

Hungary's 'West':  
Literature and Culture at the Centenary of *Nyugat*

Exhibition notes  
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UCL-SSEES Library  
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## *Nyugat*

### **1908**

The first issue of *Nyugat* from January 1908 in facsimile form.

The first article, 'Kelet népe' (People of the East), by Ignotus (b. Hugo Veigelsberg, 1869-1949), is well-known as an articulate rejection of the provincialism of small countries, and of 'the East' as spiritual or aesthetic model. Ignotus was editor-in-chief of *Nyugat* from its first issue in 1908, until November 1929.

See also exhibits of *Kelet népe* (1935-42), a journal established as something of a rural counterweight to *Nyugat*.

### **1908**

Original issues of *Nyugat* from the second half of 1908.

The 'Figyelő' (Observer) section contains reviews.

Contributions include discussions of the Renaissance; a translation of Molière's *Le Misanthrope*; Georg (György) Lukács on Stefan Georg; Jenő Heltai on Aristophanes; Zsigmond Móricz's famous short story 'Hét krajcár' (Seven kreuzers); Béla Révész on socialism; and poems by Endre Ady and Árpád Tóth.

## *Nyugat*

### **1909, 2 volumes**

The first volume contains more from Endre Ady; Mihály Babits's translations of Edgar Allen Poe and Babits on George Meredith; Lukács on Thomas Mann; Géza Csáth's novella *Opium*; Frigyes Karinthy's 'A mozgóképek metafizikája' (The metaphysics of moving pictures); articles on graphics; articles on nineteenth-century heavyweights Sándor Petőfi and Pál Gyulai; poems by Anna Lesznai; and, in the reviews section, Maupassant, George Bernard Shaw, and Béla Bartók. Contributors are already responding to each other in print.

The second volume contains translations of Poe; Endre Ady on Anatole France; articles on János Arany, Ibsen and Shaw; Ignotus on Tennyson; Lajos Hatvany (one of *Nyugat's* founders) on western culture; as well as poems by Ernő Szép.

## Nyugat

### **1910**

The second volume is on display here not only for its beautiful cloth binding, but also for the breadth and quality of its contents: Ady's poem cycle 'A minden-titkok verseiből'; Miksa Fenyő on Jenő Heltai's novella collection *Írók, színésznők, és más csirkefogók* (Writers, actresses, and other scoundrels); painter Károly Kernstock on fine art; short stories by Zsigmond Móricz, Géza Csáth; and critical texts by Ignotus, Lukács and film theorist Béla Balázs.

### **1911 & 1912** for aesthetic/visual purposes

Two years of particularly lavish illustration and presentation. A high point in the journal's early aesthetic.

## *Nyugat*

### **1915**

The Secession is over: a general austerity and dearth of decoration is visible, while controversies continue over anti-war poems by Ady and Babits published in *Nyugat*.

1915 issues often opened with 'Háborus jegyzetek' (War notes).

*Nyugat* had already been associated with a lack of patriotism and amorality in general by, most notably, Ferenc Herczeg, editor of *Új Idők* (New Times, the most popular interwar cultural publication), and in *Budapesti Hírlap* (Budapest News, also on display here).

Ady mocked his imitators in an *Új Idők* article entitled 'A duk-duk affér', which alienated him from Ignotus and Hatvany. Hatvany's letter to Ady can be found in issue no. 16 on p. 871.

## *Nyugat*

### **1924**

The first volume includes: Babits on Tennyson; Ady's famous article 'Korrobóri' on the relations between Jewish and non-Jewish Hungarians (see page 3); Pál Gyulai's unpublished letters; and Lajos Kassák's autobiography *Egy ember élete* (Life of a Man).

The second volume contains a portrait of Ignotus on p. 659; essays on Ignotus by Babits, Aladár Schöpflin, Fenyő and Jenő Dóczy, plus sketches by Dezső Kosztolányi and Jenő Józsi Tersánszky; and further instalments of Kassák's autobiography.

There are some particularly attractive advertisements from p. 730 onwards.

### **1931**

*Nyugat* had been edited by Zsigmond Móricz and Mihály Babits since 1929.

Note the different emblem of the *Nyugat* Barátok köre (Society of Friends), the invitation to a literary salon led by cabaret star Endre Nagy. Participants in the *soirée* included Frigyes Karinthy, Dezső Kosztolányi, and Vilma Medgyaszay, a popular chanteuse singing Jewish folk songs.

## *Nyugat*

### **1939**

In June, *Nyugat*, was still edited by Mihály Babits, Oszkár Gellért, Aladár Schöpflin and Gyula Illyés. By October, however, and following the introduction of the Second anti-Jewish Law (based on the Nürnberg Laws), Gellért's name had disappeared.

