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Essays in memory of Lóránt Kabdebó (1936–2022)

*The essays were written at the request of Marianne Dobos,
widow of Lóránt Kabdebó.*

Edited by János Rada
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LIKE A BUTTERFLY FROM ITS CHRYSALIS

ENIKŐ ANNA ÁGOSTON

There are many species of butterflies in the world. Some live to collect them, while others visit collections at natural history museums, come face to face with the sea of colourful wings displayed know this. The amazing ability of the butterfly is to transform from a chrysalis, but there are species that are capable of continuous change even after leaving the caterpillar form. What is surprising, is that only we see the color of blue butterflies/*morpho menelaus* as blue but as we examine this more closely, the trick of the light-reflecting surface becomes visible, changeable and vibrates. The microstructure of wings are similar to the wavelength of light, so the surface of the butterfly reacting to the light causes the colour. During the diffraction process, the light bends, so the wings become the source of the light with a vibrating effect. In the analysis of Lőrinc Szabó's poetry, it serves as an opportunity for nature and literary studies to meet. Lóránt Kabdebó analyses Lőrinc Szabó's poetry as if it would be a *morpho menelaust*, which has a special microstructure with colour changing ability. The blue colour is an optical effect, as the wings absorb light and then vibrate out the color blue.

‘That’s easy to learn: the traditionability of the »western« poetry. How proudly he writes: »the Hungarian poetry speaks my language« – when he (like the butterfly from its larva!) steps out from the tradition to be re-evaluated and fixed by himself.’¹ Kabdebó found poetic speech, with roots in the tradition of the *Nyugat* journal, although this poetry went through a transformation, which makes the speech unique and continuously changing. The poetry obtains an inner-motion like the butterfly's vibrating surface: there is not a stable colour, but the poetic speech is continuously renewable and unique, which gives a homogenic character to his poetry in spite of the permanent transformations. Lőrinc Szabó's poetic language functions in a linguistic-poetic structure, such as the transforming light effect of wings: there is no concrete colour, but the microstructure of poetic language is distinctive. Kabdebó embraces all of Szabó's life's work in this study, to understand every movement of this ability to change colour. To identify this light bending structure, as in, how this poetry continuously breaks the outer effects and how the language is in continual transformation – needs the knowledge of Szabó's life's work and his biography.

The study volume not only follows the continuous motion of changes in his life's work based on different themes, but also biographical elements of the poet

¹ KABDEBÓ 2022, 155.

are explored. We get to know Lőrinc Szabó through long quotes and diary entries including the effects related to lyrical development with the quotations in such a way that it is not necessary to visit the library for sources in order to understand: everything is present in the study in a comprehensible and experiential way. It is without doubt that Kabdebó was one of the greatest connoisseurs of Szabó. In the first chapter of the study volume, we can get to know the spirit of work fueled by enthusiasm, which inspired the author at the beginning of his career to study Szabó's poetry even in solitary research. Over time, with sensitivity and patience, he selected, taught and brought researchers together. He showed that the significance of Szabó's life's work is confirmed by the opportunities it contains, which is also supported by the countless publications and the three-volume critical edition. The author of the study volume was the soul and driving force behind Szabó's research over the last fifty-years, which is reflected in the volume's versatility, the exploration of the connection of distant points in his life's work. Kabdebó continuously mentions his previous research results inserting them by rewriting or confirming the results of the present volume. He makes a recommendation for even more detailed information, therefore testifying to his extensive knowledge of the life's work. Meanwhile he relives Szabó's poetry, so it is his personal case to show the poetry's values and the poet's exciting features.

Kabdebó provides a broad perspective to the life-work of Szabó. He highlights the poet's inner dialogue about existence, his questions and answers, and with that, the continuous renewal of his poetry. The versions of existence are revealed on a metaphysical plane in this poetic path, which, like an invisible light, is captured by language and given colour in the lyrical microstructure. However, this colour is not the colour of the outside world, because the poem becomes the source of colour and light vibrating sensually, like the wing structure of a blue butterfly. Despite the comprehension of 'horrific' and unchangeable, Szabó's poetry is capable of continuous renewal by thinking about existence. His poetry overwrites traditional interpretations of existence by constantly questioning the moments of existence and including them in verse. Researching the last two volumes of the life's work, the lyrical expression changes again and again with the incessant questioning. This dynamic provides one of the specialities of Szabó's poetry. The permanent inner dialogue renews the linguistic forms in addition to semantic changes. At the end of the life's work, in the *Cricket Music (Tücsökzene)* and *The twenty sixth years (A huszonhatodik év)*, he reaches the poetics of life in the poetry of destiny, the experience of existence can be connected with creation, which achieves a new method of questioning the completeness of existence. The poet creates a growing poetic-linguistic system, with an existence and light catching ability to express existence. Kabdebó's book uses close and comprehensive reading to understand this in detail.

Kabdebó considers the tradition of Nyugat, which builds the poetic 'chrysalis', but he analyses the lights of Hungarian and foreign author's effects as these vibrate on the wing's surface. It reveals comparative relationships that affect the poet and that can be brought into relation afterwards, which create the colour effects of this

poetry in a philological way, or enrich the interpretation and give new light and colour to the lyrical language after the poet's death. It is as if these poems, like the butterflies already frozen and stuck in a display case, are capable of a vibrating sensual effect even if separated from the philological context, the illumination of the microstructure with new lights. Reinterpretation through a comparative method, gives new light and colour to the wings and the poems. To name just a few of these philological and comparative influences: Yeats, T. S. Eliot, Heidegger, Goethe, Horatius, Nietzsche. Meanwhile, the monograph reveals arrestingly how the poet draws on different religions, blends or highlights them in the poetic formation, in answering the questions of existence: he is also nourished by Christianity, Buddhism and Islam.

With the close reading method the depth of the life's work and its formation can be discovered. The grammatic-syntactic interpretation of the poem *In the Desert (Sivatagban)* points to the microstructure of Szabó's poetics and supports the thoroughness of the poetic formulation related to existence. Kabdebó observes his butterfly's wing structure as closely as possible. In this reading, the kind of thoughtfulness that characterises Kabdebó's entire work as a literary historian is profound; he makes visible the author's human side, his own reading through philological research, but in the meantime takes into account the poem's poetic value, which can be separated from the author and his experiences. Beside the poetic ontology of *In the Desert* we come to know Szabó, who during his Egyptian journey observes the world's most simple things with the same analytical style as he builds his grammatical-syntactic structures of his poems. We see his observation ability from how he bends down to the desert sand to get a close view of how it is, how it reacts to water, how crystalline it has been shaped by time. We get insight into his attitude as a poet and world observer, but at the same time, Kabdebó draws attention to the separability of Egyptian experiences and the poem. The poem operates in itself, because its structure creates a personal and temporal experience, in which the self is not present in person, but through its perceptions. Although Kabdebó thinks in a wider perspective, at the same time, with this close reading he proves that behind the poetic network that drives many poems in his studies, there are deep layers that underlie his observations.

In a wide perspective, the poems put each other in a different light, which expands the space of their interpretation. In the studies, a more complex dialogue evolves demonstrating the poetic richness. Kabdebó uses every known detail to show the monumental poetic spectacle, for example, he writes about *The last night of Esenin (Jeszenin utolsó éjszakája)* of Szabó's poetic system. We get a complete picture of the creative perception through his poetics. The structure of Kabdebó's study volume reaches the academic cathartic experience, in the last chapter, in the meeting of *ars poetica* and theology, all the poetic principles and philological experiences discussed in previous chapters come together. It is as if we are thinking together with the research author during the philological collection work, going through the issues of poetic-linguistic, life-poetry thinking, until together we see

the entire panorama, which until then we could only discover in details, from closer glimpses. Kabdebó guides the reader through his explorations without limiting the voices of Szabó or his contemporaries who influenced him and came into contact with his poetics. He finds the quantitative limits of quotability with such fine sensitivity that the quoted voice can be interpreted on its own without him directing the interpretation, rather he subtly guides his thought processes alongside the poems. The reader can pick up the study volume in an experiential way to search for the allusions in the library, he gets everything in hand as if we are present in the literary historian's research journey, and he has space to think further about Szabó's poetry and connected works. Meanwhile, Kabdebó's personal relationships with the poet reveals itself. We can participate in his way of how he explores the poet's human side and relationship systems through his philological work. It complements the poetic path with another interpretation path, but does not overwrite the lyrical life's work, and renders a more personal connection with the poet.

The poet's intellectual relationships and the influences of the people around are revealed. The most significant moments of the poet's life become visible, which progress parallel to his poetic development. A lyrical way of speaking is created that can be separated from the biography, but when read together, the figure of the poet emerges. In the course of reading the monograph, we are in the past, when Szabó at the beginning of his career, shows his poem *Flood! Flood! (Áradás, áradás!)* to Mihály Babits, who was a significant figure in the literary sphere. We take part in this memory that Babits starts to tremble and his words echo in the past biography: 'Greater verse than this was not written since Vörösmarty'. Szabó explores 'horrific' with this poem and tests the criminalised poetics poetry, preparing to look at the non-existent role of human existence. We can understand the poetic and personal relationship between Attila József and Szabó, as Szabó admitted, throughout his life he was driven by inner monologues which he 'conducted with himself or with a worthy companion'. Kabdebó explores the experiences – when József recited the poems of *You and the World (Te meg a világ)*, and sometimes criticised and sometimes praised Szabó's inner dialogues. The generational difference, and the historic background form two types of poetic vision in the two poets, which enter into dialogue and shape the creative path. Szabó continues the inner discussion with József in spite of his death, he continues the internal debate with him until *Cricket Music*, in which his poetry of life is fulfilled.

'I do know that this declaration is audacious but it has its basis: the Word and promise of the Lord!' – are the words of the pastor at the funeral of Szabó which are from the monograph's lines. Kabdebó mentions these words again and again throughout his life, as he pays respect every year at the commemoration organised on the day of the poet's death. We can relive the literary memory with the university student Kabdebó as our eyes, as his eyes, meet with the famous poet, László Németh's green eyes at the funeral. Nevertheless, the sentence about Szabó becomes significant in the memory, just as the pastor's words become stronger in the memory and in the literary historian's life as well. The personal tone of the study

volume increases, as we understand the linguistic dimension of Szabó's poetic life's work and life events, as well as his personal experiences, are woven throughout Kabdebó's life. The words get into the blood circulation of the author and these words are heard again and again while he interprets the life's work. One illuminating example of this is how Kabdebó realises what 'Brain of a Poet' ('egy Költő Agya') means when giving the title of his previous monograph and admits in the present volume from his: 'I attained the understanding of the oxymoron occurring in the poetry of Lőrinc Szabó'. Dialogues are created in the study volume that are made up of the interweaving of the present literary historian and the dead poet, as well as the living poet and those who came into contact with him in the past. An interesting example of how Szabó is embedded in literary historical understanding of the discovery of how Szabó, during his meeting with Sándor Joó, a pastor from Passarét, and a Protestant theologian married couple who graduated abroad, finds a way to the oxymoron of the poet's brain and the universe.

'Why do write and why do people read verses at the time of changes of history?' – asks Kabdebó. 'The reply of Lőrinc Szabó's verses: because of the subterranean rivulets hidden in the text that look for interrelation between ››The Poet's Brain‹‹ and the ››Universe‹‹'.² Although the question and the answer refer to the past, the monograph not only reveals the context of the poet's era, but also connects with the present reader discovering the importance of poetic speech and reviving the poet's human character. The volume is an voluminous testimony about the still vibrant poetics of Szabó, the testimony of a literary historian who gave his life to the poet in order to show this dynamically functioning lyric. Complexity, attention to the whole world and poetic creativity that utilises all its senses sensually radiates from Szabó's poems. At the same time, we get to know the focus of the researcher from the volume, identifying the author's attitude, opens up to a wider world experience by following the author's footsteps, thereby making diverse and exciting poetic observations in the life's work. Both the poet and its researcher turn to literature with an inspiring devotion. The monograph is evidence of this inspiring research attitude. There is no better expression for the poetic attitude than Kabdebó's writing about the writing period of *Cricket Music*: 'Almost a double ego lives within it: the first one is restricted to the occasional events, experiences the torments of desolation, the other enters the process of creation with preterhuman effort.'³

Bibliography

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KABDEBÓ Lóránt: *Valami történet, Szabó Lőrinc átváltozásai*. Budapest, Prae, 2022.

² KABDEBÓ 2022, 247.

³ KABDEBÓ 2022, 274.

IN SEARCH OF LŐRINC SZABÓ MEMORIAL PLAQUES ON THE EASTERN SHORE OF THE ADRIATIC SEA

FRANCISKA ČURKOVIĆ-MAJOR

I first met Lőránt Kabdebó in person in 2003. This was preceded by a short correspondence. When I asked him to tell me where we could meet, the short answer was, at his home. In Zagreb, I could not imagine a university professor inviting me to his home for a professional discussion. The Professor welcomed me so warmly as if we were old acquaintances, and the first question his wife, Marianne, asked me was whether I would like lunch as she had cooked stew. My self-consciousness quickly disappeared.

The reason for the meeting was of course Lőrinc Szabó. The Department of Croatian Studies of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Fiume, the Department of Hungarian Studies of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Zagreb, the Department of Cultural History of ELTE, the Balassi Bálint Institute of Budapest and the Archives of Fiume organised a conference in Fiume on 3 and 4 October 2003 entitled *Fiume and Hungarian Culture (Fiume és a magyar kultúra)*. I wanted to make a presentation for that event. Lőrinc Szabó visited Fiume several times and wrote poems about the town – this was my original starting point. Professor Kabdebó, whom I still called Professor at the time, and only much later was I able to accept his request to call him by his first name, soon sent me the articles the poet had written during his first posting to Fiume and published in *Est* and *Pesti Napló*. I presented these in my paper, and they marked the beginning of my research on Lőrinc Szabó. It was thanks to Lőránt's friendliness, helpfulness and encouragement that I joined the ranks of those researching the poet's life and work.

A year before our meeting, on 8 June 2002, a memorial plaque commemorating the poet's holiday in Schwarzwald (Black Forest) was unveiled in Titisee, and soon the idea of erecting a memorial plaque on the Adriatic coast was on the table. Where should the plaque be placed? Lőránt entrusted me with the task of choosing the location, as I was then researching Lőrinc Szabó's posting to Fiume. Based on my findings at the time, the plaque could have been placed in the port city. As described in the article *Icebergs in the Chianti Sea (Jéghegyek a Chianti-tengerben)*, the poet joined a group of familiar Hungarians for dinner at a restaurant called Ornitorinco (platypus). I travelled to Fiume to visit the site, but the building in Via Garibaldi, now Adamić Street 5, which I had found out about in the archives, housed a shop at the time and, therefore, did not seem suitable for a memorial plaque. Today, the Google map shows a sign for a hotel/apartment next to the other entrance door of the building. Another restaurant is mentioned in a letter written by

the poet's wife, Nagyklára, on their second trip to Dalmatia, where the poet had dined with Nagyklára and Kisklára on their first trip to Dalmatia. This was the former Masarykovo šetalište, now Šetalište Andrija Kačića Miočiča, on the promenade at numbers 5 and 6, but the building was not considered appropriate due to its bad state of repair. After my research revealed that in 1934 Lőrinc Szabó had stayed at the former Regina Elena Hotel in Abbazia, now the Hotel Imperial, we chose this hotel. I can claim that our correspondence during this time was very frequent as we wrote letters on a daily basis, sometimes several times a day. On the one hand, I wrote to Lóránt about the results of my archival research and the data I had found, and on the other hand, about my experiences after "checking the locations". Then we decided on the Hotel Imperial. Then the negotiations took place. From the Croatian side I took the role of coordinator. As a lecturer in the Department of Hungarian Studies at the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Zagreb, I had already informed the head of the department of our intention, who then presented it to the university administration and obtained the agreement of the institution. Then I visited the office of the Croatian Tourist Board in Abbazia and outlined our request to the director of the Tourist Board of the City of Abbazia, Jasna Doričić-Sanković. I agreed with her on the details of the plaque. I can say that, although it took a lot of work and time, they were all open to receiving the Lőrinc Szabó memorial plaque. From the Hungarian side, Lóránt Kabdebó paved the way for the dedication of the plaque. He won the support of the Szabó Lőrinc Research Centre of the University of Miskolc and the Szabó Lőrinc Foundation, and negotiated with István Policsányi, the maker of the plaque, on how to raise the funds. He also thought about who would represent the Hungarian institutions at the unveiling and invited some students from the schools bearing the name of Lőrinc Szabó to recite the poet's poems. On the Croatian side, I arranged for the relevant officials to be invited. The inauguration of the memorial plaque took place on 24 September 2004. The guests were welcomed by Jasna Doričić-Sanković, followed by speeches by Željko Rolih, Director of the Profitni centar Kvarner-Imperial in Abbazia on behalf of the Hotel Imperial, and Ranko Vlatković, Mayor of Abbazia. Further addresses were given by László Mohai, Ambassador of the Republic of Hungary to Zagreb, Dr. Milka Jauk-Pinhak, Head of the Department of Hungarian Studies at the University of Zagreb. Prof. Dr. Lóránt Kabdebó, Head of the Lőrinc Szabó Research Centre, delivered the keynote speech. The events leading up to the plaque's inauguration had been one of the saddest days of my life: a few days before, my father, who lived in Vojvodina, had passed away and I had to travel to Abbazia after his funeral. I had to hold on – I still don't know how I did it. What has remained etched in my memory is the compassion and understanding of Lóránt. At the time, I didn't pay much attention to his openness to new technological advances, something that only became clear to me later, but I still remember how proudly he pointed to the flash drive hanging around his neck: „This contains all our correspondence.”



The second memorial plaque was placed in the lobby of the Hotel Petka in Ragusa /Dubrovnik on 20 April. Since our “division of labour” had worked out well with the plaque dedication in Abbazia, we decided to work the same way again. We organised the ceremony, which was hosted by the Hotel Petka, on behalf of the City of Miskolc, the Szabó Lőrinc Research Centre of the University of Miskolc, the Szabó Lőrinc Foundation, the Department of Hungarian Studies of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Zagreb. The guests were welcomed by Ivan Jarak, Deputy Director, followed by Deputy Mayor Vedran Jelavić, Head of the Department of Maritime Studies at the University of Dubrovnik, and then by Antal Disztl, First Secretary of the Embassy of Hungary in Zagreb and Academician Luko Paljetak, representing Matica hrvatska, Dubrovnik. Franciska Ćurković-Major spoke about how they managed to identify the accommodation of Lőrinc Szabó in Dubrovnik. The keynote speech was also given by Professor Lóránt Kabdebó. Finally, students from the Lapad Primary School performed the poems *To a leander from Ragusa* (*Egy raguzai leánderhez*) and *To the dalmatian crickets* (*Dalmácia tücskeihez*) We were particularly pleased that the students Croatian teacher had been a student of our department a few years before.

The location of Lőrinc Szabó’s accommodation in Ragusa (Dubrovnik) was also the subject of a lengthy “investigation”. The records mention a hotel called Pet-

ra, but there was no such hotel listed in the hotel directories of the time in Ragusa. When describing the location of the first Dalmatian holiday, I came to the conclusion that it could only have been the Petka hotel in the port of Gruž. This building was bombed at the end of the Second World War and is now the site of a modern hotel. This is where the plaque was placed. For the period of these events, the institution hosting the plaque provided accommodation for Professor Kabdebó and his wife, the publicist Marianne Dobos, and so did the hotel in Ragusa (Dubrovnik). There was only one problem: Lóránt and Marianne's dog, Wendy, as the hotel was not dog-friendly. We were nervous about how Marianne was going to sneak Wendy in and out, but she handled it coolly, taking the dog in and out, hidden under her poncho. The day after the unveiling of the plaque, we went sightseeing, not to admire the tourist attractions of the city, but to visit the places where the poet lived or stayed during his first and second holidays in Ragusa. For Lóránt, today's Put Ive Vojnovića Street was particularly interesting, because I identified the building at number 5 with the Stefany boarding house where the poet and his son had stayed in 1937. We walked around the area and I showed Lóránt where I thought the scene of the poem *Lóci and the gorge* might have been. During my research, Lóránt always encouraged me to try to get as much and as accurate information as possible about the places and events associated with the poet's travels. Sometimes I wondered about the importance of these, but seeing Lóránt's feverish interest reassured me that my „investigations” had a real reason and a real meaning.



The third commemorative plaque was placed on the façade of the arcade of the Ferry Port Authority in the Harbour of Korčula on 21 May 2011 thanks to the support of the Szabó Lőrinc Research Centre of the University of Miskolc, the Szabó Lőrinc Foundation, the Department of Hungarian Studies of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Zagreb and the City of Korčula. The ceremony was hosted by the Director of the Tourist Board of Korčula, Stanka Kraljević, and opened by the Mayor of Korčula City, Mirko Duhović. Lídia Jósvali, Cultural Counsellor and Ambassador of the Republic of Hungary to Zagreb, gave a commemorative address. Franciska Ćurković-Major, lecturer at the Department of Hungarology, presented her research results, and Dr. Lóránt Kabdebó, Head of the Lőrinc Szabó Research Centre, delivered the tribute speech. Lőrinc Szabó's poem *What else? (Mi még?)* was read by the poet from a sound recording, while the Croatian translation of the poem *Conversation with the Sea (Beszélgetés a tengerrel)* was recited by the performer Tonči Gatti from Korčula. The history of the plaque in Korčula was perhaps the most exciting. In each case, Lóránt informed me of the circumstances surrounding the making of the plaque, but in this case, the process of raising the funds was very slow. He had always managed to do this by submitting applications, but in this case, he repeatedly expressed his concern that progress was not being made. We were already on the island of Korčula when his mobile phone rang and he was informed that the necessary funds had been obtained and that the Hungarian Government would cover the cost of the plaque. So, he could relax and enjoy the ceremony, the kind hospitality that followed and, last but not least, the beauty of the town. Since then, Lóránt's words have become a household quote in our family: "Korčula is like a jewel box."



