

Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

TCLC

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Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

Guide to Gale Literary Criticism Series

When a patron needs to review criticism of literary works, these are the Gale series to use:

If the author's death date is:

You should turn to:

After Dec. 31, 1959
(or author is still living)

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William Faulkner, Mary Gordon,
Ernest Hemingway, Iris Murdoch

1900 through 1959

TWENTIETH-CENTURY LITERARY CRITICISM

for example: Willa Cather, F. Scott Fitzgerald,
Henry James, Mark Twain, Virginia Woolf

1800 through 1899

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for example: Fedor Dostoevski, George Sand,
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Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

**Excerpts from Criticism of the
Works of Novelists, Poets, Playwrights,
Short Story Writers, and Other Creative Writers
Who Lived between 1900 and 1960,
from the First Published Critical Appraisals
to Current Evaluations**

**Dennis Poupard
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**Gale Research Company
Book Tower
Detroit, Michigan 48226**

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PREFACE

It is impossible to overvalue the importance of literature in the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual evolution of humanity. Literature is that which both lifts us out of everyday life and helps us to better understand it. Through the fictive lives of such characters as Anna Karenin, Lambert Strether, or Leopold Bloom, our perceptions of the human condition are enlarged, and we are enriched.

Literary criticism can also give us insight into the human condition, as well as into the specific moral and intellectual atmosphere of an era, for the criteria by which a work of art is judged reflects contemporary philosophical and social attitudes. Literary criticism takes many forms: the traditional essay, the book or play review, even the parodic poem. Criticism can also be of several kinds: normative, descriptive, interpretive, textual, appreciative, generic. Collectively, the range of critical response helps us to understand a work of art, an author, an era.

The Scope of the Book

The usefulness of Gale's *Contemporary Literary Criticism (CLC)*, which excerpts criticism on current writing, suggested an equivalent need among literature students and teachers interested in authors of the period 1900 to 1960. The great poets, novelists, short story writers, and playwrights of this period are by far the most popular writers for study in high school and college literature courses. Moreover, since contemporary critics continue to analyze the work of this period—both in its own right and in relation to today's tastes and standards—a vast amount of relevant critical material confronts the student.

Thus, *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism (TCLC)* presents significant passages from published criticism on authors who died between 1900 and 1960. Because of the difference in time span under consideration (*CLC* considers authors who were still living after 1959), there is no duplication between *CLC* and *TCLC*.

Each volume of *TCLC* is carefully designed to present a list of authors who represent a variety of genres and nationalities. The length of an author's section is intended to be representative of the amount of critical attention he or she has received from critics writing in English, or foreign criticism in translation. Critical articles and books that have not been translated into English are excluded. Every attempt has been made to identify and include excerpts from the seminal essays on each author's work. Additionally, as space permits, especially insightful essays of a more limited scope are included. Thus *TCLC* is designed to serve as an introduction for the student of twentieth-century literature to the authors of that period and to the most significant commentators on these authors.

Each *TCLC* author section represents the scope of critical response to that author's work: some early criticism is presented to indicate initial reactions, later criticism is selected to represent any rise or fall in an author's reputation, and current retrospective analyses provide students with a modern view. Since a *TCLC* author section is intended to be a definitive overview, the editors include between 20 and 30 authors in each 600-page volume (compared to approximately 75 authors in a *CLC* volume of similar size) in order to devote more attention to each author. An author may appear more than once because of the great quantity of critical material available, or because of a resurgence of criticism generated by events such as an author's centennial or anniversary celebration, the republication of an author's works, or publication of a newly translated work or volume of letters.

The Organization of the Book

An author section consists of the following elements: author heading, biocritical introduction, principal works, excerpts of criticism (each followed by a citation), and an annotated bibliography of additional reading.

- The *author heading* consists of the author's full name, followed by birth and death dates. The unbracketed portion of the name denotes the form under which the author most commonly wrote. If an author wrote consistently under a pseudonym, the pseudonym will be listed in the author heading and the real name given in parentheses on the first line of the biocritical introduction. Also located at the beginning of the biocritical introduction are any name variations under which an author wrote, including transliterated forms for authors whose languages use nonroman alphabets. Uncertainty as to a birth or death date is indicated by a question mark.

- The *biocritical introduction* contains biographical and other background information about an author that will elucidate his or her creative output. Parenthetical material following several of the biocritical introductions includes references to biographical and critical reference series published by the Gale Research Company. These include *Contemporary Authors*, *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, *Something about the Author*, and past volumes of *TCLC*.
- The *list of principal works* is chronological by date of first book publication and identifies genres. In the case of foreign authors where there are both foreign language publications and English translations, the title and date of the first English-language edition are given in brackets. Unless otherwise indicated, dramas are dated by first performance, not first publication.
- *Criticism* is arranged chronologically in each author section to provide a perspective on any changes in critical evaluation over the years. In the text of each author entry, titles by the author are printed in boldface type. This allows the reader to ascertain without difficulty the works discussed. For purposes of easier identification, the critic's name and the publication date of the essay are given at the beginning of each piece of criticism. Unsigned criticism is preceded by the title of the journal in which it appeared. For an anonymous essay later attributed to a critic, the critic's name appears in brackets in the heading and in the citation.

Important critical essays are prefaced by *explanatory notes* as an additional aid to students using *TCLC*. The explanatory notes will provide several types of useful information, including: the reputation of a critic; the reputation of a work of criticism; the specific type of criticism (biographical, psychoanalytic, structuralist, etc.); and the growth of critical controversy or changes in critical trends regarding an author's work. In many cases, these notes will cross-reference the work of critics who agree or disagree with each other.

