

Modernism, Poetical Revolution, Adyism. On *A Holnap* [The Tomorrow] and Anthologies and Their Contemporary Role

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ABSTRACT

The article discusses the poetical revolution of the somewhat forgotten literary group *A Holnap* [The Tomorrow] and their two anthologies from 1908 and 1909, causing real poetical revolution at their times, and becoming a real forerunner of the Hungarian poetical modernity. The paper prudently debates the contradictory position and the significant role of the *Holnap* Literary Society, a new group of young poets and enthusiastic journalists, together with their Maecenases, who – from the Hungarian countryside, from a city of high-bred manners, Nagyvárad – endeavoured to reform, uprouse and even to change the inveterate literary societies of the time, competing simultaneously the capital's alluring literary life and the preponderant conservative forces, whose nationalist counter-propaganda had elevated to a governmental level. In this way, *A Holnap* acted as a kind of protective shield for the most important modernist literary journal, the *Nyugat*'s invigoration.

Key words: poetical revolution and modernism; Endre Ady's poetical role; *A Holnap* [The Tomorrow] anthologies; early phase of institutionalisation; fierce, ideological debates

For a long time, the concept of *modernism* in Hungarian literary history clung rigidly and rather erroneously to a particular privileged creative community, a location, a centre, as a narrative which sought to think of the events of literary life from this origin in a linear and developmental way, rather than in its natural network-like manner. While in Hungarian literary historiography philological exploration of the events that occurred at the dawn of the previous centu-

ry remains rather fragmentary, trapped at the level of basic bequests and source documents, and is still lamentably incomplete in terms of critical editions of the oeuvres of individual authors, an approach to its value that was not at all pluralistic has been bequeathed over the decades, a traditionalised approach which hardly sought to take account of aspirations or temporal or spatial variations that were different from or parallel to this centre. True, the intellectual circle of Budapest's *Nyugat* (Hungarian for "West") – the most important literary journal of the first three decades of the XXth century), following its short-lived predecessors, brought about a spectacular and decisive change in the country's figurative field of literature merely by consolidating and institutionalising it with the support of the National Federation of Industrialists and, from 1909 onwards, by establishing its own publishing house, thus crowning the efforts of the previous ten years with success.¹ Its unquestionable importance notwithstanding, however, for a long time, in the centrically simplified, sometimes downright cultic narrative of Hungarian literary history, "all other—former or contemporaneous—groups could only play the role of footnotes."² Thus, in the last hundred years or so, many statements have been erroneously and superficially canonized in discourses on Hungarian literary modernism which in fact failed to address or take into consideration significant facts. First, that *Modernism* arrived in Hungary rather late by European standards and can therefore only be understood as part of a very complex intellectual 'drift', i.e. as a multi-faceted historical and sociological phenomenon within art, the individual facets of which were created and shaped by one another

¹ *When I wrote this paper, I was a recipient of the János BOLYAI Research Scholarship of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

On the financial background of the journal and the publishing house of the same name, see for instance **Fráter**, Zoltán. *A Szövetség szelleme. A Nyugat mecénásai a GYOSZ-ban* [The spirit of the Alliance. Patrons of Nyugat in the National Federation of Industrialists], Budapest, MGYOSZ-könyvek, 1996; and **Buda**, Attila. *A Nyugat Kiadó története* [The history of Nyugat Publishing]. Budapest: Borda Antikvárium, 2000.

² **Gintli**, Tibor. "A 20. század első felének magyar irodalma. Bevezetés" [Hungarian literature in the first half of the 20th century. Introduction]. – In: Gintli, Tibor. (Ed.) *Magyar irodalom* [Hungarian Literature]. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 2010, p. 641. [Emphasis added by me, B.L.]

and in line with the interaction of many other different trends. Second, that the aspirations of the new literature, especially the aspirations of the modern poetics (which later, according to the principles of Marxist literary history, defined Hungarian lyric poetry of the late XIXth century as a kind of preparation, transition, labour, and thus as a purpose-oriented process) were in fact integral and integrated parts of a much larger *literary* and *social polysytem*. In this complex system, with its multiple literary factors, the events of 1906–1908 did indeed bring about a code-switching, but along several poles, and not as part of a single series of events. This polysytem can hardly be dissociated from Endre Ady's debated emergence as a poet and his poetic paradigm shift, his gradually expanding symbolism, and his important role as a publicist in the social modernisation of the age (even if it is inadvisable to forget his poetic predecessors and exemplary poets), and his contemporaries, who were sometimes undeservedly marginalised and with whom he drew inspiration from the very same source in the first part of his career.³ At the same time—and this is more important for the present topic—by ignoring this complex literary field, literary historians have pushed a fundamental aspect into the background which would have dealt with the cardinal canonisation issue of institutionalisation along with the contemporary history of many other *peer* movements (societies sympathetic to or, to some extent, rivalling the intellectual scope and aims of the capital's literary journal, which also overlapped in terms of their authorship for a long time) *simultaneously* with the unfolding Hungarian poetic modernity. As András Wirágh recently put it:

Hungarian literary studies reached the point at the turn of the millennium where it could slowly attempt to reassess the myth of *Nyugat* and

³ See **Boka, László**. “Sem rokona”? – egyediség, úttörőség és líratörténeti kölcsönhatások az Ady-életmű körül 1908 előtt” [“Not a relative either”? – uniqueness, pioneering and interactions in the history of poetry around Ady's lifework before 1908]. – In: *Az én testamentumom. Tanulmányok Ady Endréről* [My testament. Studies on Endre Ady]. Eds. Borbás, Andrea – Nagy, Réka. Budapest: Petőfi Irodalmi Múzeum, 2020. [PIM Studiolo], pp. 333–400.

discover writers and generations of writers who had been left in obscurity for decades alongside the canonical authors of *Nyugat*.⁴

In Hungarian literature

it is impossible to pinpoint one single author, place, and time with whom, where, and when the new era that replaced Romanticism and National Classicism began. But two cities, two anthologies, and a journal which was published for over 33 years and which adopted a wide range of poetic endeavours must be identified: Nagyvárad and Budapest. The collection of the two “A Holnap” [‘The Tomorrow’] anthologies, published in 1908 and 1909, and “Nyugat”.⁵

The above statement by Lajos Sipos can hardly be called into question, but it does merit further discussion and more detailed context. I undertake to do precisely this in the present study. The last months of 1908 and the first half of 1909 marked a turning point in the spread of modern Hungarian literature and the consolidation of its debated positions, as became clear in the relationship between former and latter, past and future, in the open or latent competition among radically different literary views, and even more so in the crystallisation and evaluation of new readerships and editorial groups emerged with increasingly clarity. These years were able gradually to illustrate the various aspects of the new, modern literary trend that was entering the phase of institutionalisation, including its emerging aesthetic values, which were being refined in internal and external polemics. During these years, however, the now rather forgotten group known as *A Holnap* was much more in the limelight than its more successful counterpart operating in the capital.⁶ At the time, harsh criticisms of the

⁴ See **Wirágh**, András. “*Nyugatosok*” a *Nyugaton* kívül [Nyugat members outside Nyugat]. – *Reciti.hu* 2020. -<https://www.reciti.hu/2020/5479>.

⁵ Cf. **Sipos**, Lajos. “Modern magyar irodalom: A Holnap és a Nyugat” [Modern Hungarian Literature: A *Holnap* and *Nyugat*]. – In: **Sipos**, Lajos. *Modernitások, alkotók, párbeszéd* [Modernities, creators, dialogues]. Szombathely: Savaria University Press, 2016, p. 34.

⁶ Under the literary group in Nagyvárad we do not mean just the seven well-known poets or the Holnap Literary Society that was formed in their footsteps, but a movement including sympathisers with an even broader social base.

new literary and artistic experience of the turn of the century and the emerging literary tradition were primarily aimed at them. The publication of their two poetry anthologies (in the autumn of 1908 and the spring of 1909) led to a prolonged series of polemics and sometimes scandalous debates between the small group of those who, in addition to literary modernity, also advocated social modernity, and the traditionalist forces of the conservative academics, who wielded considerably greater influence at the time.⁷ For a long time, the group of young intellectuals from Nagyvárad, which expanded into a movement and emerged as early as February 1908 and had an impact for more than three years, thematised the Hungarian cultural sphere and public life more strongly than its counterpart in the capital, which in retrospect maintained a more obvious hegemony. Its influence was far from being either local or temporary. Looking back from 1937, in his well-known literary history Aladár Schöpflin also felt the need to emphasise that three decades earlier the first debates did surrounded not the members of *Nyugat*, but the emergence of the group from Nagyvárad:

The battle was not even launched against »Nyugat«; in the first year they did not notice, perhaps they did not even want to notice, that the journal wanted something different, something new, than the other existing journals. There were debates about it in writers' and journalists' societies, and most of the acclaimed writers expressed highly critical opinions of some of its publications or writers, but these debates were not made public.⁸

From the moment they made their first appearance, however, the members of *A Holnap* found themselves in the middle of fierce debates from every direction on artistic, social, and even political levels.