Unfortunately, the many good experiences were soon followed by depressing events. In 2011, I was informed by a tourist visiting Dubrovnik and wishing to see the memorial plaque that it was not in the lobby of the Hotel Petka. The hotel had not informed any of the institutions that had erected the plaque. Nor was it known to Mr. Jarak, who was deputy director at the time and later retired. The new management of the hotel, with or without the owner's knowledge, has done nothing to restore the plaque, despite two years of wrangling, including my requests by letter and telephone calls. I wrote to several institutions for help, and Lóránt even told the then Croatian ambassador in Budapest about the case, but nothing happened even after his intervention, and everyone replied that the matter was the hotel's business. Thus, there was no other solution than asking the hotel to return the plaque, which after more than two years of homelessness, found its home in the (then girls') dormitory in Dubrovnik in 2013. It is still in the same building at Učenički dom Dubrovnik, Branitelja Dubrovnika 27. This dormitory and the Croatian Kindergarten, Primary School, Secondary School and Dormitory in Budapest are twinned.

These were also happy but exciting days for the memorial plaque in Abbazia. At the time when the plaque was erected in 2004, the Hotel Imperial was state-owned. In the meantime, it was privatised and subsequently renovated. As a result, the plaque was dismantled. When I was informed of this, I contacted the Tourist Board of the City of Abbazia, which took immediate action. Unfortunately, this quick action was not accompanied by due diligence, as the plaque was not placed on the front of the wall next to the entrance, but on the side of the wall, so it is not visible from the street, but can only be noticed directly at the entrance. This has yet to be sorted out.

This raises the question: what will the fate of these plaques be? What about the other plaques: the one in Titisee in the Black Forest in Germany, the one on the entrance pillar of the present Maritim Hotel, the one at the tourist hostel at Macocha Gorge near Brno in the Czech Republic, and finally the one commemorating Lőrinc Szabó's stay in Avelengo in Italy? What will happen to those who participated in any way in their dedication? If not the answer, some consolation can be found in Lőrinc Szabó's poem *There are none (Nincsenek)*. The figures evoked in the poem appear and disappear in the poet's memory. As he explains, "The low tide, of course, takes them away from us who are still on the other side of time (in life)". We, too, are still on the other side of time, and in our memories the figures of those who look at us from the other side appear. Among them is Lóránt Kabdebó, the soul of the plaque (and not only), the deputy mayor of Dubrovnik, Vedran Jelavić, who, in response to Lóránt's farewell words, "Make sure you love and protect this plaque", replied confidently, with a twinkle in his eye, "You can be sure of that. We are proud of it." And perhaps others who have done something about it... Let us hope that they are, in the words of the poet, "Souls. Spirits", will be sympathetic to our efforts to care for the memorials and preserve the memory of those who helped to create them.

Translated by Zsuzsanna Koós

**LET’S LOVE LŐRINC SZABÓ!
THE SPEECH DELIVERED
AT THE KABDEBÓ LŐRÁNT MEMORIAL CONFERENCE**

MARIANNE DOBOS

Lőránt Kabdebó quotes Aurél Bernáth, who created a ‘portrait’ of the poet, in his monograph on Lőrinc Szabó entitled *The Time of Summing Up (Az összegzés ideje)*:

It was in the summer of one thousand nine hundred and fifty-five. Lőrinc was on holiday with us at Lake Balaton. The volume of *Selected Poems* was the first volume to be published after a long break, and Illyés had selected the material and promised a foreword. One day we were sitting in the garden, a postman came and put a thick letter down in front of Lőrinc, Gyula’s foreword. Lőrinc became immensely anxious. He jumped up, and paced back and forth around the table. ‘I can’t read it’, he said, ‘you read it and tell me what it’s like’. I began to read it to myself. But I could feel that he was not taking his eyes off me, even though it took half an hour. ‘What was it like,’ he asked me, when I was moved to put down this study, written with a warm heart of friendship and a wonderful mind. ‘I have only one word for it: tremendous!’ and I thrust the bundle in front of him.

He began to read it. Now I was watching his face. He could barely get ahead. He looked back, pondering, looking at me. It must have taken him an hour to finish reading. But even after that he kept his head on a swivel until I said: ‘See?... see?... that’s the kind of friend you have!’ That really tore him up. He jumped up from the table and started running up and down the garden, crying like a child. ‘See?’, I repeated the word several times, for I felt that it was good for him to cry. I was running around in the garden with this crying child. Until suddenly he stopped. With tears in her eyes, she began to bring the writing in her hand to her blind eyes, and frantically turned the pages. ‘Yes... yes... but this here... this part here... it’s not quite like that...’ and he thrust a trivial detail before my astonished eyes.¹

The volume, with a foreword by Gyula Illyés, was published for the 1956 Book Week. The first edition is sold out. In September 1956, in an interview with Áron Tóbiás, Lőrinc Szabó talks about the preparation of the new edition. Twelve years of silence, ‘twelve years of real ruin’, after two heart attacks in his fifties, had bro-

¹ BERNÁTH 1962, 77–78.

ken the poet. 'The way life breaks.' He is 'delighted' to be remembered by his old readers and how good it is that 'he is so well known to the new youth'.

The real joy for him before that was when he was finally able to speak in his own voice on the radio. This 'Miskolc broadcast', in which the poet presented his hometown, was directed by Éva Zsurzs. The editor, Áron Tóbiás, remembered it thus:

Lőrinc Szabó was 'introduced' to me by Miskolc. I was working at the radio station and once I was assigned the task of putting together an hour-long celebratory programme about Miskolc, which was celebrating the tenth anniversary of its liberation.

Everything was already together: the 100,000-year-old caveman and the MOKÁN partisans of '44, the rattling tramway from Pest and the fragile wooden bridge over the Szinva, the huge wheat field and the giant blast furnace giants of Diósgyőr, the blue-green fields, the lake and grove of Tapolca, the inviting wine cellar of Avas – only one more line of poetry kept returning:

'My hometown, will you never have an eye on your stray son?'

Lőrinc Szabó has asked to be included in the Miskolc festive programme.

The poet who did not speak on the radio after liberation, his poems were hardly heard by the public. I wanted to start with him, speaking about the city of yesterday, the one-hour panorama in words and sounds.²

Then, on October 23, 1956, his hometown hosts his author's evening, introduced by Gyula Illyés. The Arany János and the Sándor Petőfi of the time are introduced to the large audience gathered in the town. In view of the huge interest, the event will not be held at the usual venue, but at the SZOT headquarters at 11 Kossuth Street, organised by the TTIT.

It is a coincidence, but it is a source of pride for us Miskolc residents that the revolution broke out in Budapest on this day. Lőrinc Szabó, driving past Stalin's statue on his way to Miskolc in the morning, sighed. I don't think he ever had a wish come true sooner in his life. Of course, even they didn't know that on the night.

The next day, as the guests and their hosts reported, Aunt Flora and Uncle Gyula wrote down from memory *A Sentence about Tyranny* in front of their eyes. In Lőrinc Szabó's bag was the first piece of his later revolutionary cycle, Surprises. First little Klára collected it 'for safekeeping', then Aunt Klára asked Lóránt to see what he had hidden in the manuscript cupboard. Finally, on 31 January 1990, Lóránt published a cycle of poems by Lőrinc Szabó in *Magyar Nemzet* under the title *A Cycle of Poems in a Drawer* by Lőrinc Szabó, after the entire cycle had been kept in Xerox copies until the fall of communism.

When a new part of Lőrinc Szabó's legacy was placed in the Manuscript Archives of the MTA Library, it contained the complete manuscript of the poem,

² TÓBIÁS 1964, 1096.

including Gyula Illyés' handwriting: 'And it was no longer a shame / that you were a son of the Hungarian people.'

On the plaque commemorating the event, unveiled forty years later, are lines from Lőrinc Szabó's poem 'Surprises' (Meglépetések).

A fourteen-year-old high school student heard the big news from his mother – who had come to pick him up from school – that a revolution had broken out in Budapest. On 23 October 1963, a twenty-one-year-old student went to a concert. 'Hajnalka! Hajnalka! What a beautiful girlfriend you have! Introduce me to her!' a young man shouted after them. It happened. At the concert, we were only looking at each other's eyes. We got married on 18 July 1964. I became the widow of Lőrinc Szabó's monographer on 24 January 2022.

On 25 November 2021, we received the copies of his last volume. The last interview of his life was broadcast on the 72nd programme of Zugló TV's KultúrZug on 31 December 2021:

Ferencz, Gábor: Lóránt Kabdebó, freeman of Zugló and of course literary historian, expert in the work of Lőrinc Szabó, monographer to him, presented a new volume. He is our guest in the studio, I greet him with honour. The volume is entitled: *The Poet's Brains*. This is a reference to a line isn't? But what does it mean as a title of a volume? What's the aim of this reference?

Kabdebó, Lóránt: Well, in the blurb the editor – I am lucky with the editor because he represents the grandchild generation, namely he is the student of my students. Nevertheless, he is a man of understanding. He interprets very well my book and he guides there, that finally every train of thoughts runs into this line, that the poet's brain. The Universe is also only the brain of a poet. This 'only', what does it mean? Until Lőrinc Szabó got this 'only', now it's what I write in this volume.

F. G.: If you did mention the blurb, the blurb mentions three lines in relation with the volume and with the train of thoughts, respectively. On the one hand it relates to an international comparison. You enumerate, from where these parallel thoughts do occur and by all means how these thoughts exert an influence on Lőrinc Szabó that he drew from the works of contemporary poets from abroad, from those of Western European and American poets. On the other hand, there is a line that makes comparison with Attila József and the third line deals not with the poetical works of Lőrinc Szabó, but with his journalism and a comparison with other volumes. How you can summarize, where gets the reader having ploughed through this book?

K. L.: Well, what is the criterion of an excellent teacher? My professor was József Szauder. He was relatively young when died, at that time he was professor of Rome. He said when was a beginner only (and got the PhD also at him), that 'now, take care, a verse from the 18th century

ought to be analyzed'. He says: look in the European poetry a verse, something similar one against which you can measure it. It was a remark of his that he passed by chance. Now, when I became old and came to like Lőrinc Szabó, I took as a little brat not as a task to trace the career of one of the most remarkable Hungarian poets – and I always mentioned that Ady has been my favourite poet – but now, I came to like him and I can say that Lőrinc Szabó is nearest me because I grew old to him. And I say something that's curious: the Lőrinc Szabó of 19 years of age.

F. G.: You had to grow old to him?

K. L.: I had to grow old to him. He had a great luck. He was born in 1900, so he was always as old in age as the century, the 20th century. In his 19 years of age how was the world? He meets Ady at the catafalque of the poet. He meets revolutions, counter-revolutions, gets acquainted with the series of leaders reigning over Europe, and this is important since he was attacked because of this. Misunderstanding him because he was afraid of them. Consequently, everything that has been horrific in the 20th century, he has experienced. And as a simple university student who visits the Central 'cause Babits called him, and writes a paragraph to the greatest writers, say to the *Be good till death* (Légy jó mindhalálig) by Móricz, how a custom of Debrecen, i.e. bell-ringing is narrated in the gymnasium, in the college. Writes it, and when the book comes out, he observes with great surprise, that his text is word by word within. Now, he gets this environment, among the greatest writers, will be their friend and everything what horrific is (the parallel book is this book is now ready: the criminalization of the verse), what is horrendous and said in verse, they experience there, in the Central together, among one another. And not only himself as a little brat but as secretary for a short time to Móricz, Babits, Kosztolányi, Dezső Szabó. Since then he learns to fear. And the pronouncement of the horrible. Let us take the 'Poet of the Hortobágy' by Ady. One of my friends, unfortunately he is not any more among us, Laci Ferenczi wrote that it is not Hungary and not Debrecen, Ady only believed this. Because the American, the great poets grown up in America who come to Europe – Ezra Pound, and T.S. Eliot, the greatest according to Babits – they bring with themselves the same experience. Hence the poets, writers in Budapest, in the Central live in the highest poetical horizon, that we learnt: they are the greatest ones of the first half of the 20th century: Eliot, Yeats, Kavafis, Gottfried Benn, let me say contrasts, or Ezra Pound – different men, different poetical world, but in this fear they grow up together. Attila József, who was younger by five years, did have in a curious manner a dreadful life, but was a released child as compared to him. He did fear much better in the early thirties than his somewhat younger adorer, Attila József. Now, I do feel that these two men were in very good friendship for several years. But he (Lőrinc Szabó) himself lived in this Western Europe in which they (or Rilke) learnt to fear. And this was not

the first world war. It was produced only by the poet and by the writer, a wondrous being that is similar to the rats on the sinking ship. It is a strange analogy. While the sun shines, the weather is clear, no sign of the devastating storm – and then rats come up from the depth, from the locker and want to flee. Animals have a presentiment to earthquakes – and so do the poets. So the pistol shot in Sarajevo that started the horrors of the 20th century is a consequence only. They mark it in advance. Joseph Conrad. A Polish noble man. One of the classicists of the English literature. He wrote his novel, *Heart of Darkness* at the time of the turn of century, that is of turn of 1800 and 1900, in the merry peace times before the Great War and from here takes his motto, say that of Eliot. Well, one has to know this, has to understand this and this is why I said in my years of 80 of age I reached to understand and love the 19 years old little brat, this beginner poet, who wrote his first verse – it remained unpublished and I published later – and when Babits did read this verse he did begin to tremble and said: since Vörösmarty no one wrote such kind of verse. Because he wrote into the verse all his fears. And this wrote into the Leader. The leader is not Hitler and Stalin or somebody else in the future, because Europe is full with leaders. From Mannerheim to Atatürk, from Mussolini to Franco, from Horthy to Pilsutsky – good and wrong, many kinds. And this fear as the ‘For Nothing Entirely’ with the selfish Zoli Latinovits ... I was unable to force him though we were in good relations: My dear Zoli, this is verse absolutely fitted to you – he said, it’s a selfish verse, I cannot recite it. Lőrinc Szabó did not understand himself, he always wanted to write its counterpart, the resolution. But it is in the verse, like in Dostoevsky.

F. G.: I think, this is a good appetizer for those who are interested in Lőrinc Szabó, in the era and in this poetical world, this will be well enough. We suggest for all who like this world, to read this volume. Thank you that you came here and thank you that I could say all these.

K. L.: I thank, too and recommend to my readers to be, because this transmitted the desperation of Dostoevsky and hands over it to us, 85 years old of age.

We can see his enthusiasm for the forthcoming new volume. He lived in it. He wrote day and night. Two days before his death, on his last night at home, he sent it to the editor, Róbert Smid, saying, ‘Let it be in his computer’.

The volume was published in posthumous edition by Prae Publishers. I hope the first copies will arrive here, straight from the printers, for the conference. In the meantime, let me quote from him, whom we remember with this conference:

In 1962 I commenced to perform the monographic processing of poet-career, to disclose and publish the text-world of Lőrinc Szabó, our classical poet and great son of Miskolc. Prior to the change of regime I collect-

ed and published the documents of his oeuvre by a one-man work,³ later as professor and leader of the PhD-course this work continued by training of students.⁴ In addition of the documentation of the poet's course of life I aimed right at the beginning at the publication of the text-world of Lőrinc Szabó, to reach the level just preceding the critical edition. Finally, this was reached by the publication of the Lőrinc Szabó series of the Osiris Classics (Osiris Klasszikusok). 'Under the guidance of Lóránt Kabdebó' attested texts supplied with the necessary notes and reference service were published in cooperation with students and researchers. The edition including all his known poems run into its second edition, the two volumes of 'Our Everlasting Friends' (Örök Barátaink), a selection of his translations compiled by the poet himself, the volumes 'Verse and Reality' (Vers és Valóság) and 'Confidential Data and Notes' (Bizalmas adatok és megjegyzések) with verse explanations, later the prose-volumes issued with critical character: 'Memoirs and Publicistics' (Emlékezések és publicisztikai írások), 'Confessions' (Vallomások) and the 'Literary Studies' (Irodalmi tanulmányok) were published.⁵ Simultaneously, the Lőrinc Szabó Research Group (Szabó Lőrinc Kutatóhely) established at the Miskolc University, with the aid of OTKA-support (OTKA – National Scientific Research Fund) published eleven documentary volumes, in cooperation with the Csokonai Publishing House of Debrecen issued five unpublished drama-translations of Lőrinc Szabó,⁶ Seven memorial tablets were erected and unveiled with ceremony abroad relating to the poet's presence, coupling these ceremonies with local foreign language conferences (Titisee, Opatija, Dubrovnik, Macocha – cave near Brno, Hafling-Avelengo, Korcula and the Balassagyarmat-Bridge that served and border-bridge for some time). In cooperation with the Archive of Manuscripts of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences' Library (MTA Könyvtára Kézirattár) the website entitled Lőrinc Szabó – Verse and Reality (Szabó Lőrinc – Vers és Valóság (<http://krk.szabolorinc.hu/>),⁷ that allows the digital appearance and data processing of all the printed pieces and all variants of all poems published up to the edition of 'Omnibus Volume of Lőrinc Szabó, 1943' – Szabó Lőrinc Összes versei, 1943 (as researching-creating work of my younger colleague, Károly Horányi). In the Research Group Bálint Szele, Csilla Nagy, Aranka Kemény and László Barna grew into professional up-to-date philologists of the Lőrinc Szabó Philology, most of them defended their PhD-dissertation at our University. Further, the conference series of Pécs and Miskolc organized together with academician Ernő Kulcsár Szabó that meant the change of process of the pro-

³ SZABÓ 1974; SZABÓ 1989; SZABÓ 1993.

⁴ KABDEBÓ–LENGYEL TÓTH 2000.

⁵ SZABÓ 2001; SZABÓ 2002; SZABÓ 2003/a; SZABÓ 2003/b; SZABÓ 2008; SZABÓ 2010; SZABÓ 2013.

⁶ Publications subsequently made available: SZABÓ 2019.

⁷ SZABÓ 2019.

fessional regime can also be mentioned, as well as the cycles of the Hungarian professional periodicals (*Irodalomtörténet, Literatura*) edited by us, where a new generation of scientists grew up who are today academic doctors (among them the other monographer of Lőrinc Szabó, Zoltán Kulcsár-Szabó, who commenced his career of training in my department of the Miskolc University and today he's one of the determinant personalities of our profession).

When I started to work László Németh gave my work his blessing: he emphasized even in two letters the importance of the task and to treat it as national interest: "I see you deal with Lőrinc Szabó. He is one of those who has been sentenced to eliminate from the public remembrance without ado. It is a hard but noble task to work against this careless oblivion and vicious living down." (17th November 1966); "I'm also glad that your book on Lőrinc Szabó is in progress [...] I do believe that even in this case the socially unpromising subject will be associated with high mental and professional enrichment: since in addition to his talent the career of a critic depends first of all on his orientation – to what he risks himself." (15th September 1967).⁸

László Cs. Szabó in the emigration in London suggested a proposal for the Mikes Kelemen Society of Amsterdam – as obeisance of western writers to the national performances – and published his opinion before the public in the *Irodalmi Újság* (Literary News) of Paris,⁹ in 1983 just the Lőrinc Szabó-research (at that time a one-man team) was awarded by the commemorative plaque of the society (the plaque and deed of gift could be sent home only by smuggling through the border): "The omission of Hungarians is staggering. Out of the two Nyugat-generations only one great poet is 'redeemed': only Lőrinc Szabó has a biography in three volumes, large volumes, complete and relatively final in western sense of the word or *une biographie définitive* as it is said in France." In Kortárs similar words were written by academician István Sötér under the title Lőrinc Szabó and his synopsis.¹⁰

At the moment of the change of regime when the Diary of 1945, apologies and verse-interpretations of the poet were issued¹¹ Tamás wrote in his essay: 'L. K. – who when issuing the *Napló, levelek, cikkek* (Diary, Letters, Articles) in 1974 and since then redacting the *Harmchat év* (Thirty six years), this amazing book of letters, and *Bírákhoz és barátokhoz* (To judges and to friends), these staggering confessions made a great service to all Hungarian friends of literature – last year clearly showed to the general reader: how a philologist can change the literary history.¹²

⁸ NÉMETH 2000, I. 1042; III. 170. Letters 2859 and 3059.

⁹ CS. SZABÓ 1984, 17–18.

¹⁰ SÖTÉR 1981, 647–651.

¹¹ SZABÓ 1990/a; SZABÓ 1990/b.

¹² TAMÁS 1991, 10.

In the Hungarian change of regime of literary sciences Lőrinc Szabó could have appeared as protagonist. As a result of repeated OTKA-supports (National Scientific Research Fund) he is present in the mind of the cultivated public and history of literature with major part of his text-world. This is verified by the paper of Ágnes Osztovics from the new century: 'Lóránt Kabdebó attained with a work of several decades that Lőrinc Szabó could get his deserved place in the Hungarian lyrics of the 20th century and so the image on the Hungarian poetry could be modified.'¹³

In leading periodical of the profession, *Irodalomtörténet* (History of Literature), the reviewer of the volume wrote the following about my comprehension on the Szabó Lőrinc researches: 'Lóránt Kabdebó gives the modest title Szabó Lőrinc utóélete ('Posthumous life of Lőrinc Szabó') to his review on the processing, publication, critical edition and analysis of the poet's text-world, although it becomes clear, how profound, careful gigantic work – performed along at the beginning and with student later on – stands in the background so Lőrinc Szabó, threatened by the danger of forgetting, could get the deserved position in the history of Hungarian lyrics.'¹⁴

I processed the poet-career of Lőrinc Szabó in a monography of three volumes (Szabó Lőrinc lázadó évtizede [Rebellious decade of Lőrinc Szabó], Útkeresés és különbéke. Szabó Lőrinc 1929–1944. [Seeking ways and means and separate peace. Lőrinc Szabó 1928–1944.]