- A complete *bibliographical citation* designed to facilitate location of the original essay or book by the interested reader accompanies each piece of criticism. An asterisk (*) at the end of a citation indicates the essay is on more than one author.
- The *annotated bibliography* appearing at the end of each author section suggests further reading on the author. In some cases it includes essays for which the editors could not obtain reprint rights. An asterisk (*) at the end of a citation indicates the essay is on more than one author.

Each volume of *TCLC* includes a cumulative index to critics. Under each critic's name is listed the authors on whom the critic has written and the volume and page where the criticism may be found. *TCLC* also includes a cumulative index to authors with the volume numbers in which the author appears in boldface after his or her name. A cumulative nationality index is another useful feature in *TCLC*. Author names are arranged alphabetically under their respective nationalities and followed by the volume numbers in which they appear.

Acknowledgments

No work of this scope can be accomplished without the cooperation of many people. The editors especially wish to thank the copyright holders of the excerpts included in this volume, the permission managers of many book and magazine publishing companies for assisting us in locating copyright holders, and the staffs of the Detroit Public Library, University of Detroit Library, University of Michigan Library, and Wayne State University Library for making their resources available to us. We are also grateful to Jeri Yaryan for her assistance with copyright research.

Suggestions Are Welcome

Several features have been added to *TCLC* since its original publication in response to various suggestions:

- Since Volume 2—An *Appendix* which lists the sources from which material in the volume is reprinted.
- Since Volume 3—An *Annotated Bibliography* for additional reading.
- Since Volume 4—*Portraits* of the authors.
- Since Volume 6—A *Nationality Index* for easy access to authors by nationality.
- Since Volume 9—*Explanatory notes* to excerpted criticism which provide important information regarding critics and their work.

If readers wish to suggest authors they would like to have covered in future volumes, or if they have other suggestions, they are cordially invited to write the editor.

AUTHORS TO APPEAR IN FUTURE VOLUMES

- Abercrombie, Lascelles 1881-1938
 Adamic, Louis 1898-1951
 Ade, George 1866-1944
 Agate, James 1877-1947
 Agustini, Delmira 1886-1914
 Aldanov, Mark 1886-1957
 Aldrich, Thomas Bailey 1836-1907
 Allen, Hervey 1889-1949
 Annensky, Innokenty Fyodorovich 1856-1909
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 Arlen, Michael 1895-1956
 Austin, Mary 1868-1934
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 Benjamin, Walter 1892-1940
 Benson, E(dward) F(rederic) 1867-1940
 Benson, Stella 1892-1933
 Bentley, E(dmund) C(lerihew) 1875-1956
 Berdyaev, Nikolai Aleksandrovich 1874-1948
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 Bergman, Hjalmar 1883-1931
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 Bethell, Mary Ursula 1874-1945
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 Bourne, George 1863-1927
 Brancati, Vitaliano 1907-1954
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 Byrne, Donn (Brian Oswald Donn-Byre) 1889-1928
 Caine, Hall 1853-1931
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 Chatterji, Sarat Chandra 1876-1938
 Churchill, Winston 1871-1947
 Comstock, Anthony 1844-1915
 Corelli, Marie 1855-1924
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 Croce, Benedetto 1866-1952
 Csáth, Géza 1887-1919
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 De Gourmont, Remy 1858-1915
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 Delisser, Herbert George 1878-1944
 DeMorgan, William 1839-1917
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 DeVoto, Bernard 1897-1955
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 Douglas, Lloyd C(assel) 1877-1951
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 James, Will 1892-1942
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 Lewisohn, Ludwig 1883-1955
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 Lowndes, Marie Belloc 1868-1947
 Lucas, E(dward) V(errall) 1868-1938
 Lynd, Robert 1879-1949
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 Manning, Frederic 1887-1935
 Marriott, Charles 1869-1957
 Martin du Gard, Roger 1881-1958
 Masaryk, Tomas 1850-1939
 McCoy, Horace 1897-1955
 McCrae, John 1872-1918
 Mencken, H(enry) L(ouis) 1880-1956
 Meredith, George 1828-1909
 Mirbeau, Octave 1850-1917
 Mistral, Frederic 1830-1914
 Monro, Harold 1879-1932
 Monroe, Harriet 1860-1936
 Moore, Thomas Sturge 1870-1944
 Morgan, Charles 1894-1958
 Mori Ogai 1862-1922
 Morley, Christopher 1890-1957
 Murray, (George) Gilbert 1866-1957
 Musil, Robert 1880-1939
 Nordhoff, Charles 1887-1947

Authors to Appear in Future Volumes

Norris, Frank 1870-1902	Roussel, Raymond 1877-1933	Turner, W(alter) J(ames) R(edfern) 1889-1946
Olbracht, Ivan (Kemil Zeman) 1882-1952	Ruskin, John 1819-1900	Vachell, Horace Annesley 1861-1955
Ophuls, Max 1902-1957	Sabatini, Rafael 1875-1950	Van Dine, S.S. (William H. Wright) 1888-1939
Parrington, Vernon L. 1871-1929	Santayana, George 1863-1952	Van Doren, Carl 1885-1950
Pickthall, Marjorie 1883-1922	Sardou, Victorien 1831-1908	Vazov, Ivan 1850-1921
Pinero, Arthur Wing 1855-1934	Seeger, Alan 1888-1916	Veblen, Thorstein 1857-1929
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Pontoppidan, Henrik 1857-1943	Seton, Ernest Thompson 1860-1946	Wallace, Edgar 1874-1932
Porter, Eleanor H(odgman) 1868-1920	Shestov, Lev 1866-1938	Wallace, Lewis 1827-1905
Porter, Gene(va) Stratton 1886-1924	Slater, Francis Carey 1875-1958	Walser, Robert 1878-1956
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Rinehart, Mary Roberts 1876-1958	Strachey, Lytton 1880-1932	Wren, P(ercival) C(hristopher) 1885-1941
Roberts, Elizabeth Madox 1886-1941	Sudermann, Hermann 1857-1938	Wylie, Francis Brett 1844-1954
Rohmer, Sax 1883-1959	Sully-Prudhomme, Rene 1839-1907	Yonge, Charlotte Mary 1823-1901
Rolfe, Frederick 1860-1913	Tabb, John Bannister 1845-1909	Zangwill, Israel 1864-1926
Rolland, Romain 1866-1944	Takuboku, Ishikawa 1885-1912	Zoshchenko, Milchail 1895-1958
Rölvaag, O(le) E(dvart) 1876-1931	Tey, Josephine (Elizabeth Mackintosh) 1897-1952	
Rosenberg, Isaac 1870-1918	Tolstoy, Alexei 1882-1945	
Rourke, Constance 1885-1941		