⁷ Within a few weeks of the anthology's launch in September 1908, almost all the leading representatives of the literary scene of the time had expressed their opinions about the members of *A Holnap*, the moderns who were now 'acting as a group'. Within a few months, even prominent figures of Hungarian cultural politics spoke out against them, including Zsolt Beöthy, Jenő Rákosi, Albert Apponyi, Albert Berzeviczy, and Ferenc Herczeg, mostly without being familiar with the poems in the anthology.

⁸ See Schöpflin, Aladár. *A magyar irodalom története a XX. században* [The history of Hungarian literature in the 20th century]. Budapest: Nyugat Kiadó, 1937, p. 128.

As Mihály Ilia put it, their performances were surrounded by satirical vignettes and mocking poems and snappy cabaret sketches, and the poems by the seven poets included in the anthology were bitterly referred to in newspaper articles throughout the Monarchy without people knowing them, while most of these poems were known to the general public not in original, but only from paraphrases, caricatures in the tabloids, superficial assessments or summary opinions of nationally renowned critics, and propaganda elevated to the governmental level.⁹ In fact, although the first Nagyvárad anthology was not published in large number of copies, still a significant share of them remained unsold. The group action, however (done in deliberate support of Endre Ady), aroused real fear in many of the authoritarian Pharisees of the age's declining literary scene. Thus, *A Holnap* unwittingly acted as a kind of protective shield for *Nyugat* in those early years, and *Nyugat* was able gradually to grow stronger in the background.

In the first decade of the XXth century, leaders and advocates of literary societies, who were rigidly opposed to poetic change, completely subordinated artistic and critical considerations to national standpoints.¹⁰ These societies continued to promote the literary tradition of the XIXth century and a sort of János Arany epigonism. Zsolt Beöthy¹¹ and his brother-in-law, Jenő Rákosi,¹² representatives of the

⁹ Ilia, Mihály. "A Nyugat és A Holnap programja" [The programme of Nyugat and A Holnap]. – *Tiszatáj*, LXII, 2008, № 11, pp. 4–8; and Ilia, Mihály. "Irodalmi ünnep" [Literary celebration]. – *Bárka*, 16 January 2008, www.barkaonline.hu (accessed on 8 June 2021)

¹⁰ These societies were gradually losing their significance and prestige compared to the early 19th century, when they were tasked with promoting publications in the mother tongue, revitalising the life of literary criticism, and creating space for literary debate. However, during the period discussed here, they became closely involved with politics, becoming increasingly rigid, closed, and conservative.

¹¹ President of the Kisfaludy Society, a leading lecturer and professor at the University of Budapest, and author of several high school literature textbooks, who believed, for example, that literature should be understood as a direct expression of the national spirit. In his book published for the millennium of the Hungarian Conquest, which was originally intended to replace the historical epic with a literary narrative, he therefore took the figure of the Volga horseman as his starting point in a kind of search for the ancient traits of the national character.

¹² Influential owner and editor-in-chief of the *Budapesti Hírlap* [Budapest News], a writer of German ancestry, playwright, theatre director, member of

conservative nationalist worldview and cultural approach who were able to shape public opinion, strove for many years to portray the new trend, and in it Ady and, after 1908, also all the works and writings by his young colleagues from Nagyvárad, in a negative light, partly out of incomprehension and partly as conscious, determined opponents of social and artistic modernity. Of course, many thought already in the 1880s that the literary approach, manner of expression, and poetic horizon of the Kisfaludy Society and the Petőfi Society had become anachronistic. The critics from the populist-nationalist side, who considered the XIXth century poets János Arany and Sándor Petőfi as paragons, had occupied all the important positions in Hungarian cultural life (with relevant political support) since the time of Pál Gyulai and his colleagues. As László Imre explains in several of his studies, they seized these positions in the literary societies and in the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and the literary prizes were distributed among them, and undeserving works won awards with increasingly frequency.¹³ This was also related to the fact that during the rise of the so-called ‘literary modernists’, Count István Tisza,¹⁴ who polemicized with Endre Ady, claimed several times that János Arany was the ideal to follow for the young, in opposition to the new poets, who were con-

parliament, and a corresponding member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences who considered language and national loyalty the primary values of artistic and literary expression.

¹³ **Imre, László.** “Bevezetés” [Introduction]. – In: *A magyar irodalom története 1849-től 1905-ig* [The history of Hungarian literature from 1849 to 1905]. Eds. Imre, László – Nagy, Miklós – S. Varga, Pál. Debrecen: Kossuth Egyetemi Kiadó, 2006, pp. 3–12.

¹⁴ A Hungarian politician from an aristocratic family, member of parliament, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Hungary, first between 1903 and 1905 and then between 1912 and 1917. He was President of the Chamber of Deputies in 1912 and 1913, and he also held the Croatian-Dalmatian-Slavonian ministerial post without portfolio on several occasions. He was one of the most influential political leaders on the Hungarian side in the last decades of the Monarchy, advocating the maintenance of the Austro-Hungarian dualist system and also being a member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. He was an advocate of the rule of law, the parliamentary system, and constitutionalism but also supported the leading role of the aristocracy and the gentry and the maintenance of limited voting rights. Endre Ady criticised him sharply (and sometimes unjustifiably) on several occasions in his writings as a publicist.

sidered decadent, sick, immoral, and obsessed with imitating foreign trends. Some people therefore assumed, completely groundlessly,¹⁵ simply on the basis of the title of the anthology that it had a political tone, echoing the voices of social democracy and bourgeois radicalism. Ákos Dutka, reacting to this phenomenon, noted in a short article for the annual *Budapesti Újságírók Egyesülete Almanachja* [Almanac of the Budapest Journalists' Association] at the very end of 1908, in the midst of the conflicts, that the members of the new generation were talents who, “were all, one by one, welcomed by Hungarian literature at the time of their arrival. But when they gathered together to document the beginning of the new era, a whole host of authorities took up arms against them. Today, therefore, a serious and honest *aesthetic evaluation is unimaginable*.”¹⁶

The rigid rejection soon took on ideological overtones, and in the eyes of the enthusiastic young people who were taking the first steps to emerge as a group, it all degenerated into an unjustifiable father-son, nationalist-liberal struggle lacking any dialogue. Initially, they had hoped, in the face of superficial accusations, for a certain unification of the still very small, not at all united and not homogeneous camp of those who demanded a more modern, more progressive literary style with a greater degree of individual artistic freedom. The rejection with which they met seemed to be stronger and more united than ever before. “Call yourselves the ‘representatives of Holnap’,

¹⁵ The final choice of the title of the group of poets in Nagyvárad has given rise to several criticisms. One could easily understand it as a desire to break completely with national traditions and the present. Yet, as Zoltán Szénási pointed out, it should be understood as a kind of “highlight of the temporality (the momentary, transitory, ephemeral nature) of modern art.” In addition to the necessity of looking into the future, it is appropriate to emphasise in the final naming the ‘contemporary’ meaning of the adjective modern, the content-evaluating meaning of the artistic expression corresponding to the expectations of the present, and the desire to do so. Cf. **Szénási**, Zoltán. *Néma várostrom. Népnemzeti tradicionalizmus és konzervatív kritika a magyar irodalmi modernség kontextusában 1920 előtt* [Silent castle siege. Ethnic traditionalism and conservative criticism in the context of Hungarian literary modernism before 1920]. Budapest: Universitas, 2018, pp. 95–106.

¹⁶ **Dutka**, Ákos. “A Holnap” [A Holnap]. – In: *A Budapesti Újságírók Egyesülete Almanachja* [Almanac of the Budapest Journalists' Association], 1909. Budapest: Révai és Salamon, 1909, pp. 119–120. [Emphasis added by me, L.B.]