Az összegzés ideje, Szabó Lőrinc 1945–1957. [Time of summation, Lőrinc Szabó 1945–1957] (9), then I wrote the poetic monography of the poet, that has two editions ['A magyar költészet az én nyelvemen beszél']. A kései Nyugat-líra összegződése Szabó Lőrinc költészetében ['The Hungarian poetry speaks in my language', Summation of the late Nyugat-lyrics in the poetry of Lőrinc Szabó], the text of my academic doctoral theses served as a basis for the latter one Further, in two micro-monographs I propagated the poet (Szabó Lőrinc, Szabó Lőrinc pályaképe [Lőrinc Szabó, Poet-career of Lőrinc Szabó])¹⁵ later in a collection I contended enforced by data with the character-killing legends developed around Lőrinc Szabó (Szabó Lőrinc 'pere' ['Legal action' of Lőrinc Szabó]) (12), finally in two study-volumes I published case studies on the development of career (13). Just after my 80th birthday celebrated in the assembly hall of the Academic Committee of Miskolc I completed my book that summarizes the poetry of Lőrinc Szabó and compares his poetry with the modern European poetry. Major part of the book consists of my lectures prepared for high-grade conferences. I continue to write my results achieved so far. My monographic books being composed in earlier

¹³ OSZTOVITS 2012, 58–59.

¹⁴ KÁLLAY 2014, 403–409.

¹⁵ KABDEBÓ 2001.

debates I introduce Lőrinc Szabó to the Hungarian experts and expectant reader and researchers as fashioner of the classical poetry, as phenomenon of the world literature [‘egy Költő Agya’]. Szabó Lőrinc Lőrinc pályaképe a ‘modern’ európai költészetben [‘Brain of a Poet’. Course of poet-career of Lőrinc Szabó in the ‘modern’ European’ poetry]]¹⁶

To conclude, Lőrinc Szabó received the Kossuth Prize on 15 March 1957. He used the money he received to help Zoltán Zelk, György Sárközi, István Sinka and the wife of Sándor Bihari, who was later imprisoned for directing his evening in Miskolc.

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¹⁶ KABDEBÓ 2021.

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INTELLECTUAL TESTIMONY: LÓRÁNT KABDEBÓ'S RESEARCH ON LÓRINC SZABÓ AND THE PLACE OF THE VOLUME *VALAMI TÖRTÉNT* (SOMETHING HAPPENED) IN HIS ACADEMIC OEUVRE

JÁNOS D. MEKIS

In my study I will briefly review the main stages of Lóránt Kabdebó's research career, all of which were invariably dominated by his investigations of Lőrinc Szabó. I will then examine Kabdebó's book *Valami történt: Szabó Lőrinc átváltozásai* (Something Happened: Transformations of Lőrinc Szabó; hereinafter: *Something Happened*)¹ and its contexts, focusing on the role it plays in Kabdebó's decades-long work as a literary historian. The volume in question is a posthumous summary: it was published after Lóránt Kabdebó's death, while he was still putting the finishing touches to the manuscript. It summarises the results of his research on Lőrinc Szabó and reveals many important details about the contemporary and posthumous history of the great Hungarian poet's works, with a special focus on the decanonisation and re-canonisation operations and events that took place during the communist era.

Lóránt Kabdebó's first monograph on Lőrinc Szabó was published in 1970, and his last one in 2022. In the half-century between these two dates, he produced numerous thematic volumes, collections of articles, interviews and countless studies and essays. He has published extensively on his favourite author and on other writers and poets; he has written and edited monographs, source books, collections, articles and scholarly works. The Hungarian Scientific Bibliography (*Magyar Tudományos Művek Tára*) lists a total of 431 publications associated with his name (this figure does not include most texts of public interest), of which at least one tenth are books. In terms of quantity, this is a considerable achievement. But, of course, just as literature is not measured in running metres, neither is literary history; it requires in-depth knowledge, a real understanding of literature. And one more thing. Commitment, even obsession, in the best sense. He was and remained confidently informed on so many subjects, in so many different fields, but his most essential, all-important, heartfelt concern was and remained Lőrinc Szabó. There is no doubt that Lóránt Kabdebó was the person who knew Lőrinc Szabó's life and work most deeply in our country. And when he decided to scrutinize, show and publish things about the poet, he never failed to keep his promise. He was a true enthusiast, a fiery soul.

¹ KABDEBÓ 2022.

Three periods can be distinguished in Kabdebó's research on Lőrinc Szabó. The first is the time of his professional arrival, the period of the large, comprehensive monographs. It is hard to imagine today, but there was a not-so-short period when Lőrinc Szabó's image in literary history faded due to political prohibitions and the counter-interests of the canon, although his works were still very much present in the memories of his contemporaries. Kabdebó's comprehensive monographs on Szabó's work, *Szabó Lőrinc lázadó évtizede* (The Rebellious Decade of Lőrinc Szabó, 1970), *Útkeresés és különbéke* (Way-Seeking and Separate Peace, 1974) and *Az összegzés ideje* (The Time of Assessment, 1980), did much to combat silence and oblivion using the only substantial tool: the methodology of the humanities. Another important act was the publication in several volumes of the poet's diaries, letters and articles, including the self-examining notes and self-effacing defence of a poet with a dubious ideological past.² All these books have had a significant impact on both the public and the profession; for example, László Cs. Szabó, István Sötér and Miklós Tamás Gáspár all praised them as well as the research they were built on with the greatest enthusiasm.³

The period up to the supreme "change of regime" (rendszer váltás), i.e. the end of communism, can therefore be considered the first major era of Lóránt Kabdebó's research on Lőrinc Szabó. The second period can be dated from the 1990s and early 2000s, when, together with Ernő Kulcsár Szabó and other colleagues, he heuristically conceptualised and then explored the historical poetics of the literary paradigm shift between the two world wars. In this model, the peculiarities of Szabó's poetic approach to the subject (*subiectum*) and his use of language play a decisive role. It was at this time that Kabdebó published his poetic monograph on Szabó's oeuvre entitled "*A magyar költészet az én nyelvemen beszél*" ("Hungarian Poetry Speaks in my Language", 1996), which focuses on the thesis of the "dialogical poetic paradigm". According to him, the most important work of Szabó's oeuvre is the 1932 volume *Te meg a világ* (You and the World), in which the poet develops a specific, self-apostrophizing poetic model giving "equal opportunity to the voices striving for self-fulfilment and those conscious of the impossibility of this".⁴ His related research is also reported in the studies of his volume entitled *Vers és próza a modernség második hullámában* (Verse and Prose in the Second Wave of Modernism, 1996).

The professional context surrounding this research pertains to the significant conferences jointly organised with Ernő Kulcsár Szabó. To begin with, the pioneering symposia in Pécs addressed the fundamental questions of modern poetry and prose. The initial couple of conference proceedings volumes have had a notable impact.⁵ The *Újraolvasó* (Re-reading) series, co-organised and co-edited by Lóránt

² SZABÓ 1990.

³ KABDEBÓ 2022, 9.

⁴ KABDEBÓ 1996. Unless otherwise indicated, quotations are given in my own rough translation. J. D. M.

⁵ KABDEBÓ–KULCSÁR SZABÓ 1992; KABDEBÓ–KULCSÁR SZABÓ 1993.

Kabdebó, continued this initiative in Miskolc and Budapest. The volumes he produced aimed to re-interpret the work of Lőrinc Szabó, Endre Ady, Lajos Kassák and Attila József.

During his third and final creative period, Kabdebó produced a significant amount of literary career profiles, essay volumes, and problem-oriented monographs. Additionally, his involvement as a source communicator and editor intensified further. At this point, he was already working in groups, research communities and circles of students, as can be seen from the series of *Szabó Lőrinc Füzetek* (Lőrinc Szabó Booklets), which he edited and which presents the poet's life and work, from private libraries to illnesses and literary translations. His 2021 book, *“egy Költő Agya”* (“The Brain of a Poet”), provides a career portrait of Lőrinc Szabó, alongside comparative analyses in both international and national contexts. In addition, he has produced regular career profiles of other writers such as Gábor Dayka and István Lakatos, in the form of book-length studies or series of essays, like those dedicated to Magda Szabó. He was also happy to write literary evaluations of several poetic works and even critiqued books. He was pleased to deliver lectures at any location he was invited to, from conferences and university venues to cultural events in cities for an educated audience. He always presented with zest and eagerness.

Lóránt Kabdebó's identifiable features included his Kosztolányi necktie, his travelling hat from the Király Street hat shop (which still exists today in Pécs), and his distinctive voice. His mannerisms and voice inspired imitators with carnival tendencies. Kabdebó was more than an academic lecturer; he was also a performer, turning his podium talks and conference events into engaging performances, including the OTDK (National Scientific Students' Associations Conference) events. In case his mobile phone were to ring, he would use it to broadcast the events in real-time, going back and forth between the venue and the remote location. He was dedicated to using personal language and emphasizing the importance of human expression. Not apart from this, he also utilised his networking abilities and academic accomplishments as an organiser within an institution.

Kabdebó was obsessed with philology, but he was never for a moment a Dryasdust. For him, literary knowledge was always linked to the need for personal acquaintance and encounter, and he had the talent to make good use of this in his academic work. As an employee of the Budapest Petőfi Literary Museum in the seventies and eighties, he conducted numerous interviews with outstanding writers (including a book-length conversation with Miklós Szentkuthy, which shocked and moved me in a good sense about thirty years ago), which are now irreplaceable, valuable sources. He managed to open up to the elusive Sándor Weöres as well as to the strict Ágnes Nagy Nemes.⁶ He had an ingenious way of getting the artists of letter to talk – they were equally happy to tell him about their life events, historical experiences, their colleagues, readings and workshop activities.

⁶ See, for example, KABDEBÓ 1984.

“Intellectual testimony”, I put in the title, and indeed, the reader of *Something Happened* who is familiar with the researcher’s work will inevitably see this volume as a final message, a legacy, a figurative capstone. It is undoubtedly an intellectual summary of the research carried out on the subject, not only because of the reception situation of the volume, which turned out to be the last, but also because of the account that appears in several places as an inherent speech act. In the introductory chapter, “Új főszereplő a modernitás kánonjában: Szabó Lőrinc” (A New Protagonist in the Canon of Modernity: Lőrinc Szabó), the author himself reviews and takes stock of what, he writes, he has done since 1962 to explore and understand the poet’s work.⁷ He sums up all this briefly and concisely, with the certainty and dignity of a factual record and testimony; the facts speak for themselves.

Indeed, it is a fact of literary and critical history that Kabdebó played a leading role in documenting Lőrinc Szabó’s career, publishing the corpus of his literary texts in a philologically accurate manner, and interpreting them in a way worthy of their value. He worked first at the Petőfi Literary Museum and later at the University of Pécs (then named after Janus Pannonius), where he was head of the Department of Literary History between 1989 and 1993, during a crucial and turbulent period. He then organised the Faculty of Humanities in Miskolc, which he headed for nine years. Here he also founded the Lőrinc Szabó Research Centre (part of the digitised collection of which is available to the public on the Internet) and, together with Károly Horányi, the website *Szabó Lőrinc – Vers és valóság* (Lőrinc Szabó – Verse and Reality; MTA Library Manuscript Repository). He encouraged, educated, and even appointed a number of young researchers and colleagues to work on the poet, many times more or less closely linked to the research projects he initiated. He sought and found contacts with all those whose literary outlook and intellectual credo included an important role for the interpretation of Lőrinc Szabó. Meanwhile, he also found time to cultivate communal memory, not only in the form of scholarly essays and publicist articles, but also in ways that worked through the power and ritual of community presence, such as the erection of memorial plaques from Brno to Opatija to Dubrovnik.⁸

The volume *Something Happened* belongs to Kabdebó’s third and very prolific creative period mentioned above, but it can also be seen as a stand-alone work in juxtaposition with his entire body of research. This is partly because of its posthumous status, and partly because its summary offers the reader a reflective perspective of finality. The author’s decision to refer regularly to his own texts, to comment on a phenomenon or a statement he has outlined, and sometimes to recall the personal context and the researcher’s own history of events, also contributes to this impression. He even singles out one of his earlier studies, which had only appeared in a journal in the 1980s, and includes it in his volume. He writes: “I think that in this book it [the text] can find its true place as the initiator of the programme, with-

⁷ KABDEBÓ 2022, 7–11.

⁸ See KABDEBÓ 2022, 8.

out changing the words.”⁹ Such a reframing of the text, dedicated to the poem *A tékozló fiú csalódása* (The Disappointment of the Prodigal Son), contributes to the main thesis of the book, as indicated in the subtitle “The Transformations of Lőrinc Szabó”. Kabdebó examines in detail the motivic connections within and outside the oeuvre, as well as the biographical contexts. He finds that the role of the “prodigal” (in the meaning of “lost one” as well as “wastrel” and “munificent”) is played out in a variety of contexts in the poet’s work, from direct biblical allusions to paraphrases, from a personal relationship with Mihály Babits to the transformative evocation of his *Fortissimo*. (The Babits poem is dominated by the bitterly rebellious image of the deaf, the Szabó poem by the bitterly rebellious image of the blind God.) The underlying mood and experience of an elemental, pervasive loneliness behind and before all this is confirmed not only by biographical data but also by poems such as *Tékozló fiú* (Prodigal Son), *Túlvilág* (The Beyond), and certain pieces of *Tücsökzene* (Cricket Music). Kabdebó’s interpretation of the poems is based not predominantly on primary biographical but on literary and cultural contexts. His textual analyses cover the Christian theological and intercultural religious-theoretical contexts of the subject, the philosophical, and the poetic transcendence of moral dilemmas.

The next, very extensive chapter of the book deals with the process in Szabó’s oeuvre in which the poem type reflecting the role of the self is replaced by a dialogic poetic model that stages the crisis of roles. Szabó’s gradual departure from the classical modern stylistic certainty of Endre Ady and Mihály Babits, and from the concepts of the subject based on the dignity of language and the belief in culture, was also due to his experience of the accelerated, hectic reality of post-war Budapest. The title, “A vers kriminalizálódása Szabó Lőrinc pályakezdésében (1920–1930)” (The Criminalisation of Poetry in Lőrinc Szabó’s Early Career, 1920–1930), is also an indication of the poet’s growing interest in detective films and crime at the time. This interest also stemmed from his work, as Szabó’s job at the *Est* newspapers involved correcting, rearranging and stylising the daily “criminal news”, which had been compiled in one way or another by others, and then giving the finished material an attention-grabbing, “punchy report title”. For him, “the criminology of reality rounds out the film stories”. He then turned the news into poetry, creating “a poetry format for himself”, says Kabdebó.¹⁰ The essay includes the full text of the poem *A hasmetsző* (The Ripper), as well as the poem *Áradás, áradás!* (Flood, Flood!) with which, according to Szabó’s recollection, the young poet won the shuddering praise of his future master, Mihály Babits.¹¹ *A hasmetsző*, by the way, can be compared to such contemporary experiments as Sándor Márai’s novel *A mészáros* (The Butcher) or Robert Musil’s Moosbrugger character in *The Man Without Qualities*; in all these works, the lust murder trans-

⁹ KABDEBÓ 2022, 13.

¹⁰ KABDEBÓ 2022, 40.

¹¹ See KABDEBÓ 2022, 34.

cends the mere crime and acquires a significance that goes beyond itself, disrupting the moral and semiotic order of culture and affecting it as a whole.

The first-person plural *Áradás, áradás!* (Flood, flood!) brings the destructive instinct onto the stage in the form of a Caliban archetype and makes it suggestive with a flood of sound. Kabdebó places the “self-destructive power of the new history” and the new human condition at the centre of his thinking: “Man had to be saturated with terror and loss of role”. The young Lőrinc Szabó’s “vision of the world, creating a criminalised poetic form with its peculiar ironic formalism, at once conforming to external events and rebelling against them, exhibiting an afflicting duality”, which the essayist parallels with the contemporary poetry of Ezra Pound, William Butler Yeats and Stefan George, is a response to this.¹² The line thus opened leads from the poetic texts that remain in the legacy to Szabó’s canonised works, in which negation and rebellious action are also fundamental attitudes and forms.

The turmoil of the late twenties and early thirties is marked by the poems *Vezér* (The Leader, 1928) and *A Párt válaszol* (The Party Responds, 1931), which, contrary to popular belief, were not written after Hitler’s seizure of power, as the dates show. Kabdebó sees in them the justification of precisely that poetic and *ars poetica* process in which not necessarily the facts of reality, but also their possibilities, are brought into the lyric workshop, into the balancing power of poetry. He argues that the “terrible” nature of the imagined, possible leader and political party becomes truly comprehensible in texts understood within the dialogical poetic paradigm.¹³ “In the 1920s, the poet Lőrinc Szabó poetically rethought the historical determination of the following decade”, concludes Kabdebó,¹⁴ who also examines such additions to his oeuvre as a note on World War I graves in the pages of *Az Est* or the serialised translation of Remarque’s novel *Return from the War* in another daily, *Magyarország*. With careful philological meticulousness, Kabdebó demonstrates the close connection between the submerged prose texts and the better-known poems, some of which have been published in volumes. Surprisingly, he even relates some familiar lines and phrases from Attila József’s works to the adaptation of Remarque’s text. The chapter concludes by briefly reiterating and underlining the main theses of the monograph *Hungarian Poetry Speaks in My Language* on the period of *You and the World*. According to this, Szabó’s reflection on the exhaustion of role possibilities in a changed world and the vulnerability of the human being who has lost individuality leads to the juxtaposition of time horizons and the counterpoint dialogue between the rebel and the sceptical analyst, between the mental dispositions and the voices of the “actor” and the “spectator”, to use the monographer’s terminology.¹⁵

In the chapter “A ‘rettenetes’ megfogalmazása és feloldása” (The Formulation and Resolution of the “Terrible”), Kabdebó outlines the European literary parallels

¹² KABDEBÓ 2022, 48–49.

¹³ KABDEBÓ 2022, 55–60.

¹⁴ KABDEBÓ 2022, 65.

¹⁵ See KABDEBÓ 2022, 90.

of the post-Great War world state as a permanent crisis (T. S. Eliot, Pound, Rilke, Benn, Cendrars, Yeats, Kavafis, Joseph Conrad) in order to place Szabó's poetry in this context. The "terrible" is an intellectual and poetic reflection of conditions experienced and understood, from the image of decay to the degradation of roles to social and psychic helplessness. The dialogical logic of the lyric ranges from the competitive situation of the duality of the voice to the productive tension between poetic tradition and the "terrible". The essayist invokes the opening lines of one of Lőrinc Szabó's best-known works, *Semmiért Egészen* (Entirely, for Nothing): "That it is terrible, I believe, / but it is true."¹⁶ He denies that this poem is merely an apotheosis of selfishness, arguing that the depiction of suffering and vulnerability is part of the ethical-aesthetic complex. In his view, "the subject of the poem is not really (or rather, not only) the male-female relationship. It is a model of human social adaptation. How man can live among men, in the midst of the conditions created by the immutable, 'terrible' fate."¹⁷

The monograph repeatedly discusses the relationship between Lőrinc Szabó and Attila József.¹⁸ It is not only a personal relationship, although that is also important, as it turns out that József knew the poems of *You and the World* by heart, and that – according to Szabó's memory – he corrected them as much as he corrected the attacked master's texts in his (in)famous critical essay on Mihály Babits.¹⁹ (Incidentally, Szabó did not recommend the publication of this work, as he believed that it contained untruths, but József decided otherwise.) Even more interesting than the personal relationship between the two poets, however, is the relationship between the two poetries, about whose microphilology of influence, as well as their poetic and ideological similarities and differences, we learn a great deal. One of the two most significant differences comes from the difference in age. It is only five years, but it is enough for the younger József, less aware of the shock of war, to turn optimistically towards radical political-ideological solutions to the world crisis and individual misery, while Szabó, despite all his thought experiments, ultimately remains sceptical in this respect, and not independently of this, relativising his own early materialism, turns towards intercultural spiritualism. (Kabdebó discusses the latter in more detail in the chapter "Ars poetica vs. teológia Szabó Lőrinc pályáján" (Ars Poetica vs. Theology in the Career of Lőrinc Szabó). The other major difference is that Szabó, after rounding off his oeuvre into a seemingly closed whole, still had the time and energy to create his elaborate *Tücsökzene* (Cricket Music, 1947-1957) in which he retells his poetic work, interpreting and contextualising it from a higher level of reflection, as many of his contemporaries, including perhaps most enthusiastically János Pilinszky, have observed and marvelled at.²⁰

¹⁶ "Hogy rettenetes, elhiszem, / de így igaz." See also SZABÓ n. d.

¹⁷ KABDEBÓ 2022, 118.

¹⁸ KABDEBÓ 2022, 119–134.

¹⁹ JÓZSEF 1992.

²⁰ See KABDEBÓ 2022, 100.

The chapter titled “A művészet ‘az élet nagy stimulánsa’” (“Art is ‘The Great Stimulant of Life’”) contains a summary of Szabó’s philosophical orientation, encompassing Schopenhauer, Nietzsche (and – potentially – Heidegger) as well as Eastern intellectual traditions. Additionally, the chapter presents a detailed analysis of the poem *Sivatagban* (In the Desert), written in 1933. From the grammatical observations to the Endre Ady (and potentially János Arany) parallels, I concur with every word of the interpretation. But I question whether the poem, recognized as an admirable endeavor to grapple with the themes of time and subjectivity, is not somewhat plagued by the rhetorical self-aggrandizement (as found in Ady’s work). As for *In the Desert*, I personally detect a notably potent Romantic influence (in the finest traditions of the movement). The Sphinx’s enunciation in the endless desert (“One minute of your life is worth / more than the eternal world”)²¹ and the circumstance itself both evoke and contrast with Shelley’s *Ozymandias* while alluding to the Oedipus myth as a rite of passage.²² The triumph at the Sphinx is symbolical, as the narrow but rich human time-scale surpasses the barren vastness of non-human time. The poem presents a paradox of spatial and temporal grandeur and smallness through an astute rhetorical figure, *acumen*, taken to its limits in the conclusion, where the lyrical self assumes the persona of the Sphinx (also likened to Szabó’s famous lyric protagonist, Dsuang Dszi): “I came home, have grown old, / I am now as old as him, a terribly ancient man, / and I sit in the growing desert / that time blows around me”;²³ but the teachings (“signs”) he has written in the dust are eroded by the sands of time. The latter image evokes the figure of Jesus with astonishing ease (cf. John 8:6-8). At the same time, as is often the case with Ady, the poem’s hubris is moderated – or even justified – by the dramatic balladry that frames the upstage soliloquy.