Readers are cordially invited to suggest additional authors to the editors.

Endre Ady

1877-1919

Hungarian poet, journalist, short story writer, and critic.

Ady is considered the father of modern Hungarian literature. Known primarily as a Symbolist poet, he addressed the need to revive Hungary's aesthetic and cultural spirit, and demanded the political, social, and economic reform of his Austrian-dominated homeland. His poetry is distinguished by an innovative system of symbols, a blend of archaic and modern language, and themes which were unique to Hungarian literature. Although Ady's achievements are unparalleled in twentieth-century Hungarian literature, the measure of his international reputation has been limited. Critics consistently attribute his relative obscurity in world literature to the difficulty of translating the poet's distinctive Hungarian imagery and subject matter.

Ady was born in the village of Érmindszent to an impoverished family of the lesser nobility. He was raised in a conservative Protestant tradition which he later rejected as an adult. Ady attended both the local Calvinist and Catholic primary schools. He received his secondary education at a Calvinist college, where he excelled as the school's best student and most notorious debauchee; his reputation for the latter persisted throughout his career. Ady studied law for one semester, leaving school to work as a journalist in 1899. In that same year he published *Versek*, his first collection of poems, a volume of sentimental verse which does not suggest the artistic quality of his later works. The turning point of Ady's career occurred while he worked at a small newspaper in Nagyvarad. There, he began a romantic affair with a sophisticated married woman, Adél Brüll Diósi, who served as the inspiration for "Léda" in his first significant poetry collection, *Új versek*. In 1904, Diósi encouraged Ady to join her in Paris, where he came under the influence of the works of the French Symbolist poets, most notably Charles Baudelaire and Paul Verlaine, and where the intellectual environment served to refine his reformist political and social ideology. After his return to Hungary in 1905, Ady published verse collections which introduced original themes with a candid approach never before practiced in Hungarian literature. Among his most important works of this period are *Vér és arany*, which presents both the good and bad aspects of materialism, and *Az Illés székén*, which expresses the hypocrisy of religious fervor devoid of forgiveness. In addition to his verse, Ady contributed political articles and short stories to the literary periodical *Nyugat*, becoming that journal's guiding force and Hungary's most controversial writer. However, his indulgent life resulted in continual ill health. Suffering from syphilis and alcoholism, Ady spent much of his time in hospitals until his death in 1919.

Critics often discuss Ady's poetry in chronological order, considering each of his volumes as a progressive step to the next, with all of his work forming a unified whole. The most salient characteristic of this unity is the poet's imaginative and original symbolism: Ady transformed typical Hungarian motifs into a system of symbols which convey a consistent visionary meaning throughout his poetry. In addition, his use of thematic and linguistic contradictions is an essential constant of his poetic style. Ady is also noted for his inventive language. Greatly



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influenced by the Bible, he combined Biblical idioms with words used in everyday speech, thereby enhancing the mystical allusions of his symbolism. A dominant concern of Ady's poetry relates to the suffering of the Hungarian lower classes and the need for social reform. An important motif illuminating this concern, used repeatedly throughout his works, is his belief that Hungary's monarchist order was an anachronism in the modern world. Ady radically opposed the ruling class's imperialistic attitude that adhered to stringent class separation; he believed that it inhibited social, spiritual, and aesthetic growth. Critics agree that through the expression of this view in his poetry, Ady's works display a revolutionary spirit that transcends those of his Hungarian predecessors and contemporaries. In his later verse, he extends his concern for the fate of the Hungarian people to that of humanity; thus, he developed a wider range of themes that includes love, death, and the search for a new religious ethic. Prompted by the advent of World War I, Ady incorporated these themes into his antiwar poetry, which reiterates his concern with human suffering and the debilitating aspects of war. Many critics consider these apocalyptic poems the apex of his career.

Critics concur that Ady was one of the most original Hungarian writers of the twentieth century. His innovative style not only revived a dormant Hungarian literature, but inspired a whole nation to seek social reforms that were compatible with the

modern world. Throughout his career, Ady received critical attention from both the bourgeoisie, into which he was born, and the radical, working-class groups who were aroused by his revolutionary spirit. Although several of Ady's works have been translated, he is little read outside of his own country. According to most critics, the translations cannot adequately express the mystical qualities of his poetry, nor can the foreign reader easily understand the Hungarian topicalities. In spite of Ady's lack of recognition outside Hungary, his major literary contribution within his country is summarized by Déző Keresztury, who wrote: "He touched every painful, and disquieting sore in contemporary Hungarian life; it was this quality of his poetry that has made it an inspiration for the Hungarian reform movement, a Bible for the Hungarians at home and the Hungarians scattered through the world." For this reason and for his modern literary approach, Ady is remembered as the preeminent modernist in Hungarian literature.

(See also *Contemporary Authors*, Vol. 107.)

