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"... it's only adornment, a right to live, a hope" *An Outline to Endre Ady's Image of Romanians*

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Abstract. The present study highlights and defines some of the characteristic features of one of the greatest Hungarian lyric poets, also remarkable short story writer and journalist, Endre Ady's (1877-1919) general idea of Romanians, on the basis of his specific writings poising between literature and journalism, using the comparative method to find the coherence between past and present. The analysis follows those conceptional, stylistic trends and options, whereby the poet is reacting to notions such as nationalism, tolerance and intolerance, the inferiority complex of a smaller culture, the collective sense and the soul in the light of the day to day social and political events, the mechanism of prejudice against ethnic groups, the impacts of the mid-life crisis, and the role of culture in the relation between mentality guided by rationalism or by faith. During the contextual analysis, Endre Ady's attitude as litterateur is highlighted, as a genuine and contemporary model in his ability to find the equilibrium in his writings between the ambivalent duality of his intellectual constitution and social-political views. This ability could be a key element, effective approach to a modern European community.

Keywords: Endre Ady, image, Romanians, tolerance, prejudice, literature, journalism

Written sources relate differently and with aspects about the characteristics of different historical ages and public stage. Works belonging to the science of history have their own means to provide resumes about processes that determine the existence of human communities, usually based upon already fixed data and facts, more or less crystallized, interpreted in a wider perspective. This is done so by literature and journalism (particularly in reporting) although not from a

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historiographical point of view and not with such means. Writings from these two latter areas contribute a great deal to the overall view of monitoring the history of mentalities. So it is easily understandable why sketches situated at the verge of literature and journalism have always played a significant role in the analytical portrayal of social and political processes.

In the following, I will offer some flashes regarding Endre Ady's[1] image of Romanians as reflected in those writings of the poet that are closely related to or can be lined in into the concept of the sketch. Some conclusions are projected into present-day life.

Equilibrium-creating analysis

The written source from which and upon which I have worked, is the anthology *Those who sleep and wake up*, subtitled *Hungarian Writers' Short Stories about Romanians*,[2] which gives us a thorough cross-section view of Endre Ady's writings on this issue.

The book comprises 44 writings, of which 18 are of Endre Ady's. Despite his high attendance ratio in the book, perhaps surprisingly it's applicable statement—if we take the subtitle of this collection as basic criteria for selection—that Ady is the one who harmonizes this selection by remaining a little bit outside of the main theme, while he presents the balance factor with the overall of his writings there enlisted.

As concerning the general image of this anthology, the selected writings are based upon different authorly and human behaviors and fundamental positions that can be categorized. From this respect, Zsolt Láng summarized very expressively regarding the main guidelines of the volume when writing in his book review that "Romanians don't have to be loved, this idea has came into public knowledge somewhere around the beginning of the 20th century, probably because of the Treaty of Trianon . . . . This idea bore no such significance and complexity earlier that time. But simultaneously with this there stings the other possibility too: Romanians shall be loved! One fact is clear: it was always easier to hate, to

[1] Ady, Endre (1877–1919): one of the greatest Hungarian lyric poets, also remarkable short story writer and journalist. His works have a major influence on Hungarian and European literature. Best-known books of poetry by this author: *Új versek* [*New Poems*], *Vér és arany* [*Blood and Gold*], *Illés szekerén* [*On Elijah's Chariot*], *Szeretném, ha szeretnének* [*I'd Love to Be Loved*], *Minden-Titkok versei* [*Poems of All Mysteries*], *Ki látott engem?* [*Who Has Seen Me?*], *A halottak élén* [*Leading the Dead*], *Az utolsó hajók* [*The Last Boats*].

[2] Kőrössi P., József (ed.). *Akik alusznak és akik fölébrednek. Magyar írók novellái a román emberről*. [*Those Who Are Sleeping and Those Who Awaken. Hungarian Authors' Short Stories about Romanians.*]

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execrate and to repel, than to love." (Láng 8).

This determinative ambiguity can also be found in the writings of Endre Ady, never as a statement, but as a proportionate and sustainable interposition. The author gives such an insightful description of his era's social and political phenomena, that the contemporary reader involuntarily reads the writings into his own age.