Perhaps Babits’ poem *Ősz és tavasz között* (Between Autumn and Spring), written simultaneously, may be seen as a response. The text features evocative images such as “The year is already turning like an hourglass” and “What my bough has written in the dust / the muddy water of spring washes away”.²⁴ This poem, subtly archaic in style, presents a contrasting viewpoint. The speaker portrayed has a limited existence and a self-deprecating attitude, expressing a sense of impermanence. The most compelling aspect is the antithesis, answering virtually Szabó’s poem, in which transience is personified as scattered materiality, with the phrase “I am a flake, I melt with snow”.²⁵ It is regrettable that I cannot discuss these queries and other lingering uncertainties with Lóránt Kabdebó in person.

²¹ Prose translation of „Az örökkévaló világnál / többet ér egy perc életed”.

²² Cf. BREMMER 1988.

²³ Prose translation of „Hazajöttem, megöregedtem, / vén vagyok, mint ő, szörnyű vén, / s ülök a növény sivatagban, / melyet az idő fúj körém”.

²⁴ Prose translations of „Már az év, mint homokóra, fordul” and „Ami betűt ágam irt a porba, / a tavasz sárvize elsodorja”.

²⁵ Prose translation of „Pehely vagyok, olvadok a hóval”. For *Ősz és tavasz között* see also BABITS n. d.

It is possible to challenge the statements presented in this volume, as the author's argumentation and formulation sometimes implies meditations and expose personal preferences. There have already been discussions about the multifaceted creations of Lóránt Kabdebó; appropriately so, as this displays the true strength of his work. The most important and fruitful partnership occurs when the discussion partner develops Kabdebó's perspectives, possibly even theoretically re-evaluating his main ideas. Such a dynamic is evident within the influential publication of another esteemed Szabó Lőrinc researcher, Zoltán Kulcsár-Szabó, who is also referenced in the reviewed volume.²⁶ The interaction of ideas between the two academics, which persists throughout their research and publications, is an authentic expert discourse, even a partnership, as denoted by statements in *Something Happened*.

Lóránt Kabdebó's latest publication provides a comprehensive overview of his long-standing research career. The book features a combination of retrospective analysis, inherent reformulations, and critical appraisals. The recurring motifs, ideas, and intellectual hobbyhorses reveal the methodological practices of the scholar's workshop. The book is imbued with a quasi-rhythmic formula stemming from multiple processes of restarting, reformulating, and rearranging. Themes, comparisons, historical-poetic theses, and philological elements are repeatedly taken up in different contexts to form a discourse-building network of proofs and refutations. The highly personal and sometimes playful tone penetrates all of this and is also conveyed to the reader. Lőrinc Szabó's last loves (the mysterious Madame Scrivener and the enigmatic Archduchess) are subjects of investigation at times, creating a truly engaging experience for the reader. ("Káprázat – a Vita Nuova vonzásában" [Mirage – the Attraction of Vita Nuova].) Sometimes, the author reflects on his own past achievements and his life as a researcher and cultural organiser, as a memoirist who offers an individual perspective. He recalls various instances, such as arguing with Zoltán Latinovits at the Museum Garden, and László Ferenczi convincing János Pilinszky to publish his laudative essay on Szabó's *Cricket Music*. Interestingly, it was published only in English in the 1963 P.E.N. bulletin and had to be translated back into Hungarian thirty years later. Kabdebó also documents that István Szerdahelyi, who would later become known for socialist aesthetics, was advised by his well-to-do lawyer father to study under Lőrinc Szabó. Szerdahelyi was appalled by the poet's excessive productivity and workaholicism. He also lacked the inspiration emanating from his master's forehead.

These details are by no means incidental; if they are sometimes so, their account is always and entirely captivating. Its significance, however, lies in the fact that it forms part of a larger construct and is motivated by diverse forms of autobiographical testimony and researcher communication, which are nonetheless unified in a singular stream. This is how Lóránt Kabdebó's book title *Something Happened* is fulfilled, referring not only to Lőrinc Szabó but also to the essayist himself. The book

²⁶ KULCSÁR-SZABÓ 2010, specifically pages 59–90.

recounts real events such as decisive or incidental moments in the lives of the poet and researcher, and poetic or scientific discursive events. It is an engaging read.

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ON THE LIFE'S WORK OF LÓRÁNT KABDEBÓ LYRIC THEORY, LYRIC HISTORY AND LŐRINC SZABÓ

KORNÉLIA HORVÁTH

Theoretical and historical foundations of lyric poetry

Professor Lóránt Kabdebó, who passed away in January 2022, is considered by Hungarian literary scholars as an outstanding and influential figure in lyric theory, the history of 20th century Hungarian poetry and especially the literary work of Lőrinc Szabó.

His knowledge of literary theory and literary history is universal. In his extremely extensive oeuvre, he has also dealt with the work and influence of many other poets, such as Attila József, Milán Füst, Sándor Weöres, Magda Szabó, and, in terms of wider literary culture, with the poetry of Yeats, Rilke, Ezra Pound, etc. But he was also no stranger to the study of prose, epic and the novel. He has published several studies in this field, ranging from 19th century literature (see Jókai) to the Hungarian experimental prose of the early 20th century (Miklós Szentkuthy), Magda Szabó and the epic poetry of Győző Határ.

Before I turn to the details and evaluation of Lóránt Kabdebó's research on Lőrinc Szabó, I would like to highlight the professor's basic principles and innovations in literary and lyrical theory, or more precisely, to emphasise their importance and their founding power. In my view, Lóránt Kabdebó's basic principles of literary theory have opened new avenues in the research of the history of 20th and, providentially, 21st century Hungarian literature. I would like to emphasize the following in connection with the concepts of literary theory and the insights into the history of literature that he introduced and applied:

1. The idea of the birth of the *dialogical poetic paradigm*, which Kabdebó links – quite rightly – to the work of the late Attila József and Lőrinc Szabó. The idea of dialogicity in lyric poetry is a new insight, since it is a concept that is usually associated with prose epic, following Bahtyin. Kabdebó, however, also 'discovered' dialogicity in 20th century Hungarian poetry, especially in the poetry of Lőrinc Szabó. He explains this in detail in one of his seminal monographs on Lőrinc Szabó ("*Hungarian Poetry Speaks in My Language*", 1992)¹ and in his later study on dialogic discourse, *The Birth of the Dialogic Poetic Paradigm in Hungarian Lyric Poetry*.²

¹ KABDEBÓ 1992/a, 36–56.

² KABDEBÓ 1996/b, 11–19.

Kabdebó's argument about dialogic verse language is important here: "This creative mode (the dialogic poetic practice) appears in opposition to the monologue-type poetic language, which requires tonal unity and treats the sentence-judgment identity as an indisputable fact, since its one-way, goal-oriented solutions leave the poet poetically unsatisfied, giving the impression of insolubility, and thematically projecting consequences that discourage the person asking with the intention of searching. Instead of the traditional poetic discourse, a practice of interpreting the self and the world in 'circumlocution', of expressing the personality by talking to another about something, of bringing out and emphasising – even of making into a poetic organising force – the poetic dialogicity that is always present in any text. (In Hungarian lyric poetry, this practice was embodied in the poetry of Lőrinc Szabó in the last third of the 1920s, and he remains – along with Attila József – the most significant Hungarian master of this mode of speech.)"³

2. Lóránt Kabdebó has done a great deal in the field of the theoretical question of literary modernity and its historical delimitation. This is not only a matter of the historical and theoretical "mapping" of 20th century Hungarian poetry, but also of its positioning in the European poetic canon. Kabdebó's 2021 volume "*The Brain of a Poet*", which discusses the work of Lőrinc Szabó in the light of modern European poetry, is a striking testimony to this. In this book, Kabdebó takes a special look at the Ady-Lőrinc relationship, i.e. the survival of the spirit and aesthetic-poetic conception of the *West* ("*Nyugat*", a new literary journal in the first four decades of the XX century in Hungary) in the poetry of Lőrinc Szabó, and then, as a corollary, he again analyses the question of the dialogization of classical modernity in the oeuvre of Lőrinc Szabó.⁴

3. The basic work of this theory is the 1996 publication *Poetry and Prose in the Second Wave of Modernity*,⁵ which analyses this second phase of classical modernity, which was already preparing for late modernity, not only in Hungarian lyric poetry but also in epic poetry.

4. The linking of 'classicisation' and 'intertextuality' itself seems a rather bold and novel undertaking in literary theory.⁶ However, it is also very illuminating: as indicated above, Kabdebó relates this concept primarily to the late poetry of Attila József and Lőrinc Szabó. On the other hand, he sees the tradition of this poetic idiom in the history of European poetry, naming authors such as Dante (he emphasises the 'insistence' on it by the authors of the second modernity, which was also manifested in the translations of the *Divine Comedy* [one should refer here to Babits or Sándor Weöres], Browning, Baudelaire, Ezra Pound, Stefan George, T. S. Eliot, Joseph Conrad or Kavafis). He cites the poetry of Mihály Babits and Endre Ady as predecessors in the history of Hungarian literature, as authors who have adopted this "attitude", i.e. the earlier tradition of literary theory and history, espe-

³ KABDEBÓ 1996/a, 9–10.

⁴ KABDEBÓ 2021, 9–127.

⁵ KABDEBÓ 1996/f.

⁶ KABDEBÓ 1996/e, 44–50.

cially the (neo-)classicist and classical modern tradition (the latter in the 20th century), and the tradition of the “new” and “classical modern”. In his oeuvre, Lőrinc Szabó has partly carried on this tradition and partly incorporated it into his poetic work in a variety of ways, and in this way he has naturally transformed this multifaceted tradition.

Lóránt Kabdebó’s oeuvre – Lőrinc Szabó’s oeuvre

Lóránt Kabdebó has explored Lőrinc Szabó’s oeuvre in a very diverse and multifaceted way. He has carried out extraordinary research on the biography of Lőrinc Szabó, on some of his life events, on the genesis of his texts, on the search for manuscripts and on the philological “reconstruction” of his texts. Of outstanding importance in this respect is the series of *Szabó Lőrinc Papers (Szabó Lőrinc Füzetek)*, which he founded, which, in addition to the above-mentioned aspects, contains copies of documents from Lőrinc Szabó’s life, text-fact sheets, literary correspondence, poetic analysis and comparative literary history studies, and even translations of fiction by other authors, some of whom were foreign-language authors with whom Lőrinc Szabó came into contact in some way, through a connection with the history of influence or through his own translations. (A good example of this is the 9th issue of the *Szabó Lőrinc Füzetek*, published in 2009, which, in connection with Lőrinc Szabó’s translation of Remarque */Back from the War/*, not only publishes the text of the translation itself [which consists of five voluminous parts], but also six related analytical and commentary studies, two of which were written in German.)

The fact that *Lőrinc Szabó’s Papers* could be published in Miskolc, as a publication of the University of Miskolc, not only underlines the fact that Lőrinc Szabó was a native of the city of Miskolc, but also shows the esteem in which professor Lóránt Kabdebó was held by his own university. Lóránt Kabdebó was the founding Dean of the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Miskolc, head of the Department of Hungarian Language and Literature and the Doctoral School of Literature. Both in their number and in the diversity of their authors, the volumes reflect Lóránt Kabdebó’s profound, dedicated teaching and professorial qualities and activities, which have always been highly professional. Kabdebó educated countless students, many of whom researched Lőrinc Szabó’s life, work, or poetics, and published many studies on these subjects, including in the *Lőrinc Szabó Papers*, which Kabdebó founded. Many of Kabdebó’s students have obtained PhDs, many of them teach at various universities, and some of them are deans, rectors, and doctors. All this shows that prof. Kabdebó has never “locked himself up” in his own humanities discipline but has always thought in terms of interdisciplinary cooperation between disciplines.

Lóránt Kabdebó has always paid special attention to the situation of Lőrinc Szabó’s oeuvre not only in relation to 20th century Hungarian poetic trends, but also to European lyric poetry and culture in general (again, we can refer to the em-

phasis on the influence of Dante or Max Stirner in Lőrinc Szabó's poetry),⁷ thus highlighting the European quality of Lőrinc Szabó's lyric poetry and conveying to the Hungarian receptive audience the recognition of the poet's cultural situation.

And since lyric poetry, the lyric poem in its very structure, was of great interest to Lőrinc Szabó, we must turn to his extremely thorough analyses of the poem, which pay special attention to the lyric speaker, the poetic situation and, of course, the poetic language itself. Kabdebó's analyses are never formal, on the contrary: they always focus on the semantics generated or created by the form. On the other hand, it is also necessary to see that this poetic semantics, which, according to Kabdebó, can only be revealed, understood and received through the structure, rhythm, rhymes and "images" (metaphors) of the poem, has profound existential-ontological implications in Lőrinc Szabó. In other words, the poem meditates on the position of the speaker (the lyrical self) in the lyrical text and, through the semantics evoked by the linguistic-formal characteristics of the poem, on the position of the recipient in life and existence, or the position not yet occupied. What is more, in Lőrinc Szabó's poetry, he mostly asks and *shouts*: perhaps one of the best examples of this is his poem "The Dreams of One".

A brilliant Kabdeboan analysis of poetic language and form is presented in the interpretation of the poem "*Willow on the lakeshore*", strongly inspired by Attila József, which starts from and builds on the inviting rhyme of the first line, the word "as if". This word, which can be seen both as the equivalent of Lotman's "If"⁸ and as the realisation of Wolfgang Iser's "as if" structure (which Iser defined as the main characteristic of literature, the "self-acceptance" of the text),⁹ also forms an enjambment in the poem. This "as if" thus further highlights the poetic theme of doubling, which is the focus of Kabdebó's analysis, and through it and from the point of view of the subject, the problem of the "double" or the double world, the worldly and the otherworldly.¹⁰

Kabdebó's other outstanding analysis was devoted to the famous poem *The Dreams of the One* in the volume of lyric poems entitled *You and the World*. Through an analysis of this poetic text, Kabdebó demonstrates the existence of Lőrinc Szabó's dialogical poetic language, indicating that we are dealing here with a particular version of the self-propositional verse type (see the study by Béla G. Németh).¹¹ As he writes, with this "dialogue, the poet creates a specific variation of the self-referential poetic form, in which he gives equal opportunities to the voices that strive for self-fulfilment and those that are aware of the impossibility of doing so".¹² The two "I"-s of this dialogue are distinguished by the fact that while the one appears on the plane of desire and action, the other is contemplative, forced to suf-

⁷ In relation to Max Stirner see KABDEBÓ 1996/c-d, 51–117.

⁸ LOTMAN 2001, 207–220.

⁹ ISER 2001, 21–43.

¹⁰ KABDEBÓ 1992/b, 131–138.

¹¹ See NÉMETH G. 1984, 7–40.

¹² KABDEBÓ 1992/b, 37.

fer the very acknowledgement of the futility of desire, and to perceive and interpret the world as a “web” – insofar as interpretation is possible here. Kabdebó identifies this latter manifestation of the self with the role of the *spectator*, while he defines the “self” active in the world as an *actor*.¹³ At the same time, he indicates that for Lőrinc Szabó, “the role of the actor is precisely that of movement, freedom, a constant sense of escaping from the constraints of the self”. For the subject in the poem and for the subject of the recipient, this dual tendency is revealed as a “way of life”: “The path leads from the bound to the inner infinite, not towards the traditional psychological principle, but towards the knowledge of the biological organisation of the individual human being and through this to his liberation. That which releases us from the rules, which at the same time – the viewer (the spectator) is aware of this, he constantly says – also binds us.”¹⁴

As Kabdebó stresses at the end of his analysis, these two tendencies are essentially contradictory: *only aesthetic creation can* “unite and balance” them.¹⁵

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¹³ KABDEBÓ 1992/b, 39.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ KABDEBÓ 1992/b, 40.

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LÓRÁNT KABDEBÓ AS THEATRE CRITIC: HIS REVIEWS OF PRODUCTIONS IN THE NATIONAL THEATRE OF MISKOLC FROM 1960 TO 1970

MÁRIA KURDI

The late outstanding literary scholar, Lóránt Kabdebó's name has been strongly intertwined with the study of the Hungarian modernist poet, Lőrinc Szabó, whose work he researched in its historical and cultural context and wrote several books about from 1970 on, earning the name of the most prominent and prolific Hungarian scholar of Szabó's oeuvre. Guided by the bibliography of hundreds of his writings and exploring his scholarly achievement from the beginnings, the late 1950s, one can see that the then secondary school teacher Kabdebó regularly contributed to the daily and weekly papers published in Miskolc extensively, for more than a decade. He became and remained editor-in-chief of the Miskolc weekly paper *Napjaink* (Our Days) between 1962 and 1984. In his reports he offered his views about new books, volumes of poetry and critical studies primarily, but also on various cultural events such as concerts, exhibitions, conferences, the celebration of notable anniversaries and other cultural programs. Besides, he penned several theatre reviews, part of which discuss premieres and guest performances in the National Theatre of Miskolc, while others comment on theatrical events taking place elsewhere or broadcast by the Hungarian television. Should anyone venture to collect them together under the same cover, the result would be a both informative and inspiring, compact booklet. Browsing these articles the reader gets to know a forgotten part of Kabdebó's critical work and the often strikingly original thoughts and observations Kabdebó presents in them, and will realize how much they enrich the history of the National Theatre of Miskolc and that of theatre criticism in our country more generally. The present article sets out to survey, underscore, contextualize and interpret the most important ideas in Kabdebó's reviews of noteworthy productions mounted by the National Theatre of Miskolc up to 1970, when he got a new job in Budapest and left Miskolc for the capital, to be back in the 1990s.

Kabdebó's first theatre reviews saw the light in the weekly paper *Diósgyőri Munkás* (Diósgyőr Worker). In May 1960, Konstantin Andreyevich Trenyov's *On Neva Banks* (На берегу Невы, 1937) had its Hungarian premier in the National Theatre of Miskolc. Kabdebó's review of the production begins with an upbeat: after the widely known *Lyubov Jarovaya* (Любовь Яровая, 1926), a play about the Russian Civil War which had been staged in Budapest with considerable success earlier, Miskolc now ventures the performance of a less known historical drama by the same author and earns similar appreciation. The successful production of *On*

Neva Banks, according to Kabdebó, proved to be a test for the theatre to show its performative powers by staging a play which has an intricate structure and a sizable range of different characters coming from different layers of the society. Importantly, the critic states that the National Theatre of Miskolc created an artifact that came into being from the playtext and the work of the theatre ensemble jointly. By this idea he highlighted a complex relationship and interaction, in a sense anticipating new outlooks in the study of performances critics of our country started to pursue years later. The challenge of producing *On Neva Banks*, Kabdebó's review points out, lies in keeping up the dynamic movement throughout the altogether twelve scenes (in three acts) of the play, each of which is a complete miniature drama focusing on individual lives as influenced by the massive and rapid changes the characters confront during the 1917 October Revolution in Russia. Evaluating the director, István Horvai's work, Kabdebó emphasizes that the success of the production was mostly due to the accomplished utilization of Brechtian techniques.¹

The other notable theatre event Kabdebó wrote about for *Diósgyőri Munkás* was a guest performance of singers and musicians from Csokonai Theatre Debrecen, who played Beethoven's opera, *Fidelio* to the audience in Miskolc. As a critic ardently interested in and concerned about the development and future of cultural life in his home town, Kabdebó opens this review by lamenting the fact that Miskolc has no opera company, while Szeged and Pécs have one, beside that of Debrecen. At the same time, he quotes some officials who maintain, without further reasoning to verify the point, that in an industrial town like Miskolc there is hardly any audience for opera performances. Kabdebó convincingly argues that this is the wrong path to take and this narrow-minded logic should be turned on its head: in want of an opera company, how to educate people to enjoy and appreciate the Hungarian and international gems of that musical genre? The fame of Miskolc as a cultural centre could by all means benefit from staging homemade opera productions which then may be invited to tour the country, the critic adds. That said, Kabdebó is, however, not at all unjust to the guest artists from Debrecen, whose achievement he praises in high terms, with special emphasis on the unified style and sustained concentration of their *Fidelio*. In his brief discussion of how the best singers enlivened the roles they were incarnating, Kabdebó refers to a few memorable details of the production.

In the paper *Napjaink* Kabdebó published a review of the Miskolc premiere of Jenő Heltai's *A néma levente* (The Silent Knight, 1936), directed by Péter Léner. Tracing the genealogy of the story back to Renaissance times, Kabdebó displays his wide-ranging erudition by invoking literary and dramatic works which have similar roots, including Edmond Rostand's drama *Cyrano de Bergerac* (1897) and Charles Baudelaire's poem *L'Albatros* (1859). Heltai's romantic, fable-like story places a mundane protagonist in the centre, who tries to escape from the surrounding inhumanity and the whole of the play suggests the belief that life is beautiful. According to the reviewer, what the theatre should do with a drama like this is to

¹ KABDEBÓ 1960/a, 2.

present it in such a way that its playful freshness become smoothly transmitted. However, the staging of the play in Miskolc did not fully mobilize this potential because the director employed actors and actresses who were known as outstanding ones in productions of serious drama, Kabdebó claims: for instance a fine interpreter of Shakespeare's Hamlet can hardly act a role demanding lightness really well. It may sound like a Shavian paradox at first sight, but the critic suggests that a mixture of styles can spoil the effect in certain cases, and *The Silent Knight* is that kind of drama, no matter how seriously all contributors take their roles and the instructions they have been told to follow in the actual production. The director, Kabdebó continues, attempted to counterbalance this problem by introducing gestures and devices which, unfortunately, might have struck the audience as somewhat forced in their ambitious intended impact. Nevertheless, his conclusion is that the stage setting formed an outstanding part of the undeniably noteworthy of *The Silent Knight*.²

Kabdebó's implication that "serious" drama is a distinct form with its own conventions might remind the reader of our time that defining the nature of the "serious" play is still an issue genre theories tend to identify and pay attention to. In a recently published book on the contemporary political play with examples from the British theatre, the author devotes a whole chapter to the subject and maintains: "Serious drama came into being in the late-nineteenth century in opposition to melodrama, which then dominated theatre stages." The history of modern serious drama dates back to G. B. Shaw, its main features being "an effective vehicle of [such] political and social change" as well as realist dramaturgy, Sarah Grochala explains.³ Heltai's *The Silent Knight* can be seen as a reformed melodrama, the difference of which from serious drama is also suggested by Kabdebó's review. Fortunately, he did not view serious drama and stage realism narrowly: in 1960 Kabdebó commemorated the 10th anniversary of G. B. Shaw's death in an article by acknowledging not only the playwright's social criticism as explored by other critics at that time but also highlighted the presence of uncanny and grotesque scenes in the Shavian dramatic oeuvre. Supposedly, here Kabdebó means the variety of style and technique in such plays as *Man and Superman* (1903), *Heartbreak House* (1919) or *Back to Methuselah* (1921), to mention just a few of Shaw's most experimental plays across his oeuvre. In Kabdebó's opinion, it was just this kind of stylistic variety that made Shaw one of the most realistic realists.⁴

In 1964, the four hundred years' anniversary of Shakespeare's birth was celebrated by the National Theatre of Miskolc, too. Kabdebó wrote enthusiastic "lyrical notes" as he, a scholar of poetry in the first place, called his article about the anniversary production of the theatre, which he first wanted to attend out of respect to the master, yet found that what he received was an exceptionally well selected, directed and acted program. In his introductory words he raises the pertinent question whether it is possible to show something really essential (and appetizing, one

² KABDEBÓ 1962, 8.