PRINCIPAL WORKS

Versek (poetry) 1899
Új versek (poetry) 1906
Az Illés szekerén (poetry) 1908
Vér és arany (poetry) 1908
Szeretném, ha szeretnének (poetry) 1909
A minden titkok verseiből (poetry) 1910
A menekülő élet (poetry) 1912
A magunk szerelme (poetry) 1913
Ki látott engem? (poetry) 1914
A halottak élén (poetry) 1918
Az utolsó hajók (poetry) 1923
Ady Endre összes versei (poetry) 1930
Poems (poetry) 1941
Poems of Endre Ady (poetry) 1969
The Explosive Country: A Selection of Articles and Studies, 1898-1916 (essays) 1977

ENDRE ADY (essay date 1909)

[In an essay written for the periodical *Nyugat*, Ady expresses his fear at being a creative artist in a world of "simple and second-hand" minds.]

I am afraid, therefore I am; I am afraid for alas! life has been granted to me, and I can be so afraid that I am afraid even to confess this fear. (p. 208)

I know something which few people know today, and this is a sad and fearful state. Oh, just consider: there is a man who has an intense awareness of life, and sometimes he can produce fine confessions of this. And this man uses this awareness, does this, must do something with it: this is his life, indeed this is what he lives on. Consider someone who is compelled to boast of something which he possesses, and which our modern civilization rightly values little. Someone who tends and flaunts something which would make a sensible, modern bourgeois human being run off inevitably to the doctor to have it cured if at all possible. I have lived an awful lot, but how difficult it was for me to decide, for example, to write poetry. Yet this is something I can do, and if fear were not my superstitious faith and religion, I would happily flaunt this ability

of mine. But I am afraid, and the fact that I am talking about it here is also fear; I want to see how others as they tremble view this trembling fear. I have some very kind and good friends from my schooldays up to now, who maintain that I possess intelligence and logic, and more recently they declare that I even have ability. The fact that I have become the Hungarian showpiece of unintelligibility shows what a sacred, rightful law fear is. And oh, if only that were sufficient to indicate all that should or can be known about me! But since in business jargon I am on a campaign, I have a still more deadly fear that I shall be understood. One is thirty-two years old, does not like Horace and the court poets, and is accustomed to the death of a good poet before he has been noticed by many people. And then one sees that people do notice him, and in Hungary of course they give him an unprecedented drubbing, shout his name, caress him and see him. One must be afraid, and quite often nowadays I believe I am a humbug, a man who is almost a success.

How would anyone else in my position console himself, except that even those who understand him do not understand him? This is what I do, because in my great fear I am least afraid of banalities. And I philosophize too, because this is no bad habit, and likewise quite banal. I consider how this world would not exist if we always copied our predecessors and there were no exceptions at all. I consider how much better it would be to sense things as did the old races of mankind and to profess so. I really envy those who are simple and second-hand with all the audacity of the reformer, because perhaps they are right. And perhaps it is a finer vocation to recite the words of human souls unsullied by various sights, sounds and readings than those new words of new souls. With the sincere emotions of an honest and therefore very cowardly person, I openly salute those who are old-fashioned and monotonous. But—but I also consider sometimes that it is not necessarily a sign of mediocrity that my name is known in Hungary. They know about me, they know about me as about anyone else, but it makes them rather uncomfortable, and this is the main thing.

It is almost certain that I am not simply a poet, whose proper course would be to die like Gyula Reviczky. Indeed I despise my craft and I am frightened of my appearances even when I am appearing. I see myself as one of those Hungarians whom József Katona left out of the great conspiracy-scene. I see myself as a man, a Hungarian, who nods in his cups, silently, for a few centuries while his more wide-awake companions discuss Hungarianness and the tragedy of destiny. But in the end he lifts his head—and it is high time—and says something which is Hungarian and has something to do with the matter in hand. He says it fearfully; he says it powerfully, sometimes almost without knowing he has said it, but what he says is Hungarian and not entirely valueless. (pp. 209-12)

Endre Ady, "Fear and Writing" (originally published as "Félelem és írás," in *Nyugat*, November 1, 1909), in his *The Explosive Country: A Selection of Articles and Studies, 1898-1916*, edited by Erzsébet Vezér, translated by G. F. Cushing (translation © Erzsébet Vezér, 1977), Corvina Press, 1977, pp. 208-14.

FRANZ KAFKA (letter date 1921)

[Kafka wrote the following letter to Robert Klopstock after reading a copy of *Auf neuen Gewässern*, a German translation of *Az új Hellász*.]

Gradually, with a little outside help, this great man [Ady] is being unearthed here and there from Hungarian obscurity. However, a flock of false conceptions and false analogies also intrude upon the process. Such a translation reminds one somewhat of the complaints of ghosts over the painful incompetence of mediums. Here we have the mediumistic incompetence of reader and translator. But the prose is more direct and gives us a somewhat closer view of him. There's much I don't understand, but I take in the whole. As always in such a case, one feels happy that he is there and that one is in some way or another related to him. "Without antecedents," his work is said to be, and therefore we are also related in this respect. . . .

The epilogue also contains some new things, at least new for me.

Franz Kafka, in his letter to Robert Klopstock in December, 1921, in his Letters to Friends, Family, and Editors, translated by Richard Winston and Clara Winston (reprinted by permission of Schocken Books Inc.; translation copyright © 1958, 1977 by Schocken Books Inc.; originally published as Briefe: 1902-1924 by Franz Kafka, edited by Max Brod, S. Fischer, 1958), Schocken, 1977, p. 312.

WATSON KIRKCONNELL (essay date 1937)

[Kirkconnell was one of the first to undertake the difficult task of translating Ady's works from Hungarian into English. In this essay he discusses the variety of themes in Ady's poetry.]