‘decadents’, ‘western-oriented’ or ‘modernists’: practically, it does not matter...”, wrote István Bársony in his article in *Magyar Hírlap* [Hungarian Gazette] in January 1909 in an open letter addressed to Ignóus.¹⁷ This is why János Horváth, who belonged to the conservative side but aimed to understand Ady’s relevance, noted with due criticism years later, writing about all this as a missed opportunity, that the task of the academic and conservative criticism of the time should have had, in the case of the new poetics, to “separate the literary and political meanings of each work; to determine without exasperation the novelties in taste and style”, and “to give recognition where talent creates something new of value, and to warn against its dangers. [...] But this was not the case. Instead the worst that can be expected in the reception of such a complex phenomenon occurred: the absolute denial, even without cognition. Conservative criticism has left its audience in total ignorance of the true meaning of the movement. Clearly, in their views all what Ady and his contemporaries were doing was in part a mere fad and in other part evil degeneracy, but it certainly had nothing to do with literary history.”¹⁸ This is why the huge number of attacks on the first *A Holnap*-anthology in the press used the accusation, the indictment of Ady-epigonism as the main weapon in order to discredit the movement throughout the country. From 1908, i.e. from the publication of the first anthology in Nagyvárad, the attacks proclaimed that the movement concerned little more than works by ‘disciples’ of the sick, ‘whimsical genius’, who did not need to be dealt with much. In 1909, Károly Lovász even thought it worth publishing a small book of parodies in Budapest entitled *Holnapután kiskedden* [literally: on the day after tomorrow, on ‘small Tuesday’ meaning ‘never’, mocking the name of the movement *A Holnap*], which of course sold far more copies than the original anthology and which featured a large crow and six smaller crows cawing in imitation of the large one. The subtitle made even more explicit the obvious analogy of the choice of title reflecting on the anthology, and it built on the untrue, superficial accusations concerning imitators and

¹⁷ Ignóus [Veigelsberg Hugó]: Hungarian poet, writer and journalist, editor-in-chief of *Nyugat* in its first two decades, and a major figure in the history of Hungarian literary criticism.

¹⁸ Horváth, János. “Aranytól Adyig” [From Ady to Ady]. Budapest: Pallas, 1921.

epigones of Ady that were being made in the public mind.¹⁹ It is telling that Lovászy published another volume of parodies mocking the authors of “Nyugat” under the title *Ugat* [literally: barking], but this was years later, in 1912 only, by which time the movement of *A Holnap* had all but died out. In the autumn of 1908, however, the adjective “modern” mentioned in these denunciatory debates referred primarily to poets appearing in *A Holnap* as a group, or – using the term of the conservatives – rather as Ady’s troop. Besides him, six talented poets published in the anthology: Mihály Babits, Béla Balázs, Ákos Dutka, Tamás Emőd, Gyula Juhász and Jutka Miklós. The totally unjust accusation of Ady-epigonism in the smear campaigns had a profound effect on these six authors, who had previously only expected the arguments of the counter-camp at most, but certainly not internal opposition and dissension or attempts at expropriation and competition among interests within their own camp, the modernists. These accusations (referring to the group as Ady’s followers) were unfortunately published very early on the columns of *Nyugat* as well. After the anthology had made a strong impact, many people saw it not only as a competitor, but suddenly also as a rival from the provinces. *Nyugat* undertook to publish Simon Kemény’s superficial criticism of the first anthology,²⁰ including the very lines according to which “he is their father, mother, grandfather: they all owe to Endre Ady. Least of all Mihály Babits, but him, too”. Kemény’s assessment was unluckily published exactly when, in the background people were witnessing true preparations for war between the camps of moderns and national conservatives, and within a few weeks the conflict erupted, thus “orchestras had stirred up and sprung to the attack”.²¹

¹⁹ Cf. *Holnapután kiskedden: Modern poéták verses könyve, melyből a nyájias publikum megtudja mi módon pöngetik a lantot Magyarhon új dalosai* [On the day after tomorrow, on small Tuesday: a book of poems by modern poets, from which the dear public will learn how the new lyrists of Hungary are playing the lyre]. Ed. Lovászy, Károly. Budapest: Kertész József könyvnyomdája, 1909.

²⁰ Cf. **Kemény**, Simon. “A Holnap” [A Holnap]. – *Nyugat*, 1 October 1908, pp. 214–216.

²¹ See in this connection the 1909 *Almanac of the Budapest Journalists’ Association* and its foreword by Elemér Bányai, commonly known by his pseudonym Zuboly. Later, in a letter to Gyula Juhász, Ignó, a prominent figure of *Nyugat*, partially distanced himself from Kemény and assured him of his solidari-

In addition to the blame game, the national polemics and minor scandals also served as a kind of advertisement for the group of *A Holnap*, the members of which, in addition to generational contrasts, national-liberal, and other binaries, inevitably thematised the province-capital difference (or even opposition to a certain extent). In his first, enthusiastic review,²² Lajos Hatvany, in a dig at the societies in Budapest, even noted that the glory of the publication belonged to a hitherto unknown provincial society, and not to ‘the cowardly publishing pedlars of Budapest’. Sándor Antal, the editor of the first anthology, who sometimes included provocative portraits of the poets before their poems, also touched on this in his recollection decades later:

The problem with *A Holnap* was that it was way too successful. We found ourselves confronted not only with Pest, but with everyone from old József Lévy to Gábor Oláh. [...] For half a year, we were constantly the subject of attention of the president of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, in the daily press, in the humour magazines, in the self-education circles of schools. The politicians, the prima donnas, the swindlers, the embezzlers faded into the background...²³

All this was achieved by a new provincial group, the *Holnap* Literary Society, which was unknown before the autumn of 1908, so much so that it was officially founded only a month after the launch of the first anthology in September 1908. Looking back at it today, it is completely clear that instead of the mostly condemnatory voices, the contemporary reviewers (such as Lajos Hatvany, György Lukács, Dezső

ty with *A Holnap*, but this was not made public. For more on the conservative-modern conflict that erupted, see: **Boka**, László. “Szellemi erupció” — és hadi készülődések... *A Holnap és A Budapesti Újságírók Egyesületének 1909-es Almanachja* [“Intellectual eruption” — and war preparations... *A Holnap and the 1909 Almanac of the Budapest Journalists’ Association*]. — In: **Boka**, László. *Peremek és középpontok: Tanulmányok a 20. század első felének magyar irodalmáról* [Peripheries and Centres: studies on Hungarian literature of the first half of the 20th century]. Budapest: Balassi, 2018, pp. 13–34.

²² **Hatvany**, Lajos. “A honlap” [A holnap]. — *Pesti Napló*, 23 September 1908, pp. 3–4.

²³ **Antal**, Sándor. *Ady és Várad* [Ady and Várad]. Typewritten document, NSZL Manuscript Collection, Emőd’s bequest, Fond 395; in print under the same title, Budapest: Madách Irodalmi Társaság, 2004, p. 110.

Kosztolányi, Jenő Mohácsi, and even Aladár Schöpflin), who appreciated the anthology in accordance with its true merits but were by far in the minority, emphasized the compilation's truly epoch-marking role and its significance from the perspective of literary history, including the question of literary decentralization and the points of contact between early aestheticizing modernity and social criticism.

The framing and establishing of *A Holnap* itself can best be seen as a fortunate coincidence brought about by complex factors. Ady's countrywide successes by then—above all the reception of his two powerful volumes of 1906 and 1907 (*Új versek* [New Poems] and *Vér és arany* [Blood and Gold]), but also his messianic conception of poetry and self-canonisation, which he had already experienced in his 1903 volume of poems *Még egyszer* [Once Again] published in Nagyvárad – played a significant role in this, as did his failures and tragedies in his personal life: after the loss of their stillbirth baby with Léda in the summer of 1907, by the end of the year Ady lost his job as a journalist in the capital, at *Budapesti Napló* [Budapest Journal]. In his hopeless situation friends and followers in Nagyvárad welcomed him with open arms. The smaller but prosperous city, where he had lived and worked among 1900 and 1903 was also his muse's (Léda's) hometown, the place where their fateful love begun to glimmer, a beloved place that played a decisive role in his earlier career too. Ady wished to novelise this milieu of Nagyvárad, naming the city: The City of Blood. Thus he gladly accepted the invitation of the local poets, organizers and maecenas, who were preparing to launch a “modernist, monthly literary revue”, simultaneously with *Nyugat*, and he assumed the figurative leading role in it, for which he felt predestined from the outset.²⁴ By this time, the first two issues of *Nyugat* had already been published in Budapest, and this might had been an incen-

²⁴ Ady's poetic universe has a synthesizing linguistic character. Ady was receptive to the more advanced Hungarian poetic traditions of the recent past and open to French Symbolism, while at the same time preserving his intimate connection with the values and language of old Hungarian poetry, especially the Calvinist textual tradition. In line with this, Ady would have liked to have seen himself as an absolute innovator, who encompassed timelines, was a descendant of sufficiently distant noble poetic ancestors, and in many respects, not only in his poetry but also in his character, was a rebel, an advocate for his nation, a Hungarian concerned for his race, and a Hungarian who had emerged from his race.

tive for the young people of Nagyvárád and their supporters. In the spring of 1908, having in front of them the first issues of the journal, Ady took a photo with two young disciples, the poet Tamás Emőd and journalist Mihály Nagy, who later served as president of the Holnap Society. This photograph represented a sort of intellectual identification with the Budapest journal's aspirations and modern, aesthetical programme. The other decisive factor was Gyula Juhász's arrival in Nagyvárád in early February 1908. By this time, Juhász was considered also a well-known and celebrated poet by the new generation, just like Ákos Dutka, who was publishing already his second volume of poems. Juhász, who started to work at the local Premonstratensian High School and worked as a journalist too, enthusiastically threw himself into the activities of establishing a new Literary Society. At the beginning the efforts were aimed at the creation of a monthly literary journal, but it soon became clear that the necessary financial resources would not be available for a stable operation. Finally, Sándor Antal, Ákos Dutka, and Gyula Juhász reached an agreement with Gusztáv Sonnenfeld, the head of a leading Printing House in Nagyvárád, whom they commissioned to print the planned paper, according to which they would publish an anthology first, with a decorative design for the time being. From then on, recruitment was primarily linked to Juhász himself, who immediately wrote letters to his former university classmates: Mihály Babits, Dezső Kosztolányi, Béla Balázs, Gábor Oláh. He was also the most dedicated in the decentralisation movement, i.e., the effort to launch²⁵ the new Hungarian poetry from the provinces, in contrast to the powers that were in the capital (whether conservative or modern), and Nagyvárád seemed to be an ideal place for this. The most important factor enhancing this was the openness and welcoming milieu of the city itself.