³ GROCHALA 2017, 46–47, 55.

⁴ KABDEBÓ 1960/b, 5.

should add, thinking of the following years' Shakespeare performances) about the English Bard in twice 45 minutes to a Hungarian audience. For Kabdebó, thanks to the reverential work of the Miskolc theatre makers, the program did just that: by selecting parts of representative scenes from both comedies and tragedies it underscored the unique and inimitable variety in the Shakespearian heritage. Beside the texts, translated by the greatest Hungarian writers and poets, selections from musical pieces inspired by Shakespeare across the centuries added to the overall effect, and his contemporary, Ben Jonson's appreciation of Shakespeare was also quoted, Kabdebó comments. The reviewer's praise of ending the program with the artisan's comic and metatheatrical, humorously self-revealing scene from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* can also be understood as homage to the fact that in Miskolc, an industrialized city, hundreds of manual workers formed a considerable part of the audience. In this regard, Kabdebó finds it important to refer to the showing of the anniversary program in other places, notably in Kazincbarcika,⁵ a town close to Miskolc, which was famous for being an important centre of metallurgical production in Hungary, a "land of iron and steel" as so aggressively envisioned by the socialist leaders and causing so many economic problems, during the 1950s and 1960s.⁶

The 1966 premiere of a new, loose adaptation of G. B. Shaw's classical *Saint Joan* (1923) titled *Johanna éjszakája* (The Night of Johanna) written by Miklós Gyárfás in the National Theatre of Miskolc, again inspired Kabdebó to review it for the daily paper *Észak-Magyarország*. In the new article Kabdebó assumes that Johanna's story is known by the readers, supposedly from Shaw's *Saint Joan*, which harvested a number of good Hungarian productions by that time. Interestingly, while the premiere of *Johanna éjszakája* proved successful as a theatrical event, in Kabdebó's view this could not conceal the shortcomings of the play itself. Gyárfás's main addition to the original story is the use of an autobiographical frame, which leads the audience back to the political trials in Hungary in 1949. In spite of the excellent work of most of the actors, Kabdebó thinks that *Johanna éjszakája* as drama does not present clear ideas of vanity and heroism, which Gyárfás posits as central issues. What kind of vanity, the merely egoistic type or the one more like a self-assured ambition to serve the common good, Kabdebó asks in his review, one of the first critical responses to the new play. He also wonders about the possible implications of having a bastard youngster in the drama who hears voices too, although antithetical to those heard by Johanna; the duality does not make sense for the critic unless imposing some interpretation not organic to the text. For the reader the question arises, how an intellectually unsatisfying play can really serve as material for the creation of a meaningful whole on the stage, which conveys thoughts the audience can take with them and ponder further about. As if in reply, Kabdebó convincingly argues that the direction of Ferenc Lendvay managed to unify the production: the well chosen cast played their roles with great

⁵ KABDEBÓ 1964, 11.

⁶ KONTLER 1999, 418.

élan, thus filling the gaps on the level of ideas. Kabdebó especially praises the achievement of Agi Margittay, whose Johanna radiated a far wider scale of feelings than just ambitious vanity and obsession with a cause.⁷

Among Kabdebó's theatre reviews of the mid-sixties the most outstanding ones are about two productions of László Németh's plays at Miskolc National Theatre. Németh was one of the few contemporary prose writers (the others being Magda Szabó, Miklós Szentkuthy and Győző Határ) Kabdebó greatly admired and remained concerned with as well as published several articles on throughout his life. The earliest of these came out in 1964, in which Kabdebó assesses Németh's career under the title *A kísérletező ember* (The Experimenting Man), borrowing the title of a 1963 volume of essays by Németh. In further articles Kabdebó gives a vivid account of the writer's visits to Miskolc and on Németh's death in 1975, he undertook the sad task of writing and publishing an obituary in *Napjaink*. His reviews of two respective productions of plays by Németh which premiered in the National Theatre of Miskolc, demonstrate that their author has an exceptional familiarity with the whole oeuvre of Németh, fiction, essay and drama together, and between them Kabdebó finds correlations. Németh's protagonists, as Kabdebó observes them, are notable by their relentless pursuit of what they regard as the truth. First he published a review about the production of *A Nagy család* (The Big Family, 1962) by Németh, in which he emphasizes the sensitive portrayal of psychologically complex situations. The characters here, in Kabdebó's view, represent particular social types and their coping with the various challenges posed by living in a big city at that time, therefore it was an excellent choice to project the montage of a vast cityscape as background to the family apartment in which the action takes place. Similarly, this kind of setting is frequently used in the staging of Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* (1949), to highlight the smallness and vulnerability of individuals and their futile struggle against the working of oppressive social forces above them.

In the play *A Nagy család*, as often in the Németh oeuvre, Kabdebó argues, the referential context to the plot is the crisis of a marriage which has reached a breaking point. The critic gives his review the title "A kis család bomlása" (The Breaking up of the Small Family), mobilizing the idea that Németh's Big family is also a "small family" in that this generic term can be applied to it despite what the actual name implies. In Kabdebó's view, Németh weaves the theme of marital breakdown into the dramatization of a clash between two kinds of moral attitude: self-centered individualism versus its opposite, unconditional love and feeling responsibility for others. While the marriage proves irreparable, moral truth is shown victorious, and the "small family" becomes a "big family", its triumph being based on solidarity and strong communal feelings, although at the cost of pain and suffering. Marxist critics tend to identify some aspects of Németh's work as problematic, Kabdebó continues, yet the writer's highlighting the sense of social devotedness in certain characters might reassure all about the potentially positive and forward-looking impact of his

⁷ KABDEBÓ 1966/a, 4.

dramaturgy on the audience. The change in the family, Kabdebó seems to suggest, might work as a model for the dynamic of social change. László Jurka, the young director of the production deserved appreciation according to Kabdebó, because he excelled in clearly interpreting the moral and emotional complexity of the drama. Assessing the actors' work Kabdebó calls attention to the notably successful impersonation of an angry young man character, which inspires the critic to see it as evidence of the necessity to recognize the difference between the mode of telling the truth on stage and the ways in which it can be expressed in real life.⁸ With this Kabdebó, perhaps unconsciously, contributes to emphasizing an important quality of dramatic representation versus everyday language use as discussed by many theorists of the drama, dating back to Aristotle. For instance, renowned theatre studies professor Bert O. States implies a similar notion when speaking about the playwright's power of creating a theatrical image (and not merely a sign) which "detains, arrests" by its expressive density⁹ – remaining necessarily different from everyday language use and habitual gestures.

A year later, in 1966 Kabdebó published a review of the production of Németh's *Csapda* (Trap, 1966), a not so widely known work by its author. The play dramatizes the last weeks of Alexander Pushkin's life, a period in which he felt unjustly treated by the society and abandoned by his colleagues and friends. In Kabdebó's view, relying on his intimate knowledge of the writer, Németh was inspired to stage the painful experiences of historical characters such as István Széchenyi, Galileo Galilei and János Apáczai Csere because they embodied an uncompromising insistence on what they believed to be true and valuable – a kind of attitude similar to Németh's own. A few years later Kabdebó published a review of a performance of Németh's *Széchenyi* (1946) broadcast on television, in which he seems to continue the above train of thought concerning how the author can treat historical material even more clearly. Kabdebó states that, as great dramatists frequently do in his opinion, Németh created the play not out of the ambition to write about Széchenyi, but chose his figure through whom he could give voice to certain problems also plaguing himself.¹⁰

Reviewing the play about Pushkin in the production of the Miskolc National Theatre, Kabdebó considers its protagonist as having kinship with the internal development of another truth-seeking character in Németh's novel *Irgalom* (Mercy, 1964), yet he stresses that they embody two extremes in representing the fate of exceptional personalities. About the premiere of *Csapda* in Miskolc Kabdebó writes that the scenes were composed in a way to emphasize theatricality, an example of this ambition being that due to his individual difference, the figure of Pushkin was isolated from the rest of the characters: he was staying in one corner of the stage as if placed in a cage there. In his survey of the actors' work Kabdebó praises the subtle rendering of Dolgorukov's paradoxical situation, most meaning-

⁸ KABDEBÓ 1965, 4.

⁹ STATES 1985, n. p.

¹⁰ KABDEBÓ 1970, 2.

fully revealed in the scene where this petty, Iago-like figure narrates the death of Pushkin, suggesting that he admired the poet for his uncompromising tenacity and attacked him only out of sheer envy.¹¹ The Othello-Iago pair, two characters as foils of each other, must have appeared immensely expressive to Kabdebó although leading to a contentious idea in the above quoted review of Németh's *Széchenyi* where he calls the doctor character, Goldmark the Iago of the psychologically tormented protagonist, *Széchenyi*.¹²

It is, no doubt, a relevant question to ask how far Kabdebó's reviewing activity fitted into the socio-cultural milieu of 1960s Hungary, ruled as it was by Marxist ideology. The best possible answer is to compare his critical stance with that of another critic, a contemporary of his, through a concrete example. The Miskolc premiere of Németh's play about Pushkin was also reviewed by Pál Pándi, a representative and very influential ideologue of socialist literary politics at that time. He was a very good lecturer and stylist, in which respect his review published in the communist party's newspaper, *Népszabadság* (People's Freedom), was a finely composed one. Undeniably, in this piece Pándi throws a lot of light on the social and political background of Russia during Pushkin's life. However, quite unexpectedly, as if fulfilling a prescribed duty, Pándi begins to criticize Németh's literary career in the 1960s, speaking about his inability to make a progressive turn under the new circumstances when all power was already in the hands of the working classes in a people's republic.¹³ In contrast, not being a Marxist critic and an advocate of socialist realism, Kabdebó's review explores the complex, sensitive representation of human values and their contextualized vicissitudes in the work of Németh, free from narrow-minded ideological considerations even throughout the 1960s.

As I have tried to show in this study, Kabdebó's reviews of productions in the National Theatre of Miskolc are based on and tuned by his thorough knowledge of the respective playwrights and their works, testified also by his references to historical contexts and literary parallels beside aspects of the actual staging. All the reviews, overtly or covertly imply general issues about dramatic representation and theoretical approaches to theatre, which the reader might feel tempted to ponder about and perhaps use as a starting or focal point in other scholarly pursuits. American theatre critic Jonathan Kalb's notions that theatre critics (those who do their job endowed with both knowledge and enthusiasm, let me add) use "themselves as examples of how the audience responds" and in our time it is them, "to whom the classic Horatian directive to teach and delight applies".¹⁴ The same can surely be applied to the young philologist Kabdebó's activity of publishing theatre criticisms too. In spite of the fact that these writings date back to the 1960s, they evidence that his was a responsible, humanist approach to sharing expert observations and intuitive insights with others, the countless number of people who read the Miskolc papers in those years.

¹¹ KABDEBÓ 1966/b, 6.

¹² KABDEBÓ 1970, 2.

¹³ PÁNDI 1966, 8.

¹⁴ KALB 2003, 34.

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**SURPRISES, A POEM THAT CHANGES THE PUBLIC IMAGE
OF AN APOLITICAL POET
LŐRINC SZABÓ'S REFLECTIONS ON THE 1956 REVOLUTION**

JUDIT MUDRICZKI

In the history of Hungarian literature, it has rarely happened that a patriotic poet became canonical without taking an affirmative public role that has assigned social and national responsibility to Hungarian poets since Sándor Petőfi, the emblematic figure of the 1848 revolution.¹ Lőrinc Szabó, however, has proved to be one of the few exceptions to such expectations because his oeuvre epitomizes Hungarian poetry with a patriotic but apolitical leaning.

For long decades, generations of Hungarian people have been raised reading his poetry with a strongly personal voice that scholars tend to label as subjective or confessional. In nursery schools, his most popular poems include the ones that portray his attentive and caring relationship with Lóci and Klára, his children, and various pieces from his volume *Tücsökzene* [Cricket Music] subjectively depicting the “landscapes” of his life in Hungary between 1945 and 1957. In high schools, Hungarian students learn about both the European and erotic dimension in his poetry with such set readings as *Listening to Mozart* and *All for Nothing*, respectively. In academic circles, he has also been praised for his sonnet cycle *A huszonhatodik év* [The Twenty-sixth Year] that voices the emotional intensity and mental complexity of his 25-year-long adulterous affair with Erzsébet Korzáti after she committed suicide. The poetic significance of this volume in Hungarian literature compares to that of the *Birthday Letters* by Ted Hughes. Besides his own poetic heritage, Lőrinc Szabó also made a considerable contribution to Hungarian literature as a prolific translator. The authors whose works he translated into Hungarian include such classics as Baudelaire, Verlaine, Racine, Shakespeare, Coleridge, Byron, Keats, Goethe, Hesse, Yeats, Shelley, Rossetti, Kipling, Tennyson, Whitman, Pushkin, Ovid or Horace.

With this artistic profile in mind, Hungarian readers easily become astonished when reading the poem *Surprises* with its obvious allusions to the events of the 1956 revolution. Due to the publication of all three sections of this poem in the volume *Vers és valóság* [Poetry and Reality] in 1990, it is undoubtedly the merit of Lóránt Kabdebó that today we see into the depths of Szabó's cultural identity as it becomes manifest not only in his subjective poetic voice but also in the use of patriotic discourses of conventional Hungarian poetry.

¹ GÖMÖRI 1991, 240–243.

On October 23rd, 1956, when public protest in Budapest turned into a revolution, Lőrinc Szabó stayed at Miskolc, the town in which he had been born. He and Gyula Illyés had been invited to a reader-meet-writer event by Sándor Bihari on behalf of TTIT, the Society for Dissemination of Social and Scientific Knowledge. Similar events were organized on Tuesdays to allow local people to discuss anything that otherwise was forbidden under the cover of literature.² The news of what happened in Budapest reached the two poets and their wives while having diner after the public reading with their local friends, but the unexpected difficulties on all means of public transport prevented the guests from returning to Budapest until October 25th. Szabó's very first reactions to the unforeseen events were penned in the essay *Ima a jövőért* [Prayer for the Future], published in the journal *Irodalmi Újság* on November 2nd.³ He admits that the two days spent at Miskolc were relatively calm, but in Budapest, Hungarian history steadily made its turn leading Hungarian people to the "wonder of liberty". Besides glorifying the series of events that symbolically started with the fall of the idol, i.e. the Stalin statue, he also voices his concern about the future that was yet to come.

We must also be liberated in the sense that we must safeguard ourselves and our future from the risk and impulse of repeating the sins of the past twelve years. Lots of things must be repaired and justice must be done even in cases that are still to be known, and without which full reconciliation cannot be achieved. Hungary was liberated with the suffering and despair of its own people. Now, we shall redeem it with our holy work and a sort of heavenly justice on earth.⁴

On November 4th, when the Soviet troops launched a heavy punitive raid on Budapest and most major Hungarian cities, it became obvious that the liberation that Szabó cherished in his essay could not last. In the poem *Surprises* that he must have finished in December, however, he takes a considerably different stand. His answer to the question in a radio interview explains his choice of the title when he claims "it was about pleasant and awful surprises of life".⁵ In fact, it was the unexpected sight of destroyed buildings at Miskolc at the end of October that prompted him to write the poem as his former student István Lakatos recounts.

'Tyranny is always stupid', said Lőrinc pointing at the destroyed and damaged houses. 'It is eventually stupid, which gives hope to sensible people. Tyrants might be good tacticians but they are bad strategists. They sacrifice their immediate goals for long term ones. They win in the present but consequently lose their own illusions and cheat on us i.e. their own fu-

² MOLNÁR 2000, 77.

³ POMOGÁTS 2000, 70.

⁴ SZABÓ 2000, 140. The translation is mine.

⁵ KABDEBÓ 2004, 172.

ture.’ Before we reached Városmajor, he returned to the idea he had come up with. He decided to write a poem about the revolution. Yes, of the 1956 revolution paraphrasing the *Appeal*. He even recited a few lines but I can recall only the central idea that the grave out of which a nation clambers is surrounded by marvelling people.⁶

The poem that inspired Szabó was the 19th century patriotic ode *Appeal* written by Mihály Vörösmarty, which Hungarian people still regard as their second national anthem. It is remarkable but not accidental that Szabó’s central idea, eventually worded as “and already the world gazed, marveling, / At the people clambering out of their graves”,⁷ contradicts the prophecy that in the poem by Vörösmarty reads as “around the graves where we shall die / a weeping world will come, / and millions will in pity gaze / upon the martyrs’ tomb”,⁸ This stanza alludes to the 18th-century prediction of Johann Gottfried Herder that Hungarian language and thus the Hungarians squeezed between Slavic, Germanic and Wallachian people will die out. The fear of the “national death” was so widely argued and permeated national discourses throughout the 19th and 20th century permeating national discourses⁹ that it is no wonder that patriotic poets also relied on both its confirmation and refutation.

And it is not only the central image of *Surprises* that comes from Vörösmarty, but Szabó also borrowed the rhyme pattern from the *Appeal* in which only the even-numbered lines rhyme. Even if it was not named in the recollections of his student, there is another emblematic poem that determined both the form and images of Szabó’s poem. Similarly to *The National Song* by Sándor Petőfi, *Surprises* is based on the most traditional Hungarian verse form called “ősi nyolcas” [ancient eight] referring to the use of 8-syllable lines that rhyme. Besides the prosodic similarities, the last but not least line, “No! We shall be slaves no longer!”,¹⁰ verbally echoes the refrain of Petőfi’s song, c.f. “God of Hungarians, we swear unto Thee, We swear unto Thee—that slaves we shall no longer be!”¹¹

As for the overall composition of the poem, all three sections consist of six quatrains and their subtitles, *I – An Unsuspecting Poem of October 15th*, *II – One Week Later*, *III – In Mid-December*, suggest that they are meant to be read as snapshots of events in a chronological order evoking a special mixture of personal and historical memories. The repetition of the same image at the beginning of the first and last quatrain, “One moment kisses you on the mouth” and “Yet the moment kissed you on the lips”,¹² gives an intimate conceptual frame and personal touch to

⁶ KABDEBÓ 2004, 173. The translation is mine.

⁷ SZABÓ 2017, 80.

⁸ VÖRÖSMARTY 2000, 260–261.

⁹ GAL 1995, 155–166.

¹⁰ SZABÓ 2017, 81.

¹¹ PETŐFI 2000, 391.

¹² SZABÓ 2017, 79–81.

the poem. The internal perspective of the speaker of the poem with all his doubts becomes dominant even when the December events are meant to be recalled.

And something took counsel in council
and then it was back to the Same Old Thing,
and everything around fell into corruption
congruent with the custom of corrupting,

and the treads drove ahead. I don't know,
I no longer know how it was, and what
happened I no longer know.¹³

Yet, there is delicate tension between the slightly confused recollections of the actual events in 1956 and the historic ones that intertextual references to the *Appeal* by Vörösmarty bring back. Behind the lines “Freedom, it was the task of Youth / To see your heroic banner wave”,¹⁴ Hungarian people hear the tone of the following stanza from the *Appeal*: “Here Freedom’s blood-strained flag has waved / above the Magyar head; / And here in age-long struggles fell / our best and noblest, dead.”¹⁵ Similarly, the last line of the poem, “And further: God bless the Hungarian!”¹⁶ is the literal borrowing of the first line of the National Anthem written by Ferenc Kölcsey, “Lord, bless us Hungarians”,¹⁷ which in fact is a prayer of blessing for the future of Hungarian people.

Such direct allusions to canonical poems of Hungarian patriotism overwrite the tone of subjective reflections and thus make *Surprises* an exceptional poem in the oeuvre of Lőrinc Szabó. Needless to say, in 1960 only the first section of the poem was published in a journal and in the *Selected Works of Lőrinc Szabó*, as it was void of such allusions and images that ideological and political censorship could find alien to the regime.¹⁸ The second and third sections in which the poets glorifies the revolution and describes Budapest under Soviet raid were accidentally discovered by Lóránt Kabdebó in 1980, while he was looking at unpublished manuscripts in the archives for the third volume of his monograph on Lőrinc Szabó.¹⁹ Even in those days, it was obvious both to him and Pál Réz, the editor of the book, that they could not publish these sections even if this discovery would have considerably modified the artistic image of Lőrinc Szabó. They had to wait until the change of the political regime to reveal the existence of these last two sections first in 1989 at a public reading then in 1990 on the pages of the newspaper *Magyar Nemzet*.²⁰ Yet

¹³ SZABÓ 2017, 81.

¹⁴ SZABÓ 2017, 80.

¹⁵ VÖRÖSMARTY 2000, 260.

¹⁶ SZABÓ 2017, 81.

¹⁷ KÖLCSEY 2000, 226.

¹⁸ KABDEBÓ 2017, 135.

¹⁹ KABDEBÓ 2004, 172–173.