It would be possible, by a tendentious selection of poems from [Ady's] output, to prove that he was a pagan or a Christian, a Satanist or a pietist, a proletarian or an aristocrat, a rebel or a mystic, a cynic or a sentimentalist, a neurasthenic or a man of iron, a cosmopolite or a patriot. Each of these facets of his personality would be authentic, but each, if isolated from the rest, would falsify one's estimate of the man. His is rather the poetry of totality,—the synthesis, in a thousand lyrics, of a thousand intensely realized aspects of modern experience. In so far as there is any dominating mood in his work, it is the tragic fever of a terrible, self-consuming spirit, "a wandering hell in the eternal sphere." He was a turbulent creative force that burned itself out in an effort to become incandescent with the intensity of its living. (p. 501)

[Ady] was consumed with an ambition to become the creator of a new lyric poetry for Hungary, a poetry which should express adequately the shifting currents and profoundly contradictory moods of modern life and thought. (p. 504)

In the very forefront of his poetic themes stands his treatment of love, a treatment in which he broke completely with that sentimental tradition which the Age of the Troubadours has imposed on Western Europe for the past nine centuries. In the passion of sex he found rather a gloomy compulsion, far nearer to the Black Aphrodite of Corinth than to the foam-begotten goddess of Paphos. He might, indeed, express a pagan joy in the gratification of the senses, but even in his psalms to the white body of "Leda" an ineluctable bitterness creeps in. Hedonism exhausted itself and found itself involved in sombre strife, full of shameful compromises and empty storms of passion. Thence came Ady's lyrics of penitence and confession, the realization of spiritual fall and of the need for spiritual expiation. He thus runs through the whole gamut of erotic experience. One is reminded of Catullus's poems to "Lesbia," but Ady had embraced a legion of Lesbias and his "love lyrics"

are, if possible, harsher and starker in their intermittent moods of disillusionment. (pp. 505-06)

Death, in Ady's poetry, is a theme almost as frequent as love, and one more august in its conception. It is the rare ebony coffin that enhances the value of his brief earthly pleasures, lying yet alive within it but soon to be interred forever. It is the invincible frost that sooner or later blights all human effort. It is an ocean of darkness on whose shadowy shore we linger for a brief while. It is a cavalcade ("The Horses of Death") that rides the roads by night, halting at unpredictable door after door with its austere summons. . . . (p. 506)

Religion entered likewise into his poetry, but under strange guises. Calvinism had permeated his youth in no uncertain fashion; and the Bible, his constant study throughout life, tinged with its fundamental colours nearly all that he wrote. More important still, there issued from his early training a tragic dualism of spiritual mood, for even amid his most riotous living the Prodigal could not free himself completely from the allegiance of an earlier devotion. He might deny God, and blaspheme proudly against Him, uttering black accusations against the Administrator of the Universe; but all this could alternate with sobs of contrition or with expressions of simple trust in the Divine. The Rt. Rev. Sándor Makkai, the Calvinist bishop of Transylvania, has actually regarded Ady as the most authentically religious of Hungarian poets; and there is a sense in which he shares in the spirit of the penitential psalms of that lovable blackguard, King David. . . . In *The Last Boats* [*Az utolsó hajók*], the sombre lyric that gives its general title to his posthumous poems, the mood, however, is one of tragic exhaustion—sans faith, sans fear, sans hope, sans everything. . . . Whether or not this represents the final position reached by the spirit of Ady, it is hard to say. With posthumous material, assembled by literary executors, it is almost impossible to assign dates to individual pieces or to give them their respective places in the progressive experience of their author. The most legitimate conclusion, however, is that we have here his last grim utterance, written on "the shores of waters of darkness."

Nature is often a favourite theme among lyric poets, but with Ady a real sensitiveness to nature does not seem to have been awakened until his sojourn under the alien skies of Paris had opened his eyes to the beauties of his native Hungary. Thence came not only wistful enthusiasm from a distance, but plenary inspiration when the Magyar countryside was revisited. A specimen of this rapture over his native fields in spring, reaching its climax in a masculine awareness of woman as a symbol of earth's beauty and fertility, is found in his poem "After a May Shower." . . . (pp. 507-09)

Towards Hungary as a land and a nation, he was profoundly patriotic. That is not to say that many of his earlier poems were not trenchantly critical of his countrymen, even to the point of arousing bitter protest; but while he might be frankly faultfinding within the family circle, he was emphatic in telling the rest of the world of Hungary's achievements and Hungary's age-old martyrdom. . . . With the World War, however, his sense of the Hungarian tragedy grew deeper and more intense. He saw the Magyars drawn against their will into a maelstrom of death. He saw Austrian generals prodigal in their use of Magyar storm troops. Under the similitude of "The Lost Horseman," his 1918 volume compresses the long, fateful annals of Hungary into a few melancholy stanzas. . . . (pp. 509-10)

Love, death, religion, nature and patriotism are thus among the major themes of his poetry; but these, even in all their

Protean forms, do not begin to exhaust the range of his interests. . . . More and more, in reading through the collected works of Ady, one is impressed by the universality of his experience. Twentieth century critics are prone to emphasize the impossibility of co-ordinating and integrating all of the spiritual contradictions of modern life. A fatal erosion of thought has tended to demolish the massive ideological structures of an earlier age, leaving Man to wander blindly among the ruins. Bitter, corrosive waters lap at the foot of walls once deemed impregnable. Vampire systems of long dead thought suck at the life-blood of the bewildered living, while new, amorphous worms of half-begotten concept writhe into greedy life. A metaphysical unification of all that is significant in contemporary thought is almost too much to hope for. In Ady, something of that integration takes place; but it is in feeling, not in thought—in an intensity of infinitely varied mood, not in a coherent and well-rounded philosophical system. There is a sense in which Ady is a Nietzschean *Übermensch*, consummating in his own person a combined and heightened version of all modern experience but burned at last to a charred wreck by voltages beyond human endurance. (pp. 511-12)

It is important, in conclusion, to comment on the intrinsic qualities of his poetry. He is not a great artist in the sense that János Arany and Mihály Babits are artists. His verse is not finely chiselled marble, but lava still warm from subterranean arteries of passion. He often achieves revolutionary ends by revolutionary means; his very power often produces the effect of monumental dignity; but one rarely feels that conscious planning has entered into the task of creation. His most notable quality is his command over vivid and unforgettable images. In this he is no doctrinaire exponent of an opinionated "imagism," but rather a spontaneous spiritual brother of the English poet, William Blake. Vision and metaphor are the very essence of his thought.