Nagyvárád (today Oradea, Romania) has a rich and varied history, with successive periods of prosperity and decay. With its bishopric founded in the XIth century, its large manorial estates, its dynamic economic development after the Compromise of 1867 (between Austria and Hungary), its enlightened citizens who were well aware of the

²⁵ As he repeatedly mentioned in his correspondence with his good friend Mihály Babits or later explained in their programme letter to the paper *Független Magyarország* [Independent Hungary], which supported them.

need for constant renewal, its persistently strong military base, and its railway hub as the centre of the second largest county in Hungary at that time, it was a city with a strong sense of tradition but also with an open and welcoming approach. With its strong ecclesiastical schools, its famous Law Academy, its learned archpriests, its nationally known editorial offices,²⁶ its growing number of European-ranking printing presses, its theatre (which was already standing by the turn of the century), its large Jewish population, its cafés (which spread rapidly compared to its population), the conservative but supportive Szigligeti Society and the King Ladislaus Masonic Lodge, which by then was also decades old, and, in general, its vibrant intellectual and artistic life, the city set the scene for competitive, parallel worlds. Ady, who in December 1899, as a true village boy, was still amazed by the lively atmosphere in Nagyvárad, lived in the city for a period of nearly four years at the time, which became a determining factor in his personal life and in his poetry and publicism. He described the local society as follows: “In Nagyvárad, a quite peculiar and interesting art of living and coexistence has developed. [...] here people understand one another. Although this city was made up of antitheses such as freethinkers and priests, churches and synagogues [...] Here, kindred spirits find one another, and here excellence of any kind succeeds. This is the society of Nagyvárad.”²⁷ Dezső Szabó, a well-known Hungarian prose-writer and at the time a substitute teacher who had been transferred to the aforementioned High School in the city in 1908, wrote about Nagyvárad in his autobiography *Életeim* [My Lives]:

It was one of the most interesting cities in the country. [...] It had all the contradictions, all the solidarity, all the discord, all the seeds of life and all the death germs that determine the future. An open eye could see all the problems of the country simmering behind the joyful effervescence of life. In its centre, it was easy to believe that you were in one of Budapest's very lively districts. [...] The composition of its people justly represented a Hungarian Noah's ark. There was the aristocracy and the gentry. [...] Then there was the intellectual Latinist middle class.²⁸

²⁶ In addition to many other periodicals, there were four in 1900, five in 1904, and by 1908 seven prestigious daily newspapers in the city.

²⁷ Ady, Endre. “A hétről” [On the A hét]. – *Nagyváradai Napló*, 26 October 1902.

²⁸ Szabó, Dezső. *Életeim* [My Lives], II. Bukarest: Kriterion, 1982, pp. 189–190.

Gyula Juhász wrote not a glorifying reminiscence but an enthusiastic article already after the first months of his stay in the city. He shared his perceptions in an article entitled “A nagyvárad nyitány” [The Overture of Nagyvárad], written for the daily newspaper of his hometown, Szeged. According to him, “this Hungarian city of priests, soldiers, and Jews, modern and old, unites and compresses Hungarian oppositions with almost electric tension.”²⁹ At the dawn of the new century, the multifaceted city or the city with multiple souls — as Endre Nagy, Ákos Dutka, György Bölöni, Aladár Schöpflin, László Cs. Szabó, Sándor Márai, Ernő Ligeti, Sándor Antal, and so many others have referred to it—“was not proud of its past, but was vain about its future”.³⁰ Zoltán Szabó’s apt lines were once confirmed by Endre Ady himself. Ady, who left the city for Paris in the autumn of 1903 to follow his muse, Léda, did not cut ties with his local friends. On his way from Budapest to his native village, Érmindszent (today Ady Endre), or later, on his way to Csucsá (today Ciucea, Romania), he always stopped in his beloved “little Paris on the banks of the Pece”, as he himself playfully labelled the city, and regularly got together with his friends and supporters, including his later colleagues at *A Holnap*. Ady’s increasing reputation as a poet and his attachment to the city also helped prompt many others seriously to consider the idea of publishing a permanent literary journal here.

The city did indeed “welcome many of the great intellectuals of the time, attracting them from the most diverse regions of the country,” thus becoming “the cradle of significant transformations in Hungarian literature.”³¹ According to the young Tamás Emőd, the idea of founding a new literary society and a literary journal was already being discussed among the local intellectuals in 1907. It is more likely, however, that the arrival of Gyula Juhász in Nagyvárad as another ‘nationally renowned poet’ gave the final impetus for the earlier plan

²⁹ See Juhász, Gyula. “A nagyvárad nyitány” [The overture of Nagyvárad], – *Szeged és Vidéke*, 19 August 1908.

³⁰ Cf. Szabó, Zoltán. “Nagyvárad, költők kedvese” [Nagyvárad, beloved by poets]. – In: Szabó, Zoltán. *Szerelmes földrajz* [In: Love with Geography]. Budapest: Nyugat, 1942, p. 176.

³¹ See Ilia, Mihály. “A Holnap születése” [The birth of A Holnap], – [Irodalomtörténeti dolgozatok], Szeged, 1960, p. 97.

to come to life. Juhász had already written about his new workplace on 24 February 1908 to his friend, a former fellow student at university, the young Mihály Babits, as follows:

Nagyvárad has already given me great, significant, beautiful spiritual sensations. It is a highly intelligent, even brilliant city. Here are some of my friends and admirers: Sándor Antal, writer and sculptor (a great admirer of yours, too), Manojlovits, German translator of Ady, János Hartmann, future monographer of Petőfi, Kardeván, eminent educator, Ignác Ödön Udvardy, teacher of painting, physicist Iréneusz Károly, Gyula Kozáry, philosopher and priest, Kollányi, who writes essays on poets for “Huszadik Század” [Twentieth Century], Léda, whose name needs no epithet, and — last but not — Dutka and Tamás Emőd, poets. And many other notables. My book is selling fast, and I am going to be a theatre critique and a columnist for “Szabadság” [Liberty]. And you should send me your writings right away, because they are waiting for them, eagerly waiting for them.³²

Three days later, on 27 February 1908, Ady arrived in Nagyvárad again. By this time, the nucleus of the future society had already gathered in some form, namely the authors of the literary journal to be published, who were considering launching a monthly revue.

At that time, the initiative was primarily the brainchild of Gyula Juhász, an active and enterprising man already considered a ‘local’ poet, who also waited for his former fellows Dezső Kosztolányi and Gábor Oláh, to join the newly forming society. Because Ady was the avowed head of the movement, Kosztolányi declined to participate, as so did Gábor Oláh from Debrecen, who dropped out because of his reckless ambition. Oláh who hesitated for a while, but eventually failed Juhász’ expectations, was even willing to speak in the later series of polemics against the anthology’s contributors. Unlike Kosztolányi and Oláh, Mihály Babits,³³ whose name and poems were

³² *Babits Mihály levelezése 1907–1909* [The Correspondence of Mihály Babits 1907–1909]. Ed. Szőke, Mária. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 2005, p. 80.