²⁰ KABDEBÓ 2004, 173.

in those days nobody suspected that this poem would cause one more surprise to Tamás Kabdebó. In 2002, the manuscript archive of the library at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences received new documents from the heirs of Lőrinc Szabó among which the autograph of the whole poem was found. This copy and an entry in the diary of Gyula Illyés prove that the last two lines of the fourth stanza in the second section were actually written by Illyés and the two poets even considered revising the poem together.²¹

Ten days of freedom? Make that eleven!
From the heart, every moment, kisses were torn!
And you were no longer ashamed to admit
that you had been Hungarian-born.²²

Considering this affirmative claim of patriotism that originally comes from Illyés and all historical and cultural implications discussed above, Béla Pomogáts reasonably argues that *Surprises* reflects Lőrinc Szabó's conviction that Hungary is not only a political and institutional entity determined in space. Rather, it is an intellectual and spiritual concept in time, the historical and moral guarantee of which becomes manifest in Hungarian poetry when words of ritual and sacral traditions mingle with images of topical accounts of historic events. Thus the references to conventional patriotic poetry connect *Surprises* to the spiritual heritage that Hungarian literature represents, which eventually gives rise to historical hope.²³ At the same time, the discovery of the last two parts of the poem as well as the role Illyés played in its birth contribute to the legacy of Lőrinc Szabó with refining his public image in terms of his patriotic stand.

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²¹ KABDEBÓ 2017, 136.

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SOMETHING HAS HAPPEN'D AS SOON AS LÓRÁNT KABDEBÓ APPEARED

JOLÁN ORBÁN

“Death is nothing / I just went to the other side. / I am I, You are You / As we were to one another / We will always be.” (Augustinus) – Lóránt’s first message from the ‘other side’. While I was thinking about what to put in his obituary, this quote from Augustinus arrived from Lóránt”, writes Marianne Dobos, Lóránt Kabdebó’s lifelong creative partner. Did he choose this quote, or did the quote choose him? This was the case with Lőrinc Szabó, who was selected for him by József Szauder, or as he chose an author for his students. Like for many young researchers, Lőrinc Szabó, or for me, János Arany, quite unexpectedly, in the middle of a conversation. In my enthusiasm for Derrida, I said no to his choice because János Arany, like Lőrinc Szabó, requires an entire life, and I have only one life, which was Derrida’s. We all have our personal memories of him because he always addressed us personally, he was excellent at combining the professional and the personal, and his interest as a philologist was always matched by his innate curiosity about the individuality of the person he was talking to, whether he was talking to the most famous figures in contemporary literature or to his students.

His voice was recognizable from afar, the long, drawn-out, sustained sigh that echoed through Building B of Janus Pannonius University. His figure was recognizable from afar as he appeared in the second-floor hallway, his posture slightly bent, with a hat on his head and a backpack on his back. Lőrinc Szabó’s walking library, familiar with all the philological and biographical details of his oeuvre, is open to all new approaches, be it philosophy of language, hermeneutics, or deconstruction. His three volumes on the oeuvre of Lőrinc Szabó – *Szabó Lőrinc lázadó évtizede* (1970), *Útkeresés és különbélke* (1974), *Az összegezés ideje* (1980) – have made him known in professional circles. The book edited by him *Vers és valóság. Bizalmas adatok és megfigyelések* (2001) gave a new direction to research on Lőrinc Szabó. The essays in the volume *Valami történt. Szabó Lőrinc átváltozásai* (Something has happen’d. Transfigurations of Lőrinc Szabó, 2023) may give new impetus to research on Lőrinc Szabó’s oeuvre in the context of modern European literature.

Something has happen’d as soon as Lóránt Kabdebó, invited by Tamás Bécsy, arrived at Janus Pannonius University in 1989 from the Petőfi Literary Museum, where he had been a senior research fellow in 1970, head of the department from 1972 to 1989, and academic advisor from 1989 to 1991. From 1989 to 1993, he taught at the Department of Literary History in Pécs, where he was appointed head of the department and became a professor in 1991. This period was decisive in the

history of Hungarian higher education and the University of Pécs, as the teacher training college was transformed into a university. The teachers and students of the Hungarian Literature and Linguistics Departments, namely Özséb Horányi, György Szépe, Balázs Kézdi, Tamás Bécsy, Lóránt Kabdebó, Ernő Kulcsár Szabó, and I could add many names to the list, played a crucial role in this. The professional discussions about the university started at the Faculty Council, continued at the Makári restaurant, and ended on the Pécs-Budapest train. It was a time of late-night discussions and in-depth conversations. At the country's oldest university, the aim was to create the country's youngest faculty of humanities: to develop a "Pécs model", which would develop its own spirit, structure, and curriculum, taking into account contemporary international research and university reorganisational experiments, where disciplinary boundaries could be crossed, where teachers and students learned from each other, where speakers from Hungary and abroad were giving lectures at Janus Pannonius University.

Something has happen'd as soon as Lóránt Kabdebó and Ernő Kulcsár-Szabó initiated a series of conferences in Pécs. Literary theory has invited literary history into dialogue, the theoretical perspectives and interpretative procedures offered by hermeneutics (Hans-Georg Gadamer), reception aesthetics (Hans-Robert Jauss, Wolfgang Iser, Renate Lachmann), post-structuralism (Roland Barthes, Julia Kristeva), narratology (Gerard Genette, Paul Ricoeur), new historians (Stephen Greenblatt and Louis Montrose) have been combined with the philological and critical tradition in the texts of colleagues interpreting modern Hungarian lyrics and prose. The first three conferences took place in Pécs, in the House of Arts and Literature, and the papers have been published by Janus Pannonius University Press, edited by Lóránt Kabdebó and Ernő Kulcsár Szabó: *"de nem felelnek, úgy felelnek"*. *A magyar líra a húszas-harmincas évek fordulóján* (1992), *Szintézis nélküli évek. Nyelv, elbeszélés és világkép a harmincas évek epikájában* (1993), *Az irodalomértés horizontjai. Párbeszéd irodalomtudományunk modern hagyományával* (1995). These conferences marked the beginning of an era of rereadings, which continued in Miskolc, where Lóránt Kabdebó taught as a secondary school teacher between 1958 and 1970 and as a university professor between 1993 and 2006. He took with him from Pécs the experience of university organisation and played a decisive role in the establishment of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Miskolc, and the founding of the departments of Hungarian literature, history and modern philology. From 1993 to 1997, he was Director of the Institute of Humanities at the University of Miskolc; from 1997 to 2006, he was Dean of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Miskolc; until 2005, he was Head of the Doctoral School of Literature, and from 2006 Professor Emeritus of the University of Miskolc.

Something has happen'd as soon as Lóránt Kabdebó joined a literary society or a journal: as secretary general of the Hungarian Literary History Society (1990–1991), as editor-in-chief of *Irodalomtörténet* (1993–1998), as Magda Szabó (from 1998) and as Lőrinc Szabó expert (from 1999) expert of the *Digital Literary Academy*, he encouraged literary scholars from different theoretical backgrounds to

engage in dialogue. He founded and led several journals and research groups, including the journal *Irodalomtudomány* (Literary Studies) and the series *Szabó Lőrinc Füzetek* (Lőrinc Szabó booklets). In 1997, he founded the Lőrinc Szabó Research Centre, also supported by the OTKA, where he encouraged young researchers and doctoral students to explore his oeuvre and to publish unpublished translations.

His scientific work, educational organization, and teaching activities were recognised with numerous awards: in 1969, he received the Literary Award of the City of Miskolc. In 1989, he was awarded the Lőrinc Szabó Prize, and in 1990, the Literary Prize of the Art Fund of Miskolc. He was awarded the Order of Merit of the Republic of Hungary in 1998 and the Order of Merit of the Republic of Hungary in 2021.

The volumes, the interviews, the awards, and the recognitions speak for themselves, testifying to the work of the literary historian, the researcher of Lőrinc Szabó, the editor, the educational and institutional organizer Lóránt Kabdebó. They encourage us to read Lóránt Kabdebó's volumes with the same love, openness, and curiosity with which he read literature. By reading his texts, we can experience the secret of Kabdebó's love of reading, his curiosity as a researcher, and his passionate questioning as an interview maker. But for those of us who knew, respected, and loved him as colleagues or students, we must bear witness to his personality. We miss his inspiring and encouraging presence; we miss the conversations with him, starting with the most simple questions and leading to more profound professional and personal questions. We can still hear his voice, see his figure, and quote the phrases that have become spoken. On this occasion, I would like to quote the interview headline on his 80th birthday: "I consider it a privilege when someone calls me Lóránt." It was a privilege for us to call you Lóránt, to teach together at Janus Pannonius University, to hold conferences together in Pécs or Miskolc, to contact you as you always call us – recalling the poem of Augustinus (*Don't Cry If You Love Me*):

“Call me as you always call me.
Talk to me as you always did.
Don't change the tone of your voice.
Don't be somber or sad.
Keep laughing at what we used to laugh together.”

Farewell, dear Professor Kabdebó! Lóránt will remain with us forever.

**A SHORT SKETCH ON THE SIGNIFICANCE
OF LÓRÁNT KABDEBÓ'S WORK
IN MODERN HUNGARIAN LITERARY SCHOLARSHIP**

ROBERT SMID

Lóránt Kabdebó left his mark on Hungarian literary scholarship as the monographer of the late-modernist poet, Lőrinc Szabó. The three volumes on the oeuvre of Lőrinc Szabó were completed in the 60's and 70's without any official support in Hungarian academia that was controlled by the totalitarian communist leadership. Next to the three oeuvres – Sándor Petőfi's, Endre Ady's and Attila József's – that were hand-picked by the party and the interpretation of which was tailored to suit the official political agenda, Szabó Lőrinc's works and the work of Kabdebó on them were canonically sidelined. With his meticulous readings and persistence, Kabdebó, however, managed to turn the tides; becoming a full professor and the founding dean of the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Miskolc, he succeeded in repositioning the oeuvre of Lőrinc Szabó into the center of Hungarian literary canon.

But Kabdebó's scholarly work provides much more than the interpretation of Lőrinc Szabó's poems. His books were imperative in explicating the so-called "late-modern threshold" in Hungarian poetry, i.e., in identifying the shift in poetic discourse that had been brought along by the realization that it is not the subject who has complete over language, rather the other way around: the lyrical subject and all its contexts are nothing more than verbal effects. Consequently, the main concept of the paradigm-changing collection of poems by Lőrinc Szabó, entitled "You and the World" (*Te meg a világ*, 1932), became a life-long theme in Kabdebó's work. On the hand, he approached the connection between the you and the world as apostrophic effects: e.g., in his posthumous volume, entitled "Something Happened: The Metamorphoses of Lőrinc Szabó" (*Valami történt: Szabó Lőrinc átváltozásai*, 2022), he discussed the "criminalization" of poetry in the earlier stages of Lőrinc Szabó's career with respect to the interrelation between the discourse of daily news and poems. On the other hand, focusing on the poetic relationship between the you and the world, Kabdebó managed to reveal new connections between the poetry of Lőrinc Szabó and Attila József. He interpreted the former's associating the brain with a machine and the latter's "lovely people-lessness" (at least that is how John Báltki translated the phrase "szép embertelenség"; another possible translation could be: "beautiful inhumanity") as two sides of the same late-modernist poetic discourse. Kabdebó nevertheless always carefully avoided positioning this discourse as something that had appeared out of the blue. A few years

ago, when I was travelling from Dresden to the Baltic sea, he enthusiastically called me about his findings; he drew my attention to Lőrinc Szabó's review of "Bonfires Sing" (*Máglyák énekelnek*, 1920) by Lajos Kassák, in which he pointed out a shift in Kassák's interest, from ideological power of language to its performative potential in accordance with literary tradition.

The abovementioned small episode shines light on why Kabdebó became one of the eminent scholars of modern Hungarian poetry: his interpretative practice synthesized close-reading and philological awareness. On the one hand, he believed in the unity of rhetorics and poetics when reading lyrical; on the other hand, beside comparing different versions of a poem, he also traced their interconnections with the author's work in translating poems, review-writing, etc. With the help of his interpretative method, Kabdebó also succeeded in discrediting clichés that were forcibly attached to Lőrinc Szabó's oeuvre over the communist decades. One such label was the inhumaneness of the poems due to the frequent use of such phrases as "horrid" or "atrocious" (*rettenetes, szörnyű*). Kabdebó, however, traced these back to Rilke's shock that had been triggered by World War I, and appropriated Lőrinc Szabó's discourse as a rewriting and rearticulation of Rilke's which could have served as the Hungarian poet's warning to the world on the brink of World War II. He also showed that claims about Lőrinc Szabó's enthusiasm about Nazism and the cult of the Führer were groundless since the poem "Leader" (*Vezér*, 1928) that is said to be the most incriminating in this case, was based on the author's unfinished translation of Shakespeare's "Macbeth", in which he translated the word "battle" to "vezér," instead of "harc."

And this was also Kabdebó's warning to us, who spend most of our time reading literary texts, that there is a great danger in labelling pieces of literature and reading with our ideological glasses on; these are the surest ways of muting the text and eliminating aesthetic experience. Fortunately, Kabdebó provided us with enough philological material and interpretative offers so that we would not repeat the mistakes of the past when reading the poems of Hungarian late-modernity.

I would like to finish this short sketch about Kabdebó's importance and legacy with two quotes. One of them can be read as his conclusion about what fundamentally constitutes Lőrinc Szabó's poetic discourse, and the other is a few lines from the poem he was reading when he reached that conclusion – both quotes are my translation.

"This infernal low is nothing else than daily life, which is coincidentally also the scene of poetic existence. Existing in it is life itself. The human comedy is nothing else then descending to the depths of Hell, that is, existing in everyday life. This is the conclusion towards which Lőrinc Szabó's earliest meta-poetical writings are moving. And I have no choice but to read the poem 'Materialism' as a stage in that movement: 'Life is the suicide of matter' – as he put it, and then came the ultimate question: 'why does the body still carry on for the sake of the soul?' This is how human consciousness and material world are simultaneously embodied in the poem, and, accordingly, how the duality of the 'you' and the 'world' makes

possible the aesthetical formalization of Dasein-presence as a whole, or in other words, encounter and event in the Heideggerean sense (*Ereignis*). No wonder that in Lőrinc Szabó's self-commentary, it is stated that 'the poem Materialism might as well bear the title Spiritualism.'

“My mother is matter, a caring miracle:
my teeth chattered in the terrible winter,
then the coal came, and wood from the mountains,
and threw her body on the bonfire for me without a word.”

DEAN OF ARTS, FRESHMEN WITH TOTES

Interview with Lóránt Kabdebó

(Zita Horváth) **Please tell us a little about your background, your home, and your parents.**

(Lóránt Kabdebó) Although I call myself a native of Miskolc, I grew up in Gyöngyös: the only, late-born, child of my parents. My ancestors were Hungarians of Armenian origin. The name “Kabdebó” already appears among the founders of the older Solomon’s Temple in Szamosújvár. My grandfather was a notary in Vasasszentivány; he lived there on the family estate. After thirty-six months of front-line service, my father graduated as an engineer in Budapest. He then moved to Gyöngyös, where he got a job at the municipal utilities. It was thanks to him that water and electricity were supplied and the railway was put into operation in the Mátra region, which was discovered by the public in the absence of the Tátra and Fáttra mountains and the snow-covered Transylvanian mountain ranges, lost after the Treaty of Trianon. When independent local governments ceased and the electric service was gradually centralised, he was transferred from Gyöngyös first to Eger and then to Miskolc in 1949. That’s how I ended up in Miskolc in 1951, where I graduated from high school.

“Begin, my son, with the grandfather of Nicholas”, Géza Bándi, my high school history teacher, always began his lessons with a quote from *Toldi*. Everything comes from something. My family thought I would continue the family tradition and become an engineer. But under the influence of Sándor Pápay (once a student of the great Hungarian educator Sándor Karácsony, who attended Karácsony’s evening classes on Ady at the University of Debrecen and later became the most popular lecturer in the literature department during my tenure as dean), I realised before I graduated that I wanted to study literature. My professor and I bought all the works of the “*Nyugat*” poets and their translations in the antiquarian bookshop in Miskolc. I cannot imagine a better teaching staff I had as a pupil than the one created by the merger of the former Reformed and Catholic grammar schools. The junior library of Földes Grammar School became the school of the elite within the school under the influence of Géza Bándi and Sándor Pápay. Let’s not forget that even in the “fifties” (the cruellest decade of communism) both the doctor and the grammar school teacher deserved the title of “master” rather than “comrade”. And in the classroom he could teach what he wanted, unless he was denounced for a personal vendetta. (To give you an example: even party members, alcoholics and cynics asked students in class to tell them about civil rights: “Well, lie a little!” And even the dumbest pupil knew what he was being asked.) In the library we could get our hands on the works of Kassák, Kodolányi and László Németh. The

publication of a new book by Áron Tamási was always a cause for celebration, and the whole work of Ady with his Hungarian identity and divine poems was the subject of discussion. And what we had learned in the classroom we reviewed it in the history books of the great Marczali and Hóman and Szekfű — a habit I have kept to this day! Thanks to my parents, I and my classmate (who later became a doctor and helped my sons Tamás and Gyuri into the world a decade later) received English lessons from Zoltán Csorba, who was also in contact with Lőrinc Szabó. Mr Csorba prepared me for the university entrance exam teaching me Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind".

It was the day after the Hungarian team lost the final of the FIFA World Cup in Bern, Switzerland, when I took my university entrance exam. After graduating in Hungarian and History from ELTE University in Budapest, I taught at a secondary school for more than a decade while I was involved in founding and editing the literary journal *Napjaink*. I am proud that the first poems of Dezső Tandori and Imre Oravecz were published in my journal for the first time in Hungary, as were István Ágh's oratorio "Bell for the Sailor" (*Harangszó a tengerészért*) and József Ratkó's rhapsodic generational account "My Dead, My Dead" (*Halott halottaim*). I worked at the Petőfi Literary Museum for twenty years, during which time I produced four volumes of interviews: *The War Is Over*, *Workshop Secrets*, *Fateful Moments* and *Lost Homes* (*A háborúnak vége lett, A műhely titkai, Sorsfordító pillanatok, Elvesztett otthonok*). Three important works were published in the same period: Miklós Szentkuthy's *Frivolities and Creeds* (*Frivolitások és hitvallások*), Győző Határ's three-volume *Life Journey* (*Oly jó követni emberélet!, Minden hajó hazám, Partra vetett bálna*) and Ottó Orbán's just-completed *Colourful Siege with Burning Houses* (*Színompás ostrom lángoló házakkal*), a book of interviews about his life's work edited and transcribed from a tape-recorded conversation. As a critic, I was the first to write about Péter Esterházy's *Fancsikó and Pinta* (*Fancsikó és Pinta*). I still think that his *Hrabal's Book* (*Hrabal könyve*) testifies to his rising level. I was also the first to review István Szilágyi's novel *Stone Falls into a Sinking Well* (*Kő hull apadó kútba*) in Hungary. I celebrated Tandori's *The Döbling Winner* (*Döblingi befutó*), his first novel in which his attention turned from sparrows to horses, the moment it was published in 1992. I celebrated his poetic capture of the regime change, which the author immediately acknowledged by phone from Paris. Even at eighty, I can still be a fan of new works. I enthusiastically welcomed the revised second edition of Miklós György Száraz's novel *Horses in the Mist* (*Lovak a ködben*) and was almost as excited as the author about the perfect artistic choices in his later novelistic reckoning *My Father in Pieces* (*Apám darabokban*). From 1988, I taught at first part-time, while keeping my full-time job at the Petőfi Literary Museum, then full-time, at the University of Pécs. I was a successful head of department there when I said goodbye to Pécs, because I was called back to Miskolc in 1993 to set up the new Faculty of Humanities, of which I became the first dean.

(Z. H.) Why did you choose this career?

(L. K.) My father wanted me to continue in his profession and become an engineer. When I won the national study competition in literature in grammar school, I asked him if I would offend him if I studied literature. He answered with his own naturalness: “Kabdebó” was household name in his profession. He knows no one among the literati, I can only rely on my own strength. But I should do it if I feel like it. I undertook it, not thinking at the time that showing humility to my nation I would discover the work of a classic poet and publish his entire textual universe. I managed to get a classic oeuvre accepted within a lifetime. I have been subjected to disapproval and attacks. But I also earned the credibility and respect of the writers. During these difficult decades, I followed the example I had learned from my father in Gyöngyös.

(Z. H.) What has led you to your research topic?

(L. K.) In September 1958 I returned to Miskolc, the town where I had graduated four years earlier, as a teacher of Hungarian and History. I started teaching at the Industrial Department of the Economic-Technical School and the affiliated Music High School. I invited my graduating class to the first notable event of the autumn, a public lecture on Lőrinc Szabó that I had read about in the newspaper. “Be there”, I told them. Junior teachers, young teachers, have credibility with students of almost the same age. On Sunday, at the announced time, a small note greeted me at the gate of the House of Educators in Déryné Street: Ferenc Jankovich’s lecture on Lőrinc Szabó was cancelled due to illness. We were naive people, we believed what was written on the note. I would still believe it today if Miklós Benedek, otherwise a friendly constant debating partner of mine, had not yelled at me in the corridor of the editorial office of the local daily *Észak-Magyarország* in a few years’ time: “We were just able to prevent Jankovich’s lecture, and now you start promoting the memory of Lőrinc Szabó in Miskolc.” The circle has closed.

Anyway, I saw Lőrinc Szabó once, by chance. In the spring of 1957, the poet gave an early afternoon lecture on Shakespeare’s sonnets at the Kossuth Club in Museum Street, Budapest. After the lecture, a long queue of people formed to get their volumes signed. I was a university student at the time, and I only took with me the memory of the exact speech and tearful reading of the tall, stooped, broken man. The next time I could only go to his funeral. I expected the greatest writers of the time, Illyés or László Németh, to speak. But, to my disappointment, I heard boring speeches by Ernő Mihályfi and József Fodor. What remains in my ears is József Fodor’s strangely pronounced address: “*Szabóóó Lőrinc.*” He repeated this rhetorically several times. As someone who had not yet been initiated into the family’s secrets, I had no way of knowing that Sándor Joó (the Protestant pastor of Pasarét) and Gyula Illyés had spoken to the closest circle of friends before the official ceremony. As a memory of the funeral, I brought with me only a look that I could connect for a moment with the gaze of László Németh, who was standing on the other side of the grave. In the great writer’s creole face, the light blue eyes shone far

away and met my admiring, curious gaze. (I told this to László Németh in person in Miskolc and then to Aunt Ella, László Németh's widow, at Nagyklára's funeral.)