The selected writings of Ady can be categorized as journalism with literary pretence. Among them we find open letters (*Hungarian and Romanian / Letter to Octavian Goga*), notes (*Romanians' Rodostó, Romania*), pen sketches (*The One Who Sat for Iancu*), sketch stories (*One Hundred of Hiding Families, One Priest and One Ecclesiastical Unit*), and some short analyses that can be taken as short essays (*Octavian Goga's Charges*). They can be categorized according to their conceptions, themes and writing modes as well. Some of them react to some eloquent actions or human tokens in a very striking mode, in the style of daily periodicals, while other articles are lyrical short proses containing stories and a definite shred of psychological analysis. Meanwhile the author uses here and there a sentimental, yet withheld tone of voice, and in his almost every article we can find the voice of healthy irony and self-irony. We can also notice the trespassing of some of his symbolical and allegorical elements of his poems into his comments. He also handles with an excellent sense the indirect quotations of his time's stereotypical and ironical phrases.

Highlighting historical and social relations

Ady's writings in this anthology present an authentic and perceptive radiography of the social relations that formed throughout history and are peculiar to the author's specific themes. Endre Ady examines the mentioned domain's certain main and—one can tell—permanent components with a watchful care, among which we can mention:

a) a radiography of the collective consciousness and collective soul, especially through analyzing everyday life's suggestive momenta (The Csögi-land—similar to the main character Ion from the eponymous novel of the Romanian writer Liviu Rebreanu—; The Ghost of Szelezsán Rákhel, The Death of Madam Veturia);
b) ignorance and its connected identity crisis, authoritarianism, respectively the relationship between the rough, barbaric living conditions and the civilizing efforts (*The changing of Wiesner Rudolf* seems to be the associate-written prose of the poem On the Hungarian Waste Land by the same author);
c) ethnic prejudices and marriage (The Resurrection of Girl-hood), the "rivalry" between fervent spiritual life and rational pragmatism (Spring

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liturgy, The Horse-trade of Dumbrava, Mrs. Puskas's Christ—in all of these writings appears a more archaic, magical and hidden side of spiritual life, and the texts are mediating these through a kind of transcendental sense of reality);

d) mapping the prime movers of the renegade's soul (Romania);
e) the relationship between men of politics and men of culture: through those who are doing both politics and art we may read about the art of the irregular logicality of politics (or of the "virtuosity" connected to politics) in Ady's The Disbanded Republic (1905): "Great falls may come in close time, and blissful are the nations that can act as smart eager beavers" ("Élet" 157);
f) the complex of the "small culture" (Octavian Goga's Charges) and its compensating fix ideas, as a psychological equalizer (irrational bidding, proudness/disdainfulness, enviousness, discernment based on an emotional base, etc.)—The One Who Sat for Iancu.

Ady's writings that concern this theme prove that the author thinks of Central-Eastern Europe as a kind of melting pot, where the historical interplay and the momenta of daily actuality closely combine—this is why cutting their ambiguity is sometimes a risky operation.

Of all the anthology's Ady-writings exemplary is from this point of view the radiography of the unquestionably counterproductive phenomenon of the *Barking patriots* published in 1902, which exemplifies that the noisy, but in the same time (perhaps because of this) shadowing patriotism trips the balanced, reserved and rational judgement. "We are a nation with strong affinity to Romanticism", states the author (see Kőrössi 218), and this Romanticism in his idea appears as a notion of general infantilism: what we strongly believe in, will turn out to be our weakest point in time of crisis and ambush.

In his sketches with literary claim Ady often uses the countryside as scenery—not to oppose town and village, but to have the opportunity to analyze in simple and clear-out forms such phenomena that show up in a wider social scale as well.

In his articles Ady handles professionally his strong emotions that are reactions to mostly illogical, but manipulatively more effective-efficient strategies, gestures, actions (thus rises the question: can we speak about this theme without emotions?). If the author is more emotional—e.g. in *Hungarian and Romanian—Letter to Octavian Goga* ("Élet" 138-40), his attitude is reflected through sentences that remind us of the polemical literature's feverish style, yet they bear Ady's inner discipline.