One is reminded of Aristotle's magistral dictum with regard to poetry: "The greatest thing of all by far is to be a master of metaphor. It is the one thing that cannot be learned from others; and it is also a sign of original genius, since a good metaphor implies the intuitive perception of similarity in dissimilars." Had he no other endowment than this, Ady would rank high; and it is by the application of this gift to a universal range of experience that he is a poet of world importance. As already noted, he is not a conscious "imagist," ticketing prosaic little ideas with single, explicit little images. His is rather an inborn power over symbols and analogies that are complex and suggestive, assisting the mind to explore and chart non-measurable worlds of spiritual quality. (pp. 512-13)

Watson Kirkconnell, "The Poetry of Ady," in *The Hungarian Quarterly* (reprinted by permission of The Hungarian Academy of Sciences), Vol. III, No. 3, Autumn, 1937, pp. 501-14.

RENÉ BONNERJEA (essay date 1941)

[Bonnerjea's essay discusses several of Ady's poems and stresses the originality of the poet's contribution to Hungarian literature.]

If we were to pass in review the names of all those poets noted for their originality we could hardly find one more original than Ady. His originality borders on eccentricity, and his subjectiveness on neurasthenia. In whatever mood he may happen to be the reader of his verses is not for an instant allowed to forget that the poet is born and evolves in a universe other than our own. He feels far beyond the life of experience and drags

us back into the most unexplored and dreaded convolutions of our soul. Ady's poetry is more than strange: it is alarming. To the broad, smooth highway paved with tradition, he prefers the unbeaten labyrinths of virgin forests where the green-eyed monster of madness is day and night on the lookout for unwary pioneers. What Ady describes are images distorted and unintelligible for having been observed at too close a range and with a camera out of all focus.

Reading Ady we feel ourselves wrecked on an island where the conceptions and the habitual trends of thought of the Old World are unknown or long since forgotten. Symbolism is the lord of creation and master of our will. Ady is a visionary. He sees rather than composes, and jots down what he has seen. Like the Delphic oracle he is in a state of ecstasy whenever he speaks, and sometimes is not conscious himself of what he has uttered. Symbolists there were before him by the dozens, but we may safely say that none of them ever went as far as he did. Not only does he write, but he lives and thinks in terms of symbolism. Realities of common, everyday life are not real to his imagination until they have undergone a process of transformation in which they gradually lose their distinguishing characteristics and become signs in a world of enigmas. A few examples of his poems chosen at random by their very titles will suffice to demonstrate in what symbol-conscious channels the current of his thoughts flowed: "Migration from Curses' City", "The Cemetery of Souls", "Burial at Sea", "I kiss Miss—Kisses", "My Coffin Steed", "Homesickness in the Land of Sunlight", "Weeping beneath Life's Tree", "A Boat on the Dead Sea", . . . etc., etc.

The publication of "New Verses" ["Új versek"] was a slap in the face of Convention and a challenge to the Past. As such it received its full and just share of attacks. Critics literally pounced upon it. It was objected to from all points of view. But of the throng of writers who fenced with him Béla Tóth was the only one who struck him at the weak point of his armour. Tóth's criticism was cruel yet, from his standpoint, just and judicious. He accused Ady of raving, and said that his poems were a jumble of senseless and blatant rigmarole. It hit home, and Ady, stung to the quick, tried to parry by a riposte.

When the scum and slush of his life will have sunk into oblivion and when Ady will be read no longer prejudiced against for his revolutionary principles in politics and aesthetics, but for what he himself has to offer, the validity of Tóth's attack will still hold good. All of Ady's greatness depends on our decision on this point. It is a question of fundamentals. Accept Ady's premises and we shall find him to be a poet of rarest value; refute them, and his writings will make neither head nor tail. It would be as futile an undertaking to criticize his works from any other standard than his own as it would be to wish to understand Copernicus by the Ptolemaic system, or Kant's conception of space through Leibnizian monadism.

There is—if we may express ourselves thus—a special "Ady-World". We must receive our admission into this land of wonders before we can ever hope to understand him. He is baffling and incomprehensible to the uninitiated. He is so subjective as to admit of no compromise on the part of the reader. We must either leave him alone and remain aloof from his universe, or we must let ourselves go and sink without logical restrictions to whatever he wishes to lead us into. We either rave with him or we stare at him as at an alienated. We *must* have that "willing suspension of disbelief which constitutes poetic faith". Every

single poem of his is of the species brought into literature by "Le Bateau Ivre" or "Le Tombeau d'Edgar Poe". (pp. 7-9)

Depending on unlimited inspiration as he does Ady is often unequal in his output. Sometimes his Muse lets him down; more often, however, she grips his soul and carries him to regions into which no human being had ever penetrated before.