As a student of humanities in Pest, I bought the then quickly completed second edition of Lőrinc Szabó's *Selected Poems (Válogatott versek)* with an introduction by Gyula Illyés in the bookshop at the "Villanyrendőr" crossroads in Miskolc in the autumn of 1956. It was the most beautiful sunshine, and I was celebrating the Day of the Dead at the Mindszenti cemetery with my parents. For although I studied humanities in Pest, and even though I was a member of the editorial board and author of the journal *Tiszta szívvel (With a Pure Heart)* — my first an essay on Gyula Illyés's *Handshakes (Kézfogások)* and Ferenc Juhász's *The Power of Flowers (Virágok hatalma)* was published there —, I missed out on the revolution. It was then that I had the opportunity to visit my grandmother in Transylvania. During the holidays — preparing to become an antiquity historian — I wrote a thesis on Augustan poetry. On the evening of 23 October 1956, I wanted to listen to the radio broadcast from the Budapest Academy of Music in Marosvásárhely: it was Carlo Zecchi's concert, for which I had a season ticket. But the radio did not broadcast it. It was no longer broadcasting anything. First came Gerő's speech ("university students will not tolerate this", I commented), then music, music and music without commentary. But not the concert. The next morning my aunt woke me up with the news: a revolution has broken out in Budapest, and shots are being fired in the street. We booked tickets for the afternoon train. My father decided to return to Hungary. Not to Pest, but to Miskolc. After many changes — Békéscsaba, Nyíregyháza, Szerencs — we arrived home on the afternoon of 25 October. With the passenger train I used to take to go to my exams on earlier days. This train usually leaves Miskolc at 3 pm. Now I have arrived in a world unknown to me. My friends in Pest took part in the revolution. At my place in Miskolc, they only appeared later in passing. I was not registered among the participants. Our apartment in Selyemrét in Miskolc provided a short refuge for the refugees. My friends from Pest also visited us, they spent several days with us, who knows why. The sons of my father's engineering colleagues stayed with us when they fled from the University of Miskolc. One of them, to my mother's great horror, had brought his machine gun with him; the other, the organizer of the foreign language broadcast at the university, had escaped wounded from the hospital and travelled home in my boots to Szombathely and then directly to Switzerland. Among our visitors was my friend Karcsi Román, now an honorary citizen of Székesfehérvár, but at that time he was a wanted man in Budapest on every "national holiday".

In 1958, as a newly qualified teacher (at that time, humanities studies lasted four years), I began my first lesson with Gyula Illyés's poem "Bartók": "A confusion of noises? — Yes! If that's what it is for them...", and I took it for granted that I should also teach one of the classic greats of Hungarian literature, the recently deceased Lőrinc Szabó.

Lőrinc Szabó mentions in his *Diary* of 1945 (*Napló*) that Goethe's name became a secret password in Nazi Germany, binding those who referred to him into an inner

alliance. This was also the case in Miskolc when I returned as a teacher and invoked the name Lőrinc Szabó.

On Lőrinc Szabó's sixtieth birthday — in 1960 — I published an article in *Észak-Magyarország*, paying tribute to the poet and enclosing from his volume *Tücsökzene* the poem “What else?” (*Mi még?*): “The desire that ‘Nothing is enough!’ was beautiful.” And I organized the memorial evening at the Intellectuals' Club of the Scientific Dissemination Society (TIT), where my university professor and friend Sándor Koczkás delivered the eulogy. The evening was a breakthrough in Miskolc, albeit “watching eyes and ears” appeared in the audience. At the end of his life, Sándor Koczkás recalled the memory of the trap in Miskolc, the shock that befell him. When he went into the hall to give his inaugural lecture, the zealous secretary of TIT with excellent organisational skills, Zoltán Kárpáti, whispered in his ear: “Be careful, they are listening to every word you say.” With this, the literary-political tactics of the time enforced a restrictive clause. After the line “Miskolc can be proud of its great son”, the speaker looked around and then cut himself short: “and the city regrets that he could not be even greater.”

At the same time, Imre Gyárfás, the chief ideologue of Miskolc, my former teacher and supervisor, asked the poet's widow in a handwritten letter to send some of his unpublished poems to the *Borsodi Szemle*. (“Dear Madam”, he began, noting that he knew decorum and good manners.) We received three poems, all of which were soon published in the sequence *Something Beautiful (Valami szép)* in the volume *Collected Poems (Összegyűjtött versek)*: “Ageing” (*Öregedés*, 1944), “Bondage” (*Rabság*, written after 1945, perhaps at Ábrahámhegy, at Aurél Bernáth's place) and “Surprises” (*Meglepetések*, 6 October 1956). The poem “Bondage” was in fact written at Bernáth's in 1948. But, somehow, “Surprises” gave me — not only now when I think about it, but also then — a feeling of incompleteness. It reminded me of the desperate, grotesque poems written during World War II that searched for the meaning of life in the midst of destruction.

The real surprise came when I found among the unpublished poems in the Lőrinc Szabó estate the draft and the pencil-corrected typescript of an entire sequence about the 1956 revolution. How do I signal to posterity that a finished sequence of poems is hidden here? I wrote about him in my monograph:

Lőrinc Szabó, as a poet — in addition to his busy schedule preparing his major series of poems — has tried to follow history in occasional poems. Chronologically, the poem published in 1960 in his *Collected Poems* under the title “Surprises” is the last work known as a single poem and was not originally written as part of sequence. He mentioned this poem, dated mid-October, in a radio interview: “When was the last time you wrote an original poem?” “Last Sunday.” “How and about what?” “By chance. About life's beautiful and ugly surprises.” The poem itself seems unfinished, and the poet's drafts confirm this. The title of the poem, which was later published in the volume of his collected poems, also hints at a planned cycle, an emotional chronicle of events.

I then went on to indicate in a note:

The first piece of this planned cycle would have been the poem idea, originally titled “Unsuspecting Poem on 15 October” (*Gyanútlan vers október 15-én*) published later as a stand-alone poem under the title “Surprises”. Although the *Collected Poems* mentions “around 16 October” as its date of composition and the Sunday mentioned in the interview fell on the 14th, we should accept the date given by the poet, which is also in the title, as the definitive date for the poem’s composition. Other titles are: “In a Week” (*Egy hét múlva*) and “Mid-December” (*December közepe*).

This is how I and the editor of my volume, Pál Réz, to whom I also handed over the xerox copy of the poem for safekeeping, have hidden the news about the existence of the sequence behind philological questions.

I first spoke about the poem publicly at a meeting of the Circle of Friends of Borsod-Miskolc held at the Vigadó in Pest. I read the sequence there, and then I published it in *Magyar Nemzet* on 31 January 1990, accompanied by an article entitled “A Poem Sequence from the Drawer” (*Egy fiókba zárt versciklus*), and in book form in the second volume of *Verse and Reality* (*Vers és valóság*), the conclusion of the unpublished poems, in 1990.

The sequence “Surprises” follows the revolutionary events of 1956. In it, his two established voices as a national poet — the elevated and the desperate irony — are once again heard. The opening, distorted image is a vision of the past (“Unsuspecting poem on 15 October”), the sequel celebrates the revolution and struggle for freedom (“In a Week”), and the bitter ending in “Mid-December”: “Budapest was clamped / by a ring of iron worms”. At the moment of the revolution, Miskolc, the birthplace of Lőrinc Szabó, celebrated the poet in the presence of Illyés and his wife. In this extract from the sequence, written in a tone reminiscent of the poem *Szózat*, according to the manuscript, includes a passage written by Illyés: “And there was no longer any shame / In being the son of the Hungarian people.” The two poets jointly welcome the nation finding itself:

Freedom, this is where youth
Carried your heroic flags!
And the tomb from which a people emerge
Was already gazed upon in amazement by the world.

Ten days of freedom? Eleven!
Kiss, heart, every moment!
And there was no longer any shame
In being the son of the Hungarian people.

Ten days of freedom? Eleven!
Plan boiled, lit up, burned every brain.
Our future was in a lombics.
And we buried the dead.

The sixties marked the triumphal journey of Lőrinc Szabó's memory in Miskolc. Referring to his 1957 Kossuth Prize, they could not deny him local recognition. After his *Collected Poems* was published in 1960 with an afterword by István Sötér, I praised the poet as a poet of classical magnitude in two portraits, in the November issue of the inaugural volume of the journal *Napjaink* and in *Borsodi Szemle*. László Kordos, director of the Municipal Library, launched the series *Borsod-Miskolc Notebooks* (*Borsod-Miskolci Füzetek*) with my booklet *Lőrinc Szabó at the beginning of the rebellion (Caliban) (Szabó Lőrinc a lázadás kezdetén [Kalibán])* — a chapter of my later monograph — and managed to get the library named after Lőrinc Szabó. A rare invitation came my way when I was gathering documents for Csaba Fazekas's book: on 22 October 1962, the Municipal Library invited the public to a Lőrinc Szabó memorial evening, almost on the anniversary of the revolution, as it were. I gave the lecture, with the participation of Mária Ruszinkó, and Ferenc Némethy, who was the leading actor of the city at the time.

The great rehabilitating Lőrinc Szabó programme, *Cricket Music: On Lőrinc Szabó (Tücsökzene — Szabó Lőrincről)* took place on 23 April 1965 at the Vasas Community Centre in Diósgyőr, where his widow was accompanied by his two children (Kisklára and Lóci). Kisklára recited poems by Lőrinc Szabó. I found the documents and the material of the evening, which I organized together with József Böröcz, the artistic director of the community centre and an excellent choreographer, while proofreading the aforementioned book by Csaba Fazekas, in my correspondence collection and made them available to him to supplement his book.

As we drove the family along Vörösmarty Street (formerly Új világ Street), I showed them the poet's modest birthplace, which is still standing, and I expressed my hope that we would soon adorn the place with a memorial plaque. When I put the guests on the train, on the way back, László Kordos remarked to me with a smile: "I don't think there will be a plaque on this house. Do you know what the building is called? It's called 'shit all over'. It used to be a disreputable pub." Anyway, when the so-called "Pissing Streets" were demolished, the birthplace could not be saved. Since I was already living far away, I asked Irénke, Mrs Ferenc Kovács, to observe the events of the demolition with her students and record the moments. Since then, I have given the photographs she sent to me to my friend the museologist Tibor Porkoláb for museum placement. The street nameplate and the number plate of the house are the treasures of my library. A bilingual primary school named after the poet was built on the site of the birthplace, with a memorial plaque, and the street running next to it was named after Lőrinc Szabó. I have fond memories of the inauguration of this school: it is preserved on video footage of the young children in the crowded sports hall listening for almost an hour to my unflinching narration, which I presented to them as a continuation of the thoughts of the poem "Sun Wu Kung's Rebellion" (*Szun Vu Kung lázadása*).

At a poetry day programme, I performed with the Lóci of poems in the old building of Ottó Herman Grammar School at the invitation of the headmistress Márta Kovács. It was there that Lóci — stamping his feet in a way that shook the old monastery building — got the students to vote for establishing a biennial recitation

competition. Lőrinc Szabó should not be a book, but a popular, lively reading for young people. And I suggested that I should not always give a lecture on the poet, but that this biennial should also be a gathering of young researchers.

Although there was already a Lőrinc Szabó primary school in Miskolc, the city council at the time decided to name the new grammar school on Avasi after the poet. The unveiling of the magnificent statue of Lőrinc Szabó by Imre Varga was to be the prelude to this. In the letter inviting me to give the opening address, the head of the Department of Culture wrote: “The City Council of Miskolc would like to settle an old debt by placing a statue of our town’s great compatriot, Lőrinc Szabó, on 28 March 1988 at 2 pm in the square in front of the Avasi Grammar School, which is also to be named after him.” Unfortunately, the naming of the grammar school has not taken place to this day.

I summed up all this at the turn of the millennium, when I was finally able to freely tell what it meant to the citizens of Miskolc to remember Lőrinc Szabó during the years of tyranny.¹

¹ Celebrating citizens of Miskolc, dear friends!

At the moment when the mayor of our town unveiled the commemorative plaque of the literary evening of 23 October 1956, the process of regime change here in Miskolc was completed with this solemn act.

For this commemorative event, attended by the two greatest recognised poets of the time, Lőrinc Szabó and Gyula Illyés, not only saluted the great son of Miskolc, but also coincided with the historic moment when the Hungarian nation once again expressed its desire for freedom and independence in the twentieth century. Miskolc celebrated a classical poet and the country began its revolution and struggle for freedom, the most enduring literary memory of which to date was created in Lőrinc Szabó’s series of poems “Surprises”.

The person of Lőrinc Szabó and the memory of the ‘56 Revolution were intertwined in the minds of the city’s citizens. Talking about Lőrinc Szabó here has been synonymous with the memory of the revolution for decades. The book, which is a gift from the University’s Faculty of Humanities and Bótor Publishing House to the citizens of Miskolc, is already in print. My colleague Csaba Fazekas interviewed the surviving participants of Revolution Day and collected the documents of this great event and its aftermath. The series of bans and the works that still resound, the revival of literature and national memory.

The literary gathering of 23 October 1956, which took place in this house, was inadvertently associated with the revolution. But later the events merged in memory. It is rare in history that poetry and history, literature and revolution meet in such a direct way. Once the occasional song of a regiment of soldiers, the Marseille Regiment, became the anthem of world freedom and the anthem of the French nation. And in the history of our nation, it is the day of March 1848 that we remember with awe, the — almost accidental — encounter of Petőfi’s “National Song”, and the young people of Café Pilvax, with the historical moment. On 23 October 1956, the preparers, the participants and those who left the evening in Miskolc with a cathartic feeling in their hearts were able to witness such a meeting of literature and national destiny. Those who were able to understand it can be proud. Let me take this opportunity to welcome the witnesses among us!

(Z. H.) How did your research evolve?

(L. K.) Lőrinc Szabó is the greatest native of Miskolc to date. Immersed in his poetry, I can believe that I have remained a decent human being in difficult times. As a national classic and a phenomenon that can be appreciated globally, Lőrinc Szabó has set an example for me, and through his work I made contact with a poetry that represents real value.

If we are lucky, poetry can be enriched by more than one great achievement in a generation, and after an artist of such magnitude, our perception of poetry changes. At the beginning of the post-World War I period, two great careers of global standard began. Lőrinc Szabó and Attila József. József was a few years younger than Szabó. Their careers met, as the younger poet reworked the poems of his older colleague: he argued with him, rewrote his poems in his head, and thought them over. Today, in the eyes of posterity, the achievements of the two poets make a synthesis.

Lőrinc Szabó died five minutes before three o'clock in the afternoon on 3 October 1957. Soon after, in 1960, a volume of his *Collected Poems* was published, with a foreword by István Sótér, Fellow of the Hungarian Academy, and with the censorial approval of the head of its Institute of Literature, Miklós Szabolcsi. Philologically, it was an easy task: before the Soviet siege of Budapest, the poet had compiled a definitive volume of his poems by 1943. This was followed by an autobiographical summary, two editions of *Cricket Music* (1947, 1957), *The Twenty-sixth Year (A huszonhatodik év)*, 1957) and a new volume compiled for his *Selected Poems* of 1956, *Something Beautiful (Valami szép)*, which was ready for publication in its own, expanded version. The family typed the politically sensitive texts that the poet had been forced to omit at the time and sent them to friends along with the volume. By the end of the poet's life, the collection of translations he had compiled, *Our Eternal Friends (Örök Barátaink)*, was ready to be published. For the tenth anniversary of his death, István Simon selected and edited a collection of essays that were perhaps thought-provoking but could not be a model of philological fidelity. This volume was revised after another decade by Ágota Steinert with an exemplary philological apparatus (1984). As a project of the Institute of Literature, György Rába's exemplary monograph, Aladár Lászlóffy's dissertation submitted at the University of Kolozsvár — full of great intuitions — and Ágota Steinert's doctoral thesis — which concludes with an analysis of the poet's 1932 volume *You and the World (Te meg a világ)* — formed the body of research on the poet.

Two enthusiastic radio producers (Ilona Fodor and Edit Tertinszky) collected the memoirs of the poet's friends. To this could be added *Poem and Reality (Vers és valóság)*, a memoir containing the poet's explanations of his poems, which Gyula Illyés's wife, Flora Kozmutza, helped the poet compile and preserved — according to the poet's wishes — until after the death of Mrs Lőrinc Szabó. That would be the total number of Lőrinc Szabó texts known today. But...

Miklós Szabolcsi, guided by his excellent sense of quality, used his power to get the Manuscript Department of the Library of the Hungarian Academy to acquire most of Lőrinc Szabó's perfectly preserved papers. To prove the necessity of this

and knowing my essay on Lőrinc Szabó published in *Napjaink* and in *Borsodi Szemle*, he then entrusted me with the task of editing his poetic works. “Comrade Kabdebó, you have just written a good portrait of Lőrinc Szabó, why don’t you choose his poetry as the subject for your academic dissertation?” — the omnipotent head of the institute said. “But he’s a great poet, and I’m just a beginner.” “It’s okay, no one will do a much work on him these days.” It was decided. To write a three-volume monograph by the time I was forty-four, I needed the generous encouragement of Endre Illés, the director of Szépirodalmi Publishing House. (I remember we once rode together in the freight lift at the back of the New York House in Budapest, and he used this brief time together to ask me: “Long time no hear, you haven’t been unfaithful to us?”) Every now and then I think about how lucky I was that as a snotty kid I “met” one of the greatest poets of Hungarian literature of the century.

If the publication of Lőrinc Szabó’s work had developed spontaneously until then, from 1962 on I began consciously to explore and publish Lőrinc Szabó’s textual universe. László Németh gave my work his blessing. In the two letters he sent me he emphasized the importance of the task and that I treat the poet’s work as a national treasure: “I understand that you are working on Lőrinc Szabó. He is also one of those they want to quietly erase from public memory. It is a difficult but beautiful task to work against this careless forgetting and criminal elimination” (17 November 1966); “I am also glad to see that your book is making progress [...] I believe that in this case, too, the socially ungrateful subject will be a great intellectual and professional asset: for a critic’s career depends, apart from his talent, above all on his ambition — on what he sets out to do” (15 September 1967; see *Life of László Németh in Letters*, Vol. II, 1042, Vol. III, 170).

The poet’s biography — including all aspects disputed by his contemporaries and former friends — was elaborated in my three-volume monograph and later in my case study entitled *The “Trial” of Lőrinc Szabó (Szabó Lőrinc „pere”, 2000)*. The biography is complemented by Károly Horányi’s book-length study in *ItK*, which examines the poet’s controversial public life through the watchful eye of new generations. As part of a series of publications by the Lőrinc Szabó Research Centre at the University of Miskolc, I published his correspondence, which sheds light on his relationship with Germany. One of our first doctoral students, Noémi Kiss, then a scholarship holder at the University of Konstanz, has arranged and annotated Szabó’s correspondence with Karl Rothe and written the fundamental study *Who is Carl Rothe? A Literary Map of the Relationship between Lőrinc Szabó and Carl Rothe (Ki Carl Rothe? Szabó Lőrinc és Carl Rothe kapcsolatának irodalmi térképe)*. The volume attracted international attention and was adapted and published in Vienna (2002).²

² (<http://www.kakanien.ac.at/beitr/materialien/UREber1>. Seite 1-32 20 |04 | Copy of PDF [Edition des Briefwechsels {1942—1949} zwischen Carl Rothe und Lőrinc Szabó. Es handelt sich nun um die zweite und verbesserte Auflage. Kommentar und Analyse von Noémi Kiss: „Wer ist Carl Rothe? Eine literarische Kartographie der Begegnung zwischen Lőrinc Szabó und Carl Rothe.” <http://www.kakanien-revisited.at/beitr/fallstu>

Since in the case of Lőrinc Szabó I considered the biographical-poetic connection of women to be an integral part of biography and poetics, after protracted negotiations, I published the Lőrinc Szabó—Erzsébet Korzáti correspondence, which has survived the war, with the complete documentation of the sonnets of mourning in *The Twenty-sixth Year (A huszonhatodik év)*, with help from my former doctoral student, Krisztina Lengyel Tóth. I published an analysis of the poet's last sequence of poems, *The Illusion (Káprázat)*, under the title *Secrets in a Life/Work (Titkok egy élet/műben)*, 2010). Parallel to these monographs, in 1974 I produced the volume *Diary, Letters, Articles (Napló, levelek, cikkek)* which, together with autobiographical writings and diaries, makes up a complete biography. Complementing this, in the volume *Maturing Student Years (Érlelő diákévek)*, I have presented a comprehensive documentation of the beginning of Szabó's career from his grammar-school years in Debrecen to the publication of his first poem in the major literary journal *Nyugat*. I have compiled his correspondence with his wife in two volumes, accompanied by the poet's correspondence with Kodolányi and Aurél Bernáth, edited by Károly Horányi. The biography is complemented by the volume *Diaries of Lőrinc Szabó's Contacts (Szabó Lőrinc környezetének naplói)*, published in the Lőrinc Szabó Notebooks series under the auspices of my doctoral student Mariann Tóth. It contains a complete set of his wife's diary entries and the memoirs on the poet's death. Judit Bisztrai Farkas, my then PhD student, has documented the relationship between her grandfather, a legendary print shop owner, bibliophile publisher and later a friendly politician who supported the poet, and Lőrinc Szabó in a superb thesis. In addition, there is a study of the poet's stays abroad, researched with funding received from the Hungarian national research fund (OTKA): a summary by Franciska Curkovic-Major (*Lőrinc Szabó's travels in the Eastern Adriatic, Szabó Lőrinc kelet-adriai utazásai*, 2010) and memorial plaques have been placed in Dubrovnik, Opatija and on the isle of Korčula. Balázs Rutkai's PhD thesis provides the accounts of Szabó's two trips to Italy and Austria (1924, 1925) and the reappraisal of his trip to Czechoslovakia in 1933. In addition, there is a booklet on the translations the poet's summer at Lake Titi has produced (*Lőrinc Szabó's Travels in Germany. Black Forest and Ulm, Szabó Lőrinc németországi utazásai. Fekete-erdő és Ulm*, 2004). His tower climb in Ulm, researched for us by Alfréd Schneider from Germany, has now become a wandering legend and has already been featured in a programme on Duna Television. Documenting the biography requires deciphering the poet's shorthand notes. During the writing of her doctoral thesis, Tímea Lipa learned from Palma Schelken the shorthand used by Lőrinc Szabó and not taught since 1920 within the framework of OTKA and Széchenyi research grants. Since Schelken's death Ms Lipa has been the only Hungarian expert on this type of writing, which was also used by Árpád Tóth and Kosztolányi. And we even prepared a special volume for the Lőrinc Szabó Books series: Aurél Bernáth's wife, the poet's doctor, kept all the documentation on the poet for decades during the hospital directorship of Dr István

die/NKiss1.pdf, downloaded on 21. 05. 2016], and the letters are also available in Hungarian translation by Csilla Nagy PhD on <http://krk.szabolorinc.hu>.)