³³ In 1908, one of the most outstanding authors of the first era of Hungarian literary modernism, the later editor-in-chief of *Nyugat*, was in fact still completely unknown in Hungary. “A young poet, an independent man who reads a lot. That’s all I know about him. And I would like to know more,” wrote Lajos Hatvany about Babits (who had not yet turned 25) in his exultant review of the anthology

basically still unknown to the general public in 1908, and Béla Balázs, who start off as an aesthetician and writer, but was beginning to pursue his ambition to become a poet too, contributed their poems to the forthcoming volume. As a matter of course several of the local poets were unquestionably considered members. Among them was Ákos Dutka,³⁴ who's reputation stood the closest to that of Ady and Juhász. Dutka had already had two collections of poems published in national forums, and in this respect he was followed by Jutka Miklós, a promising poetess who had already made her debut in *Budapesti Napló* [Budapest Journal] at the age of 16 and was in the middle of editing her second volume of poems in 1908. Tamás Emőd, a young man about to graduate from high school, had also joined them. In addition to the seven people included in the anthology, they were joined from the outset by Sándor Antal as an 'eighth' member, who organized the publication of the anthology with the head of the Sonnenfeld Company. Despite having the seven authors as 'stable' members, the new society took some time to arrive at a consensus concerning its name. Juhász's suggestion — also for the title of the journal — was *Hétmagyarok* [Seven Hungarians]. Others suggested the name *Göncölszekér* [Big Dipper], a reference to the fact that the constellation also consists of seven stars. In the end, the story of how the members of the group eventually arrived at a decision concerning the name was unanimously linked by those who remember it to the decisive opinion of Ady. As the assembled could not decide on the name, they desperately asked Ady, who sat wearily in an armchair and, refusing to take part in the deliberations, said only, "tomorrow". Dutka then allegedly exclaimed, "Fine, let it be 'tomorrow', 'The Tomorrow'. Then,

of Nagyvárad, and he then went on to say, based on the small number of his poems published in *A Holnap*, "I will not ask biographers, but his poems to tell me about him." See **Hatvany**, Lajos. "A holnap" [A holnap]. Op. cit.

³⁴ This also explains why, after the poems by Ady, which made up about half of the first anthology, Dutka's 15 poems made up the second largest group in the volume. In his introduction, it is not a coincidence that Sándor Antal singled out Ady and Dutka among the "settled problems," i.e. those above discussion, and wrote that "it is difficult to risk opinions" about the other five contributors.

when the letters were counted, the words [‘a holnap’] turned out to consist of seven letters, so everyone calmed down.”³⁵

Although the anthology itself was mostly ready to go to press by the end of May, it was only launched in September, after the off-season, the so-called ‘saison morte’ of summer. Until then, however, it was reported on in several forums and national organs, and excerpts from it were published ad absurdum, even in *Új Idők* [New Times], which a few months later tried (partly successfully³⁶) to play off Ady, who had proclaimed himself as the intellectual leader, against his fellow young poets who had joined forces with him in the anthology and generally against those who were dedicated to and supported the new, modernist trend. The anthology, however, was an immediate and stunning success. A significant part of the preface dealt with Ady, and almost half of the selection consisted of a series of his poems, thus setting Ady’s poetry as an example or even a programme for the young literature and the new artists. Within just a few weeks, the poets whose works had been published in *A Holnap* were joined by dozens of progressive creators, visual artists, composers, publicists, and other intellectuals, such as Dr. René Berkovics, Dr. Sándor Dénes, Zoltán Franyó, Ernő György, Nándor Hegedűs, Henrik Horváth, Dr. Bertalan Kolbach, Boldizsár Kollányi, Theodor Manojiovics, Manó Marton, Jenő Mohácsi, Dr. Mihály Nagy, Endre Pálos, Dr. Lajos Sarkadi, Gyula Sebestyén, Barna Szunyogh, Ernő Tibor, and Viktor Wertheimstein. On 17 April 1909, Anna Lesznai was admitted at the meeting of the electoral committee, and Béla Reinitz, Andor Böszörményi, and painter István Balogh joined the general assembly on 14 November, as did the young publicist Ernő Ligeti, who was still living in Kolozsvár [today Cluj-Napoca] at the time, as the publication of the anthology in Nagyvárad had inspired local movements in several other cities throughout Hungary, and similar poetry collections

³⁵ Dutka, Ákos. *A Holnap városa. Regényes korrajz a nagyváradai “A Holnap” születésének idejéről* [The city of A Holnap. A fictional chronicle of the birth of A Holnap in Nagyvárad]. Budapest: Magvető, 1955, p. 34.

³⁶ The notorious *A duk-duk affér* [The Duk-Duk Affair], a still enigmatic, poignant piece of writing, appeared in the pages of the *Új Idők* [New Times] in October 1908, for a time driving a wedge between Ady and the members of the Holnap Society and between Ady and the prominent figures of *Nyugat*.

had been published, also featuring seven young poets. Within a few months, “the name of A Holnap had become an emblem”.³⁷

On 27 September 1908, a festive inauguration ceremony was held in the city hall of Nagyvárad, where both Ady (and Léda), who had just returned from Paris, attended. In his opening speech, the president of the new literary society, Sándor Dénes, spoke of the new group as a movement with great ambitions, and he also spoke of a certain ‘campaign’ which lay ahead.³⁸ From then on, the critical reception surrounding the anthology on behalf of the conservatives became even more radicalised, “and participating meant a choice of cultural and political values”.³⁹ At the same time, the Society, which was the first to dedicate itself to János Vajda’s oeuvre⁴⁰ and the preservation of his memory (but also the oeuvre and intellectual heritage of Hungarian poets like Bálint Balassi, Mihály Csokonai Vitéz, Sándor Petőfi, and Gyula Reviczky), sought not simply to break with the outmoded, arrogant canon of Hungarian literary life. The idea of creating independent forums for new literary talents inspired both generational and local visions of decentralisation. Speaking of the anthology itself and the eponymous *Holnap Literary Society* less than a year later, Theodor Manojlovich (the Serbian-born Todor Manojlović) made the fol-

³⁷ **Ilia**, Mihály. “A Holnap születése” [The birth of A Holnap]. Op. cit., p. 98.

³⁸ “We are now competing with the Past for the Tomorrow. Amazingly, in this very city, a whole small group of minstrels has come together—all leaders of the new campaign.” Cf. **Dénes**, Sándor. “Az első előadó estély” [The first night of lectures]. – *Nagyváradai Napló*, 29 September 1908, p. 7. For more see **Ady**, Endre. *Összes prózai művei* [Complete works of prose], IX, Budapest, Akadémiai, 1973, p. 514. The Society itself — which continued to plan a journal — was not actually and formally established until 15 October 1908.

³⁹ Cf. **N. Pál**, József. “Ady – az irodalmi modernség s a progresszió viszonya”. (II. rész) [Ady -the relationship between literary modernity and progress. (Part II)]. – Kortárs, LII. 2008, № 4, pp. 1–32; and **N. Pál**, József. *Modernség, progresszió, Ady Endre és az Ady-Rákosi vita. Egy konfliktusos eszméletörténeti pozíció természete és következményei* [Modernity, progress, Endre Ady and the debate between Ady and Rákosi. The nature and consequences of a conflicting position in the history of ideas]. Jyväskylä–Pécs: University of Jyväskylä, Faculty of Humanities, Hungarian Studies, 2008; https://jyx.jyu.fi/dspace/bitstream/handle/123456789/19856/URN_ISBN_978-951-39-3327-2.pdf?sequence=1 (accessed on 8 June 2021)

⁴⁰ János Vajda, a leading poet of the late 19th century, a predecessor and role model of Endre Ady.

lowing remarks at the Society's matinee in Arad: "Our suspicion that we had entered an era of literary and cultural revival was confirmed. And this is our greatest triumph. The emergence of the Holnap Society is not accidental, not arbitrary, not a starting point, but the necessary, inevitable consequence of something that began long ago, that has been in operation for a long time—but only invisibly, in an elusive manner. [...] *A Holnap* gave a name to something, an effort, a direction that existed before and only needed a name, an emblem. Therein lies its strength and its importance. *A Holnap* is not a »literary society«, as there are in the capital and in the countryside, with an organisation, a working schedule, basic rules—and arrogance. It owns none of these nice and salutary things. It is infinitely free, irregular, and individualistic, and is strongly opposed to literary and artistic factions and interest groups, enemy of all systems based on drinking and herding others."⁴¹

In the youthful milieu of the supporters of the *Holnap Society*, regardless of worldviews, there was a place for everyone who thought the social framework of the time was outdated or who wanted to escape the influence of the literary 'popes' (whether pro-governmental or oppositional, conservative or liberal) in a prosperous, provincial city that was open to culture to — in Ady's words — "make way for all true talent." The versatile company of those who rallied behind the anthology (and the even wider movement it generated on a theoretical level) seemed to fill a certain void and close gaps in a truly unique way, embodying previously unspoken aspirations — as Manojlović went on to say — of a Hungary which was young, intellectual, aspiring to join the West, which could awaken "for the time being only in literature." Thus, this unusualness itself created multipronged attacks, violations of interests, and sharply polemical situations from

⁴¹ See **Manojlovitsch**, Theodor. "A Holnapról: lényege, céljai" [About A Holnap: its essence and objectives]. – *Függetlenség* (Arad), 12 November 1909. The text was also published in the capital by *Független Magyarország* [Independent Hungary] on 21 November 1909. On Manojlović's youth. See also: **Németh**, Ferenc. *Ady vonzáskörében. Todor Manojlović Nagyvárad, Temesvár és Arad között 1907–1910* [In: Ady's zone. Todor Manojlović between Nagyvárad, Temesvár and Arad 1907–1910]. Zenta: Vajdasági Magyar Művelődési Intézet, 2012 (Délvidéki Soroló 3).

all directions. Seeing this, the conservative populist-nationalist camp and its organs, still in an overwhelmingly dominant position, sought to minimise the poetic significance and perceived value of the new poetry in its efforts to stabilise their position.⁴² Furthermore, they struggled to extend the aforementioned accusation of Ady epigonism to the other six poets in the anthology in every possible way. The naysayers (and this time not only the traditionalists) tried somehow to separate the younger poets from their notorious leader, but there were also examples of the reverse: falsely sending a message to some of their ‘more novice’ peers, they said they were more valuable, ‘stronger lads’, too strong to need to join Ady’s ‘school’. The point was obviously to drive a wedge between them in some way, so that the Society, which also stood for the new poetic direction, would not be consolidated in the long term.⁴³ According to Sándor Antal, for example, the rather conservative newspaper “Alkotmány” [Constitution] instantly condemned “Ady in its attack, because of his irresponsibility and immorality”, while at the same time it acknowledged the works by Gyula Juhász, Mihály Babits, and Ákos Dutka.

