphic designers and proofreaders in the realisation of the illustrated album. Judit Hammerstein, Acting Director-General of the NSZL, and Gergely Tamás Kucsera, Secretary General of the HAA, delivered greeting words at the opening ceremony, accompanied by actor Bálint Jaskó and the curators of the exhibition.

The launch of the illustrated album was a significant segment of the opening. The roundtable discussion was attended by

photography historian Csilla E. Csorba, poet Márton Falusi, art historian Zoltán Rockenbauer, Györgyi Pécsi, head of HAA Publishing House, and the two editors of the volume, literary historians László Boka and Zsuzsanna Rózsafalvi. The invited experts regarded the work as a significant volume and milestone in nuancing our current image of Ady, which raises our attention to the poetic role of travel and spaces, as well as to the psychological motivations behind flinches and fears in parallel to external successes. So, everything that Ady’s

impressions infiltrated into his poetic language express, that can nuance our fixed, strongly canonized image of him – as Zoltán Rockenbauer put it – that of a ‘macho Ady’. The visual material selected for the album, like the exhibition, provided a rich glimpse into the most valuable section of the above-mentioned Ady collections owned by the NSZL, that were, to a little extent, completed with items from other public collections. The editors also enriched the volume with two professional studies and a chronology of the poet’s travels, the typographical sophistication of which praises the work of Judit Vincze.

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With the exhibition, the series of events and the decorative album, the national library honoured condignly the memory of Ady, the great poet about whom László Németh noted the following: ‘While Hungarian literature can have great representatives, Hungarian self-knowledge has hardly a deeper source than him.’

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