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The overriding importance of the need for communication

As for an expressive, but at the same time empathic example for Ady Endre's balance and objectiveness in his approach and usage of the theme, we may quote from the author's *Octavian Goga's Charges* article, in which, among other issues, he dissects the organic differences between cultures that raises in time and their impact on collective soul:

> Sure enough, this peculiar Hungary a little bit always lived its life together with Europe, through crusades, Protestantism, French Revolution till the bodily, brawny reality of Socialism. It's our luck or our curse: every pulsation of the greatest civilizations not only infiltrated in us, but also constantly pierced us throughout. I'm not saying that it's unimaginable, but for now our intellectual culture is dizzily big and vividly rich for present day Romanians, but most of all it's blinding, thus provocative, too. But our place, the true meaning of geography, was ordered and decided this way, we don't have too much of benefit out of it, it's only adornment, a right to live, a hope. ("Összes prózai művei" 18)

Behind these kinds of statements we find causes originating to a certain point from the author's spiritual temper. In the same time however these constitute an organical own-interpreted opinion-formatting role of the almost naturally entitled mediator between the cultures of East and West, as stated by László Németh: "What [Ady] knows, suspects about Hungarian relations, Hungarian past, is lining up to a certainty carried in his temper. He is the Hungarian, the history happened to him; when he speaks about Hungarians, he simply remembers things" (Németh 447).

How will Ady's rational judgement and sympathetic ability or even his confiding good temper act in circumstances, events that warn about transfiguration of such people of whom he considered his true friends in principle, like Romanian poets and essayists Octavian Goga and in certain aspects Emil Isac? Ady's sketches confirm: the necessity of denomination, of saying out things in most cases designates in his writings a kind of middle course, in order that thoughts should result in valuable deductions. These texts are written by the erring, because reflective, pensive man who is reconsidering again and again his own inner world, who maybe realizes at every turn that nothing is foredoomed for final determination, and irrespective of the options somebody may have, you can communicate with him, as long as he can support his ideas with healthy, traceable and elucidated arguments. In those moments when Ady lets himself in the flow of sometimes intolerant general atmosphere, he tries to legitimate his arguments, in order to be capable of having or continuing a dialogue. In the same time, he shows

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between the lines the great communicational gap that is very often traceable amidst ethnic or human interrelations, nowadays maybe even more accentuated than in his time. Probably that's the reason why Ady composes in such a way to let his readers think, ask for answers and decide.

Of course, we cannot make abstraction of Ady's options derived from his personal conceptions and style, from the author's basic political and social position, views. Onto his constitutional variegation comes not only the interpretation of different approaches of liberalism (at least two: the real one and the theatrical one), but also the processing of the effects of socialism which is gaining ground. This kind of ambiguity can be traced in one of the key-elements of his self-awareness and conception: his relation to Transylvania. He sets Transylvania as an example for his contemporaries, this way on the one hand he wanted the region to be a part of Hungary, that would necessitate more strenuous attention from the state, and on the other hand he thought of this traditional, history-honored, realistic and liberal Transylvanian society as a good pattern for the wellfunctioning of multicultural/multi-ethnic society as well. That's why Béla Pomogáts said that Ady is the forerunner of the idea of Transylvanism (15).

Afterword: of the benevolent ambiguity

Endre Ady sympathizes with liberal and socio-democratic ideas, interprets extreme nationalism as an instrument and not as a programmatic target, expresses his thoughts with a slightly radical tone of voice. His lyrical and journalistic mode of thinking and expressing himself are overlapping each other, as András Veres properly suggests (see Kabdebó et al. 45). The reason this might be so is that—be it poetry or journalism with literary pretence (thus sketch as well)—Ady is looking for the genuinely human that is sought, found and then illustrated with great naturalness, almost with an implicit openness. In his quest, belonging to an ethnic group is not authoritative, he pays equal attention to Hungarian-Romanian relationships, to Jew and Gipsy matters and themes as well. We can also find in his articles and sketches the idea that the backstage movements of politics that oppose to everyday life's existential interests (altogether with the snakes and ladders and material decay following it), affect everybody in the same way, merging all ethnical groups in a perverse manner into living their trivial reality. Meanwhile the answer for this problem could be culture (including communication and upheaval as well), literacy and civilizing, and also that personal interests should approach, because without this approach there is no true community, nor real nation. It is not the irony of fate that Ady could observe this from Paris at a certain point.

As we all know, Ady is critical as well towards himself as towards his nation-fellows, while—in legitimate, reasonably sustainable cases and situations—he stands up for both Hungarians and Romanians. In a way he revises himself

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permanently, his image of Romanians comes off as if he would deliberately, patiently and carefully watch the reflection in a mirror of the tiny traces left by time on their face, on their image. But Ady goes even further: sometimes, if necessary, he is able to compromise with the image shown by the mirror.

(*English translation: Tímea-Ildikó Kosztándi*)

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