All the other opponents — even *Budapesti Szemle*⁴⁴ [Budapest Review] — promise to forgive Ady if he dismisses his army and marches unarmed and unescorted into the counter-camp.⁴⁵

In the scheming against the poets whose works were published in the anthology (and against the heterogeneous group of their supporters in general), the province-capital opposition also appeared over

⁴² ‘Poetry that is indecipherable to the ears and soul of the Hungarian people, that is not rooted in the spirit of the nation, and that even explicitly wants to create a “new world” here through some western poetic fads: it is not aware of itself and cannot be anything but a literary aberration that lasts for a while,’ wrote Mihály Szabolcska, one of the recognized poets of the time, in an article entitled *Ma, holnap, holnapután* [Today, tomorrow, the day after tomorrow].

⁴³ Which was partly achieved with the infamous Ady article *A duk-duk affér* [The Duk-Duk Affair] published in the competing *Új Idők* [New Times].

⁴⁴ Popular newspaper of Jenő Rákosi.

⁴⁵ For Antal’s typewritten recollection, see Antal, Sándor. *Ady és A Holnap* [Ady and A Holnap], NSZL Manuscript Collection, Fond 395. Budapest, Madách Irodalmi Társaság, 2004.

time, while the nightmare of an impending rebellion against Budapest was unfortunately successful in reducing the sympathies of those who shared or supported related aspirations.⁴⁶ However, a few weeks after the initial, perhaps too belligerent celebration in September in Nagyvárad, Ady said in October 1908 that

A Holnap does not seek to be an immature rural, provincialising revolution, a kind of literary Barbizon school; it does not seek to be a provincial protest against the literature of the capital.⁴⁷

Ady pragmatically realised that the intellectual and financial support of Budapest was indispensable, and he also tried to muffle the sometimes too harsh remarks made by Juhász and his fellows against the capital city. *A Holnap* found itself confronted with too many people whose interests it was clearly threatening, even if unwittingly. By seeking to make way for the young creative individuals while at the same time speaking out against all binding institutionalism and authoritarianism entwined with political power, or at least by seeking to offer something new instead of these, it won the sympathy of the supporters not only of the ‘aesthetic new’ but also of the ‘social new’ in its theory of modernism, and in doing so, it also frightened a great many people. This was aggravated by the fact that in a dynamically

⁴⁶ Juhász, strangely enough, played a leading role in this, but it is well known that Ady himself was not too fond of the Hungarian capital, and according to Béla Balázs’s letters, he was averse to any kind of “clique in Budapest.” More than six months before the release of the anthology, Juhász wrote in the columns of *Szeged és Vidéke* [Szeged and its Surroundings], in a review of Ákos Dutka’s new volume, that “we have only one desire, to write new, more beautiful Hungarian poems. It doesn’t matter, whether Ady writes them or Dutka or me, we understand, appreciate and honour each other. What the Faculty, the Café New York, and the Calvinist ecclesia say about us — is of no importance.” In a programme-article for the *Független Magyarország* [Independent Hungary] he stated that the new literary society “in the homeland of Chief Bihar” rebels against “the pretentiousness of the literary authorities in the cafés in Budapest.” Juhász, Gyula. “Dutka Ákos versei. A föld meg a város” [The poems of Ákos Dutka. The soil and the city]. – *Szeged és Vidéke*, 27 June 1908; see also the manuscript of the programme written for *Független Magyarország* on the aims of the Holnap Literary Society. Petőfi Literary Museum Manuscript Collection, 1908. Call number: V. 2332

⁴⁷ See *Nagyváradai Napló* [Journal of Nagyvárad], 16 October 1908.

developing city in a province of the Monarchy, not only had an anthology been published, but — as had been planned for several years — a monthly literary revue was also going to be published with Ady as editor-in-chief, and this could not have pleased the new regulars at the Café New York in Budapest, who increasingly saw the *Holnap Society* as a rival and usurper of the label ‘modern’ in the symbolic literary field.⁴⁸

Nevertheless, there was no question that in the eyes of public opinion, the writer of the preface to *A Holnap* had more radical aims than the author of the opening page of “Nyugat” had had nine months earlier. Sándor Antal did not proclaim his appreciation of national values, as Ignotus had done, and he boldly set out the path of the new group and openly claimed famous poets as predecessors in opposition to the old-fashioned approach towards the literature of the time:

And our society, *A Holnap*, includes Balassa, Csokonai, Petőfi, János Vajda, and Reviczky. All those Hungarians who burned and died for tomorrow. They are long gone. Today they ask for nothing. But even today the lintels in the Hungarian mansions are still so low that they cannot enter.⁴⁹

These lines made many hiss with disapproval. The most common accusations against those included in the anthology thus continued the criticisms against Ady that had been made in the past (lack of artistic talent, incomprehensibility, lack of national sentiment). These were followed by accusations according to which they were sick or even insane,⁵⁰ and they were subverting the social order and corrupting the youth, so the smear campaign deliberately conflated the individual poetry of those younger than Ady with that of the supposed leader, treating their poems as mere epigonism. At the meeting of the

⁴⁸ The journal plan came up several times in the 1910s.

⁴⁹ See Sándor Antal’s introduction. – In: *A Holnap*. Nagyvárad: Holnap Irodalmi Társaság, Láng József nyomda, 1908.

⁵⁰ Jenő Rákosi wrote about the poets in the first anthology at Christmas 1908: “they all seem to have been taken from Petőfi’s poem ‘Örült’ [Madman],” Cf. **Rákosi**, Jenő. “Holnaposokról és modernekről” [On the members of *A Holnap* and the moderns]. – In: *A Budapesti Újságírók Egyesülete Almanachja 1909*, Budapest: Révai és Salamon, 1909, pp. 163–169.

Petőfi Society on 6 January 1909, Géza Kenedi read his ‘reflections’ on the anthology (entitled *Fagyöngyök [Mistletoes]*). He spoke of a “decadent, symbolistic, and morbid literary trend”. Ferenc Herczeg, the president of the Petőfi Society and one of the most prominent authors of the time and also president of the largest journalists’ association and member and vice-president of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, repeated his earlier statement at this assembly, namely that “what is usually called a school or a trend” is nothing more than a bunch of talentless imitators, although in the years and months before the anthology was published all the major newspapers had already published poems by individual poets whose works were in the anthology. As noted above, “Új Idők”, edited by Herczeg, had published excerpts from the edited volume *A Holnap* in August 1908!

There were indeed few sober aesthetic assessments of the volume from Nagyvárad in the national press after its presentation,⁵¹ in contrast with the numerous angry rejections and the repetition of the accusations made in a series of editorials. While in the annual “Almanach of the Budapest Journalists’ Association” some wrote about “horror juvenutis”, József Mamusich, who quoted Jenő Rákosi’s infamous excommunicating article of Christmas 1908⁵² and who approved of the statements made in it, wrote the following in a rather prejudiced article in the columns of *Bácskai Napló* [Journal of Bácska]: “They can only agonize, torment, scream, and go wild, but they cannot love, laugh, or appreciate the good. Spirits of flame storming the skies, modern literary madmen,” as ‘–ő’⁵³ sees them. Immaculate joy, self-sacrificing friendship, fervent enthusiasm are banished from their ideals. They prefer only decay, because the balsamic scent of the flower disgusts them; they seek only blight, because their inert souls find no pleasure in the eternal beauty of nature. The swamp, the filth are their elements. They deny that they have souls, they conceal their hearts, for that is the only way to be modern. Only in this manner

⁵¹ In addition to Aladár Schöpflin, we can mention here in particular Dezső Kosztolányi’s more thorough criticism and the insightful analyses by Lajos Hatvány and György Lukács.

⁵² Cf. –ő [Rákosi, Jenő]. “A Holnap” [A Holnap] – *Budapesti Hírlap*, 20 December 1908, pp. 3–4.