Of whatever reality he is speaking—no matter how slight the impression from which it was derived—he first makes it pass through a process of crystallization and then starts cutting and polishing the flashing jewels which stud his ideas. As we have already mentioned he is through and through a symbolist and, as such, obscure to many; yet those who are tempted to call his poetry decadent impressionism should think twice before doing so, for, when he wishes to, he can be as universally appealing as a Vörösmarty or a Petőfi. He has many poems which are simple and direct. What more touching in its simplicity than "Saint Margaret's Island" relating how the famous modern pleasure resort received its name? How pathetic is the picture he draws of the poet born in an environment too severe and far too discouraging for him to conquer ("The Unknown Poet")! No less does he make our very heart-strings vibrate in "A Cross in the Forest" where he shows us how life and experience have taught him to uncover his head before the effigy of Our Saviour. And how intimate and passionate his poem entitled "The Lord's Arrival". It is not without just cause that Bishop Alexander Makkai calls Ady Hungary's greatest religious poet. Interesting and original too are the poems in which he treats classical themes as "Degenerate Nero's Death" or "The Death of the Poet Catullus".

But Ady's greatest contribution to Hungarian literature consists in his introduction of a world of images never seen before. There are degrees in the depth of his inspiration. At times we skim with him gaily on a lake of delicious delight, at others, he grimly drags us down to the bottom of a sea of red horror. His poems are either allegories, symbols, visions or poetic trances. His sanest vision barely reaches the borders of waking life and his wildest transcends the last limits of dreams.

Sometimes with his fertile power of imagination he establishes a striking comparison which he gradually weaves into a picture clear and consistent throughout. Such is "Old Ancestor Envy", a *curriculum vitae* in words of fire. The meaning of poems like "The Lake laughed" with its underlying philosophy or "Tender, Caressing Hands" which reminds us vaguely of Browning's "Andrea del Sarto" is perfectly clear to us. Nor do we have any difficulty in invoking the images of "The Tisza Shores", "The Thrown-up Stone", "Gare de l'Est" or "The White-Lady". In "Adam, where art thou?", "The Holy Caravan", "In Elijah's Chariot" and compositions of this nature the situation is already different. Their comprehension depends on an insight into the writer's soul, since the pictures are incomplete and require an effort on our part to supply the missing parts. Thus, the reader's mind is gradually swallowed by a whirlpool of symbols. We no longer obtain definite reproductions of the known world, but circulate in an atmosphere of subconscious intuition charged with emotions too delicate for a normal heart to register. The full meaning of his symbolic poems cannot be divined. "The Tale Died" admits of as many explanations as we wish to give to it. "Rise, Ebony Moon" is the record of a mood where the opening bracket seems to represent the black moon. "The White Lotus-Flowers" takes us to a fairyland where castles slowly revolve on an immense duck's foot. "The Compulsory Hercules" escapes logical analysis. "A Fight with the Great Lord" is, like "Old Ancestor

Envy", a combat between the poet and a fiend—this time not the past of his race, but gold and its purchasing value, symbolized by a dreadful monster half man, half swine. "In Front of Prince Silence" reveals the instinctive fear which we all have felt once at least in our lives of being followed and yet not daring to look back. . . . "The Dance of the Widower-Bachelors" is a wild dream in which weird, inhuman creatures, misunderstood in life, dance about at the hour of midnight when the restless bats are screeching and vanish at dawn, leaving behind them no traces of existence save a few drops of blood, a tear or two, and a sheet of mad verses. "The Black Piano" is the scapegoat of modern Hungarian literature, and is considered as a perfect example of Ady's ravings. Yet it seems that with a little good will and poetic feelings we should have no difficulty in understanding, if not all the words, at least the mood in which it was composed.

The reader of the poems contained in "New Verses" is either puzzled, shocked or exasperated. Ady gives us no time to breathe. From the very first line he discards the usual insipid images of his predecessors and throws himself body and soul into his own inaccessible world. The first poem of "New Verses" is perhaps one of the most difficult to understand for a foreigner.

"I am the son of Gog and Magog" he exclaims. This provides us at once with food for thought. What does he mean by claiming himself to be the offspring of such an evil power who, according to St. John the Divine, will rise to mutiny? Let us explain. In Ezekiel XXXV Gog is a mighty prince who menaces invasion at the head of a coalition of people. Josephus said that they were the Scythians. Later on, Christian writers, delving in exegetics, pinned the characteristics of these peoples on to the Asiatic races invading Europe among whom were the Hungarians. So Ady uses this line to say that he is a Hungarian seen through the history of Western Europe. (pp. 9-12)

Whether under the influence of the French *décadents*, or by his own genial intuition, it is an undeniable fact that he acquired specific conceptions of prosody unknown until then to the Hungarian public. He adheres to the principles exposed by Verlaine in his "Art poétique", the basis of which was the systematic use of impair syllables.

Ady is the Lucifer of form. His poems are consequent and as true to their own internal laws as to the severest of classical limitations. The regularity of his irregularity is imposing. (pp. 13-14)

René Bonnerjea, in his introduction to Poems by Endre Ady, translated by René Bonnerjea (copyright 1941 by Dr. George Vajna & Co.; reprinted by permission of René Bonnerjea), Dr. Vajna & Bokor Publishers, 1941, pp. 3-16.

JOSEPH REMÉNYI (essay date 1944)

[The following excerpt provides a critical survey of Ady's poetry. Reményi emphasizes the personal and poetic qualities which made Ady a literary innovator.]