Much attention was paid to Gyula Farkas's 1938 monograph *Az asszimiláció kora a magyar irodalomban, 1867-1914* (The Age of Assimilation in Hungarian Literature), in which Farkas argues that post-Compromise assimilation had produced an alien capital city and literary elite. Aladár Schöpflin's article on Farkas's *Assimilation* is in the May edition, Farkas's response appears in the June edition (p. 369), and an article in Farkas's defence by Zoltán Szabó was published in the June 1939 issue of *Kelet Népe* (on display here).

## First editions

Babits Mihály, *Az európai irodalom története* (The History of European Literature), n.d. [1934]

A charming illustration of a 'modern' English bookshop can be found on p. 9

Illyés Gyula, *Oroszország* (Russia), 1934

Together with Lajos Nagy and André Gide, Illyés attended a writers' symposium in Moscow in 1934; this is his reportage of the trip. Necessarily flattering at times, although Illyés was underwhelmed by the quality of Soviet coffee.

Mihály Babits (ed.), *Új antológia. Fiatal költők 100 legszebb verse* (New Anthology: 100 young poets' most beautiful verse), 1932

Poets include Lőrinc Szabó, Sophie Török, Andor Németh, Gyula Illyés, László Mécs, Tibor Déry and József Erdélyi

Schöpflin Aladár, *Magyar írók. Irodalmi arcképek és tollrajzok* (Hungarian Writers: Literary portraits and sketches), second edition, 1919

## First Nyugat editions

Mária Rédey, *Kassainé ifjasszony. Jászai Mari és Kassai Vidor szerelmi regénye. Kiadatlan levelek és naplók alapján*, n.d.

Rédey's love story between actors Mari Jászai and Vidor Kassai: at the pulp fiction end of Nyugat's publishing spectrum.

Kassák, *Munkanélküliek*, 2 volumes, 1932

Kassák's two-volume work *The Unemployed* was not published by Nyugat, but represents another sort of 'sociography' (the graphic depiction of social problems).

## Other periodicals

*A Toll*, 1929-38

(The Pen)

Edited by Béla Zsolt, and another *urbánus* (roughly, metropolitan) literary publication.

*Kelet népe*, 1935-42

(People of the East)

A journal of qualitatively different concerns to those of *Nyugat*. The journal published 'sociography', village research and reportages, and was clearly not intended as an *objet d'art*.

Issues from **1938** include depictions of brick workers' and peasant families' lives, and a number of pieces by József Darvas, a prominent public intellectual in the years immediately following 1948.

The **1939** issues include Zsigmond Móricz's 'Tiszta falvak' (Pure villages), articles by the left-leaning Populist Péter Veres on nationalism, and discussion of the 'egyke' (the single-child families of the agricultural poor). Note the preponderance of ideas connected to the countryside, and not to 'the West'. Very little literature other than interpretations of Ady. *Kelet népe*, in terms of its subject matter and rhetorical style, might be viewed as a precursor to post-war State Socialism.

## Other periodicals

### *Szép Szó*, 1936-39

(Kind Word)

Edited by Pál Ignotus (Ignotus's son) and Attila József (until his death in 1937), and to be regarded as one of the prominent *urbánus* journals. Pál Ignotus's article 'Vissza az értelemhez' (A return to sense) in the March **1936** issue is often cited as one of the milestones in the 'népi-urbánus vita', the interwar dispute between Populist intellectuals (many of whom contributed to *Kelet népe*) and their critics, such as Pál Ignotus.

The December **1937** issue is a tribute issue to Attila József, whose 'Ázsia lelke' (The Soul of Asia) can be found on p. 289 of the March **1936** issue.

Having fled to London prior to the outbreak of World War Two, Pál Ignotus's, 'Angol viselkedés, brit erkölcs' (English behaviour, British morals) can be found on p. 179 of the **1939** volume.

## Other periodicals

*Válasz*, 1934-

(Response)

The early post-war year issues include poems by Lőrinc Szabó, 'Tücsökzene', (Cricketmusic, **1946**, vol. 1), and István Bibó's article 'Békeszerződés és demokrácia' (The Peace Treaty and Democracy)

**1948** issues include articles by István Bibó, including 'Zsidókérdés Magyarországon 1944 után' (The Jewish Question in Hungary after 1944), and by Géza Ottlik and Imre Sarkady. By **1949**, however, a rather different set of writers are published, dealing with more cautious (if not conservative) themes.

*Magyar Csillag*, 1942-44

(Hungarian Star)

Edited by Gyula Illyés.

Note in particular the article by Elek, 'Schöpflin Aladár és a *Nyugat*', 1942, p. 265, and on p. 189 a Móricz commemorative issue with pictures and heavy attention paid to Transylvania.

And also ...

Frigyes Karinthy, *Így írtok Ti* (This is How You Write, 1912-)

Karinthy's well-known parodies of literary heroes probably did much to popularise many of the early *Nyugat* writers. He continued to revise these and other sketches until he fell ill in 1934, when he declared that he was no longer a 'humorist' but a 'tumorist'.