⁵³ One of Rákosi’s well-known journalistic pen names, his ‘pseudonym’.

can they fail to make themselves understood, and fail to understand themselves. Otherwise, it would emerge that they are not dragons that fly in the sky, but worthless worms that have jiggled a lot in the cheese, until they fell out of it, and they are wriggling next to it, but do not know why.⁵⁴ Dozens of similar examples could be cited mostly written by people who arrived at their superficial judgements without actually having read the Nagyvárad anthology. These voices tended to focus on parody poems and mocking paraphrases, and if they did turn to the primary source, only poems such as Babits's *Fekete ország* [Black Country] and Ady's notorious *A fekete zongora* [The Black Piano] received special attention, and they were readily regarded as blatant examples of decadent incomprehensibility. *Fekete ország* first appeared in print in the pages of *A Holnap*, but *A fekete zongora* had already appeared in the capital and in some papers in major provincial towns about a year and a half earlier, while Ady had included it also in his volume *Vér és arany* [Blood and Gold].

Rákosi himself, of course, continued to fight against *A Holnap*, and in the spring of 1909, not surprisingly, he had not arrived at a positive opinion regarding the second volume, *A Holnap új versei* [New Poems of A Holnap] either. He even found it strange that the same group of authors was composing new poems which resembled the poems they had written six months earlier! As he wrote, the new anthology

has a sad, in some parts depressing effect on people. They could have easily given it the title: *lasciate ogni speranza!*⁵⁵ I don't know if this second volume is a serious decline or if it just makes such a repulsive impression on me simply because it is the second. One simply cannot bear two of these. Those who seemed to be fads in the first volume now seem to be maniacs here. There, one might have hoped that their talents would shake off the hallucinations generated by their shaken nervous systems. Here, they make a system out of their own madness and turn

⁵⁴ **Mamusich**, József. "A modern költők" [The modern poets]. – *Bácskai Napló* (Szabadka), 25 December 1908, p. 2.

⁵⁵ The second part of the famous line from *The Divine Comedy*: "Abandon all hope!"

it into a self-conscious cult. [...] The reformation in Nagyvárad will not live to see the day of its own slogan: the Tomorrow.⁵⁶

In response to these absurd accusations, Miksa Fenyő⁵⁷ wrote at the 1909 annual opening that in the smear campaign

The warlike manner of the Philistines is unfolding: now they call on their followers to defend them in the name of the national spirit, but if they do not win with the slogan of Hungarianism, tomorrow they will march in the name of morality, the day after tomorrow in the name of health, etc.⁵⁸

Fenyő proved an excellent diagnostician.

Perhaps more important than the protracted episodes of the debate and more crucial than the motifs which have surfaced again and again over the years which have passed is that the people who lent their names to the first anthology were not really Ady imitators at all, even in the early years of their careers. It is vital to see that the source of the form and atmosphere of modern Hungarian poetry, which gradually gained ground at the turn of the century, is not to be found in Ady at all, but rather in János Vajda, Gyula Reviczky, Jenő Komjáthy, and József Kiss. Ady undeniably ushered in a breakthrough in comparison to them, and to a certain extent he created a ‘new language’, but he was by no means alone in this endeavour. From today’s perspective, in terms of hierarchy, one arguably discerns the outlines of forms of subordination and coordination, but in the first years of the new century, this was not obvious at all. At the time of the publication of *A Holnap*, Ady’s struggles and poetic aims were metaphorically supported by poets who clearly recognised and respected him, but above all his supporters emphasised the need for a new poetic paradigm shift. And all the while Ady’s bluster and attitude was con-

⁵⁶ Cf. –ő [Rákosi, Jenő]. “Versek” [Poems]. – *Budapesti Hírlap*, 20 May 1909, no. 118, pp. 1–5.

⁵⁷ A Hungarian writer and intellectual, a co-founder of *Nyugat* and an instrumental figure in the Hungarian Federation of Industrialists (GYOSZ) prior to Second World War.

⁵⁸ See Fenyő, Miksa. “Hadi készülődések. (Válasz Rákosinak)” [Preparations for war. (Response to Rákosi)]. – *Nyugat*, 1 January 1909, pp. 48–51.

demned by many representatives of the younger generation, who even considered his work counterproductive. As is well known, in letters written to Babits around 1906, the young Dezső Kosztolányi called Ady an ‘empty poseur’. The stormy reception of the first anthology in Nagyvárad in the autumn of 1908 thus made several young artists even more uncertain. Babits, when corresponding with Béla Balázs in January 1909, arrived at the point where they both wondered whether they should include their poems in the new anthology which was already being planned. Babits was by nature averse to harshness and superficial criticism, whatever the source. In his letters, he described overpraising flattery as ‘distasteful ad nauseam’, and he offered the same characterization of the negative clichés that were so loud in the press of the time, but he was most seriously distressed by the contentions that he and his peers were little more than Ady imitators. As a poet making his national debut at the time, he had to clear his name before this superficial brand was burned on him. This is why his “Analízis” [Analysis],⁵⁹ published in the columns of *Nyugat* only a few months later, shows a calm but very clear detachment:

I have never imitated Ady, I do not know Ady personally, I do not follow Ady’s direction, because I do not follow any poetic direction at all.

In addition to the untrue accusations of epigonism, the ‘Adyism catchword’ also became a slogan or rather an imprecation extended to an entire generation, the Hungarian modernists of the time. In the vocabulary of the conservative critics, this became the expression of a generational, intellectual, and poetic-historical, emphatically attitudinal direction, by which they paradoxically acknowledged Ady’s powerful influence and his central role, which was exactly what they sought to deny at the same time. In the daily practice of contemporary journalism, they identified and merged all the innovative elements that they did not want to see under the heading of Adyism.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Cf. **Babits**, Mihály. “Ady (Analízis)” [Ady (Analysis)]. – *Nyugat*, 1909, no. 10–11, pp. 565–568.

⁶⁰ See Rákosi’s statement made years later, in which he listed as elements threatening the social order “the Masonry, internationalism, radical social politics, atheism, nationalism, Babits, Ady, the members of *A Holnap* and *Nyugat*, this whole

In the first quarter of his creative oeuvre, which lasted for only about twenty years, Ady successfully synthesized the results of the early primary waves of domestic modernism, i.e. from the end of the XIXth century. Neither in his love poetry (at least in the period preceding the so-called Léda-poems) nor in the uniqueness of the motifs or use of symbols in his first two volumes could he be considered spectacularly ahead of his time. In György Lukács's assessment, however, by 1908, Ady's poetry had brought to the fore feelings that were "the feelings of the sun-starved Hungarian man looking westwards", and he was the first to formulate these feelings. In this respect, he was a pioneer, since "it was he who first uttered the very special pains and longings of the Hungarian man of culture, not expressed by foreigners and hardly comprehensible to them."⁶¹ When writing about *A Holnap*, Lukács already evaluated the Ady of the volumes *Új versek* [New Poems] and *Vér és arany* [Blood and Gold] when he pointed out that the significance of this poetry was spectacularly demonstrated precisely in the fact that in his so-called poems on Hungarianism Ady "reversed a relationship, exchanged an accent." Of course, this was not only noticeable in his self-flagellating poems on Hungarianism. The powerful retuning of love affairs was also based on such exchanged accents, which inevitably caused consternation among a significant mass of readers of the time.

grotesque world"" Cf. [Dunántúli] **Rákosi**, Jenő. "Levelek" [Letters] – *Budapesti Hírlap*, 12 November 1915.

⁶¹ All this inevitably created a new language, "a new mythology was born out of old concepts, outdated histories and—apparently—only ethnographic facts," through which the "tired 'Hungarian ideologies' took on an unexpectedly terrifying depth and a wildly powerful significance." Lukács pointed out that Ady's significance lay in the fact that he realised that the thesis of belonging to the west, long considered positive and seemingly solid, i.e., "not problematic," and which had been proven over and over again through the centuries was only a "blissful self-deception"! Instead, it is precisely our determinacy and its pains, and the depths of self-deception that he ruthlessly revealed in his verses to us, "guests in Paris for merely a few weeks." At the same time, Ady speaks on behalf of the entire Hungarian nation, while "giving us wings and teaching us to fly." Cf. **Lukács**, György. "Új magyar költők. A Holnap" [New Hungarian poets. A Holnap] – *Huszadik Század*, 1908, no. 11, pp. 431–433.

There was no poet in Hungarian poetry who dared to write his love poems to a married woman, and even less who would have sung the consummation of love and the psychological complications that followed,

wrote Aladár Schöpflin, who supported Ady from the outset, about Ady's poetry and his early years in Nagyvárad before 1904.⁶² The 'attachment' of *A Holnap* to Nagyvárad could have been expected to be offensive in this form, with its bundle of novel poems, including those that were published in the anthology for the first time and those that had already been published in other forums. The passionate love poems of this collection, which were very specific in their nature, and the enthusiastic poems dealing with social backwardness and other acute social problems in Hungary, such as the intricacies of urbanisation or emigration, were, moreover, given national prominence at a time when the prevailing poetic tradition and official criticism did not consider the fact that the poems were composed in Hungarian alone sufficient to assure them recognition as part of a national canon.