As a student of law in Debrecen and as a reporter in Nagyvárad, [Ady's] aesthetic taste was in accord with the problematical, romantic effusion of his older poetic confreres. In his first collection of poems, entitled *Versek (Poems)*, he succumbed to the falsehood of sentimental platitudes; in their nationalistic implications his poems did not differ from the glibly expressed patriotic impulses of other popular poets. He produced articles

and verses with the quickness of his lyrical temperament, utterly unaware of his own possibilities. (p. 196)

After the publication of his second volume, entitled *Még egyszer* (*Once More*), Endre Ady showed signs of political orientation which was not his primary interest, but was sufficiently strong to center much of his attention upon the activities of those political and social forces which fought reactionism or conservative nationalism. Though his political intuition was keen, Ady's relationship to civic problems was first of all that of a humane poet whose sense of form would have felt alien to its purpose without an awareness of social injustice. Like Schiller or Shelley, his idealism assumed the realization of human values which from the standpoint of pragmatic politics seemed too complex to be too easily solved. His wisdom was humane; but it was also creative, transcending the horizon of those whose mental and moral range was solely political. (p. 197)

If Ady were but the embodiment of Western European poetic symbolism transplanted into Hungary, he would only signify newness in relationship to Hungarian literature. Hungary had great poets in the past, but previous to Ady there was no poet who found and suggested so much delight in verbal shades as this descendant of small landowners and Calvinistic ministers. He was a challenge to the poetic conservatism of his predecessors. He had qualities which overcame the limits of an isolated tongue and showed in proper perspective the paradox of a somewhat belated poetic symbolism. (p. 198)

Ady saw the anachronism of many Hungarian views and institutions. He himself was apt to dramatize his own "gentlemanliness." He was obsessed with inordinate pride, viewing the world through the nervous temperament of a poet. But he also had deep sympathies. His amour with a married woman whom he named Léda and later his marriage to a considerably younger woman were as much a part of his intense conflict with fate as his opposition to the interests of the Hungarian ruling class, or his awareness of the plight of the underprivileged in the framework of Hungarian society. . . . Between the first and second World Wars, literary critics in the Little Entente countries, surely not favoring the Hungarian *status quo*, found valid material and poetic wealth in Ady's work. Ady's eroticism, narcissistic sensitiveness, and occasional pointedness are proofs of the contradictory components of his character; his yearning for God shows a stormy soul in search of peace.

In his majestic poem, "Az ős kaján" (*The Old Malign*), Ady fought his ancient tempter and seducer. But there is also a gay, pagan melodiousness in this archenemy. In comparison with the decadent poets of the *fin-de-siècle*, Ady's personality seems more vital than theirs. His nation was not spared his indictments. His symbolism transcended the expression of the complicated ego of a highly impressionable individual; it unfolded the image of Hungary, victimized by outer and inner forces. This explains why Ady should be called the apocalyptic poet of modern Hungary. He rose above most of his contemporaries not through learning (Mihály Babits, the classicist, had more erudition and intellectual keenness), not through a balanced orientation in the wilderness of political, social, and economic problems (others were better equipped for scientific thinking and pragmatic understanding); he rose above most of his contemporaries because his utterances took the form of concentrated imagination and emotion and turned the pathos of his national and personal destiny into a constructive symbol. While the "sober"-minded rationalized the position of Hungary in the Danubian valley with the practice of experienced politicians

("the little men of the moment"), Ady sometimes seemed possessed in a Dostoevskian sense.

In discussing Ady as a poet it should be stressed that his expression records music and color. His words have a provoking magic. One can read much into them because of their intrinsic imaginative value. His ravaged spirit sometimes abandoned the desire to outsmart perilous traps; sometimes it induced him to renounce his own world and the world at large. But as a poet he had always enough stamina to remain loyal to the integrity of words. In his most enervated and enervating moods he had sufficient energy to translate the condition of his spirit into poetry. There is a peculiar Hungarianism in his cadence and blazing unhappiness which suggests a Magyar hearth turned to ashes. His poetic diction is Hungarian and Western European; it also shows reminiscences of the Hungarian-Calvinistic edition of the Scriptures and of folk songs. Here and there, mainly when he excels in tour de force, he aims to discover a remedy for his "modern ills" in Hungarian mythology. Some of these poems seem fabricated, suggesting an arbitrary escape from the Occident. Generally, however, his spontaneity or careful articulation is symbolized by the vocabulary of a sincere poet, whose mainspring of expression was the cleavage between his sense of values and the sense of values of those in power. (pp. 199-201)

The homocentric force of nationalism, probably as an accompaniment of a small nation's instinct for self-preservation, deterred Hungarian poets from consistently applying the doctrine of art for art's sake. The reappearing motif in the work of every Hungarian poet is the acceptance of a line of conduct that connects the poet with the rhythm of his nation. Even an innovator like Ady, an innovator who as a patriot and a poet exasperated many people, echoes the overtones of nationalism with a voice that would sound incongruous in the poetry of "pure poets" who live and create in the West under more favorable circumstances. (p. 201)

There is austerity in the admission of Ady that it would be deceptive for a Hungarian poet to emphasize solely his personal problems. When one studies his volumes in chronological order, the landscape of his spirit changes, except in one respect: the spirit always indicates a return to Hungarian roots. The familiar theme of patriotism, sometimes forced to rhetorical expressions, shows effects of a tradition which is stronger than the attributes of pure art. Ady rarely knew real peace for any length of time, but when he found it his wrestling spirit rested on the strength that arose from his village past. His complex character made him different from his ancestors, yet he found comfort in memories related to his birthplace. Nevertheless, he could not forget the lack of understanding and the sad fact that so many Hungarian values were destroyed in the material poverty and depressing aesthetic insensitiveness of life. A poem, entitled "A magyar messiások" (*The Magyar Messiahs*) is a revealing example of his fatal Hungarianism. . . . This romantic voice and prophetic fervor, this frightening uneasiness, characterizes much of Ady's work. Even in translation one senses that the subject matter of tragic despair urges the poet to examine and castigate himself and through himself his own nation, while creating poetry. (pp. 201-02)

The ideological and emotional components of his poetry show the contrast between the need for salvation and nihilistic indifference, sensuality and restraint, faith and lack of faith, vitality and aridity, a spiritual nostalgia for Catholicism and an adherence to Calvinistic dignity, a childlike need for God and a pagan separation from Christianity, a baffling simplicity