At this point it seems worth recalling that the European turn to Modernism was not primarily concerned with elements of content but obviously with linguistic creativity and constructedness, or more precisely, modes of composition and pictorial-poetical disposal. The modern symbolist poem is by definition and above all organised around a set of markers reflecting in one or more symbols, which inevitably makes the meaning fragmentary, ambiguous, and layered, and thus it is impossible to assign a single meaning to a set of markers. The 'paradigm of incomprehensibility' and the 'poetry of a morbid mood' that strongly surrounded the primary critical reception of Ady and later the *A Holnap* volumes were in fact emphasised as a consequence of this. All this not only covers the statement that the possibilities of secondary meanings of linguistic elements are in fact revealed in endless degrees, in a spiral, but also the poetic idea of modernism, through its own practice, abolished the traditional notion of authorship, at least in so far as it did not consider the subject of the poem to be necessarily and exclusively identifiable with the concrete flesh-and-blood author and his or her social role. All this also meant

⁶² Cf. **Schöpflin**, Aladár. "Ady nagyváradai évei..." [Ady's years in Nagyvárad...] – *Nyugat*, 27, 1934, № 21, p. 404.

that the vision of the modern poetic subject did not need the primary experience of the physical author in terms of spatial or temporal coordinates to capture authentically a theme or mood, as the conservative critics with Jenő Rákosi at the forefront, formulated as an expectation, rather rudely raising this as an objection to Ady and to his poem *A Tisza-parton* [On the Tisza Bank], written already in 1905. The debates surrounding *A Holnap* thus were primarily

not about the work as an aesthetic phenomenon, but about value preferences, ideological intentions, clashes of human, social, and national visions and political aspirations.⁶³

For example, the groundless accusations raised against the poets of anti-Hungarianism and the accusations of a lack of patriotism went so far that not only their poems, which were described truly as incomprehensible, erotomaniac, perilous and decadent, but even their shaved faces were heavily criticised, and many people thought that not only the anthology's forward-looking title but also this physical appearance was a sign of denial of national tradition.

The first anthology — as Dezső Kosztolányi, who wrote a laudatory review in the pages of *A Hét* [The Week] under the pseudonym Lehotai, put it—was in many respects ‘shaggy, bold-hearted, and young’, that is, not yet perfect in every line, but something which, at the same time, could not be disliked. Similarly bold-hearted and young was the Society behind the poems. Though in many respects enthusiastic, naïve, and inexperienced, by mobilising enormous energy, it opened paths for other groups and fought multi-front battles with youthful fervour. Buoyed by the successes and scandals of the first anthology of *A Holnap*, the Society wanted to have Anatole France himself write a foreword for the second volume (obviously with the assistance of György Bölöni who was living in Paris, and his wife Itóka, alias Otília Márkus/Marchişiu). The plan remained only a plan, as did many other plans and visions,⁶⁴ until the successful but short-

⁶³ See N. Pál, József. *Modernség, progresszió, Ady Endre és az Ady-Rákosi vita*. Op. cit.

⁶⁴ Based on the success of the first anthology, the second one was published by Deutsch & Társa in 1909. Because of a miscalculation, it was immediately pub-

lived Society gradually ceased to function around 1911 — right when Gyula Juhász left Nagyvárad for good—because of a lack of sufficient funds. Its members were slowly absorbed by the Hungarian capital, and its best poets were attracted to *Nyugat*, which had become the absolute leader of the modernists' objectives. At the same time, a few of the seven poets began to pursue careers in theatre, film, and photography. After 1910, the prominent supporters of the former Society behind the poets continued their symbolic or very tangible struggles for the success of social modernisation of Hungary until the outbreak of the First World War created a completely new situation, which at the same time put an end to the supposed crises and prosperity of the 'Happy Times of Peace', the era of the Dual Monarchy.

Nevertheless, one finds in the complex roles played by *A Holnap* and in the direct or indirect impact of the Society many things which can be considered clear, unquestionable achievements that were reached in the span of only a few years. The publication of the first anthology and the debates surrounding it were a milestone in the institutional breakthrough of Hungarian poetic modernism. The debate sparked by the first anthology was a turning point in the debates between the existing poles of conservatives and moderns. The *Holnap Society* in Nagyvárad was thus also of great importance in the life of Ady and in the recognition of his epoch-making role. The discovery of Mihály Babits as a poet is a primary merit of *A Holnap*, and the importance of the recognition and impetus it gave to Béla Balázs in his then still nascent poetic path are also not to be underestimated, as is the open cultivation of the memory of János Vajda.⁶⁵ The primary impact and importance of the anthology are shown by the fact that it immediately provided a model for those hoping for literary decentralisation, as similar anthologies with seven poets appeared in Kolozsvár (*Közös úton* [Our Common Path]) and Miskolc (*Heten vagyunk* [We are seven]) in 1909, with meaningful titles and promising authors

lished in 1,500 copies, which, according to many recollections, eventually became a huge extra expense.

⁶⁵ They dedicated their first anthology to his memory at a time when literary historians were hardly concerning themselves with Vajda. Their first public appearance was also a commemorative evening dedicated to Vajda.

who later had prominent careers.⁶⁶ In Temesvár (today Timișoara, Romania), a new literary society was founded under the leadership of Zoltán Franyó in 1908 under the name *A Dél* [The South]. All these show the strong influence of *A Holnap* at its time. Furthermore, this weapon of literary decentralisation remained significant even decades later. In Transylvania, after other parts of the country had been annexed by the surrounding states after 1920, it helped the local Hungarian literary and intellectual life (which had been forced to become independent from cultural life in and financial support from Budapest) to (re)discover regional traditions and seek its identity in the face of the forced separation from its centre.

In the meantime, as noted above, the *Holnap Literary Society* questioned the forms, frameworks, and rigid practices of the authoritarian literary societies of the time and sought to establish instead a free and loose ‘model’ that would strengthen the individual artists’ autonomy and their co-artistic relationships. One of their most important ‘achievements’, the introduction of the so-called ‘literary-artistic matinees’ or ‘intimate afternoons’, was also linked to this.⁶⁷ All of this only becomes truly meaningful today if we realise that in the overall artistic endeavours of the turn of the XIXth and XXth centuries, literature, the humanities, and the various artistic disciplines came together in the course of these occasions and demonstrated this in practice.

⁶⁶ Cf. *Közös úton* [Our Common Path] [Poems by Gyula Andor, Mária Berde, Zsolt Harsányi, Ottó Indig, Ernő Ligeti, Andor Németh, Dezső N. Pap]. Kolozsvár, Fabritius Erik és Tsa, 1909.; and *Heten vagyunk* [We are seven] [Jenő Bán, József Faragó, Margit Kaffka, János Miskolczi Simon, Ilona Péry, Piroska Reichard and Csaba Sassy]. Miskolc: Szelényi és Társa könyvnyomdája, 1909.

⁶⁷ Despite its short lifespan, “A Holnap” and its members have been associated with numerous art events, recitals, exhibitions, and theatre performances. However, instead of simple recitals and book launches, these occasions (in front of a varying but mostly appreciative audience) brought literature, theatre, visual arts, and music into genuine dialogue. Poets themselves read their works or actors interpreted and performed them in a kind of chamber theatre production. Composers played their latest compositions alongside pieces composed to poems, and powerful paintings by modern painters were exhibited. At other times, poets themselves would appear as authors of theatre scenes or even operettas, but they were also happy to perform at more traditional vernissages, where they would talk about their works of art in the language of literature. And of course they also held academic lectures.

All this was to become known in European intellectual and art history years later, mainly through Oskar Walzel's series of lectures in 1917, as the 'mutual illumination' of the different forms of art, or '*wechselseitige Erhellung der Künste*'. In Hungarian terms, *A Holnap* played a pioneering role in this, and the existence of this mutual illumination found form both in these matinees and the anthologies.

The focus of the poetry group's worldview (despite the accusations levelled at it) was not an absolute questioning of national traditions, but rather a fruitful redefinition of them. Linked to this was the elimination of outmoded artistic forms of expression and worn-out poetic practices, and the proclamation of something radically new and hopeful beyond modern poetic forms and the declaration of a transformation and breakthrough that had already taken place in the present, which seemed to find clearest expression in literature by the members of *A Holnap* and which also pointed towards the inevitable modernisation of society. This "fertile crisis" was referred to by Ady himself at the end of 1908 as "the revolution of Hungarian souls".

Although the young people of Nagyvárad were never able to publish a literary journal and only managed to launch two anthologies, their achievements speak for themselves. These achievements documented the initial struggles and institutionalisation of Hungarian literary modernity, without which their peers, who gained greater prominence than they ever won, might not have been able later to succeed.

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