Szabolcsi, my best friend since primary school. The chief physician of our university, Sára Felszeghi, wrote a highly successful doctoral thesis from it, which was worth two editions and has been appreciated by both professions (the medical and the philological) ever since.

In addition to documenting the poet's career, I set myself the task from the beginning of bringing the publication of Lőrinc Szabó's textual universe up to the level that immediately preceded the critical edition. This was finally achieved with the publication of the Osiris Press Classics Series. We publish authentic texts with the necessary annotations and accurate dating. Two editions have been published: the double volume containing all his poems, a selection of his translations, *Our Eternal Friends, Poem and Reality* and *Confidential Information and Notes* combining his commentaries. The prose volumes *Memoirs and Journalism (Emlékezések és publicisztikai írások)* and *Confessions (Vallomások)* have also been published and *Literary Studies, Lectures, Reviews (Irodalmi tanulmányok, előadások, kritikák)* appeared on Book Day in 2013. These studies have matured doctoral student Aranka Kemény and versatile researcher Károly Horányi into outstanding textologists.

The study of Lőrinc Szabó's career as a literary translator has become a priority task at the Doctoral School of Literary Studies at the University of Miskolc. István Kontor was one of the first to defend his doctoral thesis on Szabó's poetry translations from German. Soon, Bálint Szele followed with his thesis on the Shakespearean translator Lőrinc Szabó and with a volume in which he interviews contemporary Hugnaian translators of Shakespeare on Szabó's translations. László Barna, with several publications under his belt, is now writing his doctoral thesis on the poet's German prose translations.

For the past decade, with the joint efforts of Károly Horányi and Tamás Sajó, I have been building the Lőrinc Szabó website, a joint project of the Lőrinc Szabó Research Centre of the University of Miskolc and the Manuscript Department of the Library of the Hungarian Academy with OTKA funding. The website — krk.szabolorinc.hu — offers a digital representation and data of all poetry volumes by and all variants of poems by Lőrinc Szabó, as well as a biography augmented with images.

Let me quote a foreign opinion on this research. László Cs. Szabó, who lived in exile in London, made a proposal to the Kelemen Mikes Circle in Amsterdam: a tribute, so to speak, by Hungarian writers living in the West to the achievements of Hungarian writers living in Hungary. He published his opinion in the Paris *Irodalmi Újság* (Paris, 1984, no. 2, pp. 17—18). In 1983 he awarded the Circle's commemorative plaque to the research on Lőrinc Szabó, which was then still a one-man show. At that time, the plaque and its donation letter could only be smuggled across the border into this country. "The negligence of the Hungarians is appalling. Of the two generations of *Nyugat*, only one great poet has been saved: only Lőrinc Szabó has a three-volume biography, hefty monographs, complete and relatively definitive in the Western sense of the word, *une biographie définitive*, as the French say. L. K. is its author." István Sótér wrote something similar in Hungary, in *Kortárs* (4.1981: 647—651) under the title *Lőrinc Szabó and his Summariser (Szabó Lőrinc és összegzője)*.

The work on Lőrinc Szabó stands out as an example everywhere. In the volume *The Voice of the Other Hungary (A másik Magyarország hangja)* the *Documents on the General Assembly of the Union of Writers in 1986 (Dokumentumok az Írószövetség 1986-os közgyűléséről)* can be read, which contains the Presidential Address by Miklós Hubay: “We can only repeat what Lőrinc Szabó once said in defence of writers’ freedom at a writers’ meeting in Lillafüred — the Prime Minister applauded him there, but he had already been thrown out of the journal *Magyar Csillag* by the censors: ‘The Hungarian novel, the excellent poem, the true drama is an individual work, and an almost incomprehensible celebration, ornament, splendour in the life of its creator and his nation. You mustn’t touch it.’ Thus elevating the long-ignored Lőrinc Szabó into the canon, whose texts had already played a role in the preparation of the regime change” (Antológia Publishing House, Lakitelek, 2016, 53).

Further confirmation came at the time of the change of regime, when a philosopher — who also had a political role at the time — commented on the publication of the works of Lőrinc Szabó as follows: “L. K. — who already published the *Diary, Letters, Articles* in 1974 and since then the impressive book of correspondence *Thirty-six Years, To Judges and Friends*, by bringing the poet’s shocking confessions to the press, he did all Hungarian literature lovers a great favour — last year he showed the reading public how a philologist can change literary history.” (Gáspár Miklós Tamás: *The Cold Winter of Regime Change [Lőrinc Szabó: To Judges and Friends, Poem and Reality]. A rendszerváltás zimankója [Lőrinc Szabó: Bírákhoz és barátokhoz, Vers és valóság]. Élet és Irodalom, 5 April 1991.)*

The process of “canonisation” can be built upon and developed in parallel with fundamental research. Szabó’s canonisation was initiated in our series of university conferences organised together with Ernő Kulcsár Szabó in Pécs and Miskolc, which laid the foundation for the “regime change” in literary studies. “A new protagonist in the post-regime change canon of literary history: Lőrinc Szabó” (*Új főszereplő a rendszerváltás utáni irodalomtörténeti kánonban: Szabó Lőrinc*) — I had the opportunity to publish this paper in a retrospective volume (*Weights and Emphases: Writings on Hungarian Literature of the Last Two Decades [1889–2009], Súlyok és hangsúlyok: Írások az utóbbi két évtized magyar irodalmáról [1889–2009]*, Napkút Press, 2009). My academic dissertation is actually a monograph of Lőrinc Szabó’s poetics (“*Hungarian poetry speaks my language.*” *The Summary of the Late-Nyugat lyric in the Poetry of Lőrinc Szabó*, „*A magyar költészet az én nyelvemen beszél.*” *A kései Nyugat-líra összegződése Szabó Lőrinc költészetében*, Argumentum, 1992, Literary History Booklets), which is worth two editions. And now I have completed my volume of essays rethinking Lőrinc Szabó’s metaphysics, published by Ráció in 2015. Connected to this were the journals I edited, *Irodalomtörténet* and *Literatura*, where today’s generation of our scholars grew up. An outstanding figure of the new generation, Zoltán Kulcsár-Szabó, the author of a monograph on Lőrinc Szabó from a new perspective, and Csongor Lőrinc, professor from Berlin, author of fundamental studies on Lőrinc Szabó, grew up here. Gábor Bednatics, editor of two of my books on Lőrinc Szabó, and László Bengi, one of my best critics, also started here. Anna Menyhért, who worked in my department, was the editor and organizer of our

Utánolvasó studies, with whom I later had a good fight, about which she wrote a very good poem. At the Doctoral School of the University of Miskolc, Csilla Nagy's work emerged as a doctoral thesis, which is another reflection on the poetic approach of Attila József and Lőrinc Szabó in the spirit of "tragic joy", in preparation for the 2015 summary of my last book, *The Soul Opens (Nyílik a lélek)*.

As a collaboration of all these schools, Lőrinc Szabó could appear as the protagonist of the regime change in Hungarian literary studies. Thanks to the serial support of OTKA, most of his textual universe is present in the consciousness of the reading public and in literary history.

(Z. H.) You mentioned that you also organised the promotion of Lőrinc Szabó abroad, and you decorated the places where the poet visited with plaques. Where did you unveil such plaques?

(L. K.) The plaques were placed in the name of the Lőrinc Szabó Research Institute of the University of Miskolc. I served the homeland, my own work and the canonisation of the poet's work. My "plaque mania" goes back to my days as a young teacher. With fellow teachers, I travelled around Czechoslovakia by bus. I was proud to find the inscription reminding of János Arany's stay in Karlovy Vary next to the plaques of Goethe, Beethoven and other great people who visited there. We were even shown the bench where Arany rested during his walks. So I was delighted when my phone rang in my dean's room (I was one of the first to have a mobile phone at the time) and Alfréd Schneider — my almost daily email-friend since then — contacted me from Titisee. He was from Transylvania, but due to his Saxon origin he came to the Black Forest region with his family and was looking for traces of Lőrinc Szabó. He had read about the poet. He was an accountant, but over time he trained himself to be one of the best Lőrinc Szabó experts. This became our first memorial plaque dedication abroad. My son Gyuri took me to the ceremony.



The ceremony began on 8 June 2002 at 11 am in Titisee. The memorial plaque, a work by the sculptor István Policsányi, was unveiled in the presence of the Mayor of Titisee-Neustadt, Martin Lindler. This was celebrated by the Director of the Hungarian Cultural Institute in Stuttgart, the Hungarian Consul in Munich, the Mayor of Titisee-Neustadt and the Director of the hotel (Mr Marcus Baars). The representatives of the Lőrinc Szabó School Chain and the trustees of the Lőrinc Szabó Foundation were also present. The commemoration was initiated by the Friends of Hungarians in Freiburg (one of the speakers at the ceremony was Dr Antal Könczöl, president of the circle at the time) and prepared by the Lőrinc Szabó Research Centre of the University of Miskolc. It was both a Hungarian national celebration and a memento of the cultural relations between the two peoples. The greetings of the Hungarian youth were brought by Fanni Kabdebó, a third grade student of Lőrinc Szabó Bilingual Primary and High School in Budapest, who recited the poem “Prayer for Children” (*Ima a gyermekekért*) with the confident hope of a child longing for protection in the universe. The event was covered on Duna Television’s *Over Borders (Határok felett)* programme on Monday evening, 10 June, edited by Júlia Balogh.

Inaugurat on speech in Titisee

„It seems that my concept of ‘*poésie pure*’ is now understood and appreciated by both left and right, at least as far as I am concerned. Within six weeks I have received three poetry prizes from various sides with, one, three and eight thousand pengos. Without lifting a finger” („Es scheint, als ob meine, ‘*Poésie pure*’ Auffassung man jetzt, rechts und links, wenigstens was sich davon auf meine Person bezieht, verstehen und billigen würde. Ich bekam auch drei Dichterpreise in sechs Wochen, von verschiedensten Seiten, 1-3- und 8 Tausen Pengös. Ohne den Finger zu rühren”), writes the poet Lőrinc Szabó in a letter to his German friend in the storm of war here next door, on the shores of Lake Constance, in Überlingen. This text can be the motto for the poet’s fate: his life and his afterlife. His poetry — independent of parties and systems of power — is recognised as a classic of Hungarian poetry. In the middle of the twentieth century, in the historical period marked by the two world wars, Hungarian literature had poetic twins who worked on the enrichment of poetry and whose value is still decisive in Hungarian poetry, and they are also part of contemporary world literature. Attila József and Lőrinc Szabó. They belong to the global literary lineage whose leading names are the German Rilke and Gottfried Benn, the Irish Yeats, the Anglo-American T. S. Eliot and the American Ezra Pound. They differ in nature, but they also complement each other in their poetry and work together in the polyphony that is the contribution of twentieth-century humanity to the totality of global literatures.

They were the great masters during the struggle for freedom, self-determination and the protection of individuality at a time when the world was repeatedly burnt and humanity humiliated. With his poetry, which deals with the extremes of happiness and unhappiness, Lórin Szabó gives strength to bear the burdens of existence. He holds our hands and encourages us in times of trial, he mourns the loss and sings of the moments of joy. He is the triumphant creator of a work of art that is an antithesis to human suffering. His life is a complementary and consoling example of human destiny and creation. As he recorded the superhuman determination to live for art and for creation in one of his diary entries:

„My wife says I am a monster, an incomprehensible person. My body is messy, my heart is utterly vile and barely trembles, my soul is weak and impotent, but my spirit, or even a small central part of it, its core, is indestructible: this has held, this has caught, this is what directs me! *That's what has written my poems, the recent ones* — with my head swollen as big as a house, my spirit deals with subjects of a completely different kind: moods, spiritual content, not topical at all, as if nothing was wrong with me!! It's scary, actually. Or am I crazy, am I a child?”

Lórin Szabó, one of the most important poets of Hungarian literature, was born in Miskolc on 31 March 1900 and died in Budapest on 3 October 1957. He is an admirer of the greats of world literature and an excellent translator of the works of Villon, Shakespeare, Goethe and Baudelaire. He is a true European and a champion of Hungarian–German cultural relations. He visited Germany several times and wrote a lot about the cities he visited. He arrived in Titisee on 25 July 1938, where he stayed and worked until 10 August. Here, he translated one of Shakespeare's comedies and Kleist's bitter comedy *Amphitryon* for the National Theatre of Budapest, which had just moved into its new building. He also captured the landscape in two poems and an essay. My friend Alfréd Schneider researched the places of his stay for us with excellent philological talent. Szabó stayed at the Titisee Hotel (or an annexe). Today's Maritime Titisee Hotel stands on the site of the hotel. A memorial plaque commemorating his stay will be placed on the wall of this house.

The three memorial plaques on the Eastern Adriatic are related to the research and zeal of Franciska Čurković-Major, Associate Professor at the Department of Hungarian Studies at the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Zagreb, and spring from her dissertation, which she defended at the Doctoral School of Literary Studies of the University of Miskolc.

The first inauguration took place on 24 September 2004 at 7 pm in the rotunda of the Imperial Hotel in Opatija. The patron of the ceremony was the Ambassador of the Republic of Hungary in Zagreb. Jasna Dorčić-Sanković, President of the Opatija

Tourist Association, gave a welcoming speech on behalf of the host, and Mirjana Mogorovic, President of the Board of Directors of Liburnija Hotels, gave a welcoming speech on behalf of Hotel Imperial. The ceremony was opened by Ranko Vlatkovic, the Mayor of Opatija. László Mohai, Ambassador of the Republic of Hungary in Zagreb, and Dr Milka Jauk-Pinhak, Head of the Department of Hungarian Studies at the University of Zagreb, gave welcoming speeches. Representatives of the Lőrinc Szabó School Chain and the trustees of the Lőrinc Szabó Foundation also attended. The featured poems by Lőrinc Szabó were: “Drinking Song”, “Dhuang Xi’s Dream”, “Autumn on the Adriatic” (*Hörpentő, Dsuang Dszi álma, Ősz az Adrián*) (recited by the students and teachers of the Lőrinc Szabó Bilingual Primary and Secondary School in Budapest: Laura Kabdebó, Fanni Kabdebó, László Ujvári). The plaque is the work of István Policsányi. The photo was taken in 2013. My son Gyuri and I were on holiday in Bibione, Italy, and on our way home we visited to check the memorial plaque with a large detour, where we could see a fresh wreath placed by the Hungarian community of Fiume.

Lőrinc Szabó in Opatija

“I have never lived so well for so long”, writes Lőrinc Szabó from Opatija. Until now, and even afterwards, his life consisted of nothing but hurry, a constant work of editorial and literary translations, and tangled love and personal relationships. Seventy years ago, in the late summer of 1934, between 17 and 27 September, the poet, frightened by wolves reminiscent of the paintings of Franz Marc, encountered here the “calm wonder”: nature. The sea.

With such rare words he described to his beloved the surroundings he could look at from the terrace on the fourth floor of the Hotel Regina Elena — now Hotel Imperial — while he relaxed: “Let me talk about the best thing there is here, the sea: I can only see, so to speak, within the frame of the balcony; to the right and to the left and to the front. All of Quarnero is dark blue, all around the mountains and islands are light blue, and above them the sky is even lighter, almost white. The water quivers and trembles all the time, and this trembling towards the sun is like a starry sky on earth.” And at night: “Even at night I looked out at the sea from the balcony. Even then the living black mass shone, the moon was shining, the stars in the sky, the lamps on the shore of Rijeka blinked, like in the cinema or in poems.”

And in verse he adds, “This great light healed me”. And he wants to say thanks “for being alive, for being human”.

The Eastern Adriatic has always been the world of his dreams, and when he could, he also brought his family with him, his wife and daughter Klara, and later his son Lóci. The thoughts of an economic conference in Fiume are illustrated by one of the most important poems of the Hungarian avant-garde, “Ode to the Port of Genoa” (*Óda a genovai kikötőhöz*): a few kilometres from here he learns to perceive the world interconnected by trade.

The fact of globalisation, in 1925! And here, in 1937, he wrote one of his greatest poems, “Conversation with the Sea” (*Beszélgetés a tengerrel*), which combines the dialogue between fallible man and the majesty of infinite nature into a single spectacle. The poet here is filled with sea experiences to create his visions of existence. We remember here a poet who has spent a lifetime trying to unite man’s personal existence with the natural world around him. We remember all this in a place where the sunny and nocturnal wonders of land, sea and sky come together to symbolise the beautiful moments of our existence. The poet left the complications of home behind and emphasised that he just wanted to relax, relax, relax. Nevertheless, he still had time to embark on a little adventure. He remembers this decades later: “Then, in my hotel, I met my girlfriend Magda B., who now lives in London and is fond of me — I think — in a wise and moderate way.”

And he adds something else to all this, he increases the value of the days spent here in his poetry: he enriches his poetry with a new theme. In his letters to both his wife and sweetheart, he separately describes his immersion in Buddhist literature. He even sends his lady friend one of his later famous poems on oriental themes written here. Great poems on this theme are then published.

In my youth I was pleased to see an inscription next to the memorial plaque to Goethe in Karlovy Vary commemorating János Arany. That is why it is a great event for me that two years ago in Titisee we were able to erect a memorial plaque to one of the most important Hungarian lyricists and now here in Opatija we can put up the work of István Policsányi, the brother of German remembrance, which will remind visitors to this town of the presence of a Hungarian poet. Just as it took a local resident on the shores of Lake Titi to find the opportunity to remember, today’s memorial plaque also has its own personal history. My colleague Professor Csaba Kiss-Gy. introduced me to Franciska Čurković-Major, lecturer at the University of Zagreb, who is collecting the Eastern Adriatic aspects of Lőrinc Szabó writing studies and identifying archival items. Based on all this, she is preparing a bilingual volume for us in the Lőrinc Szabó Notebooks series. We can thank both her and the renowned Department of Hungarian Literary History in Zagreb for making today’s celebratory occasion possible. And this is a worthy cause for celebration. Now, remembering a life seventy years ago, we should put ourselves in the poet’s place, who might be filled here with the plumes of the sea, the sun and the night, and we should also imagine the figure of the young girl, the „flying statue,” and let’s say goodbye to her who, in the poet’s memory, „stood most on the seafront”, „her dress fluttering in the wind”. Like this seashore statue.



Lőrinc Szabó in Opatija

Perhaps Franciska's greatest deed was to survey and identify all memorial sites. She only got stuck with the placement of the memorial plaque. Finally, a privatised hotel agreed to place it in the reception area. Thus, on 20 April 2007 at 6 pm, the Municipality of Miskolc, the University of Miskolc and the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Zagreb inaugurated a memorial plaque for Lőrinc Szabó in memory of the poet in Dubrovnik. The plaque was created by the sculptor István Policsányi.



At the ceremony in the Petka Hotel in Dubrovnik, which was attended by numerous visitors, tour guides and residents of Hungarian origin living in the city, after the welcome, Councillor Antal Dystl, representing the Ambassador of the Republic of Hungary in Zagreb, spoke on behalf of the Mayor of the city. Dr. Sc. Vice-President Vedran Jelavić, Head of Department at the University of Dubrovnik, unveiled the commemorative plaque in the lobby of the hotel. Those present were informed about the significance of the great poet in lectures and recitations. In addition to researching Hungarian–Croatian cultural relations, the Department of Hungarian Studies in Zagreb considers it an important task to train young Hungarologists who disseminate and nurture the two cultures. One of their former students, Hajdi Hajdić, a graduate Hungarologist and teacher of Croatian language and literature, took on the role of moderator at this ceremony. The two students who recited Lőrinc Szabó's poems were from Lapad Primary School, where Hajdi works as a Croatian language teacher. The dedication of the plaque was followed by a conference in one of the hotel's congress halls, where, after a welcome by the academic Luko Paljetak, he discussed the poet's poetic significance, Franciska Ćurković-Major gave a lecture on her research, presented the documents on Lőrinc Szabó's presence in Dubrovnik, and then I gave my speech. The installation of the memorial plaque was followed by a great deal of press coverage. Most of the local newspapers, and radio and television channels reported on the event.

Inauguration speech in Dubrovnik

“I’ve been sitting on the beach since morning
and watching the waves”.

Being one of his most important poems Lórin Szabó, a Hungarian poet and a classic even by global literary standards. He conceived the poem “Conversation with the Sea” during one of his trips to the eastern Adriatic. He travelled there more than once and visited Dubrovnik several times. He lived here, in this hotel that is, in one of its earlier buildings, which also bore the name Petka. The poet’s life and the hotel’s history almost rhymed with each other and both suffered the turbulent history of the twentieth century. But both defied the events of transience. The hotel has always renewed to please its many guests, and the poet’s work evokes the intertwining of landscape and sea, and the dangers and joys of human existence in a series of immortal poems.

Lórin Szabó would return to the Adriatic if he could. That was his childhood dream, when before the world wars, during the Monarchy, an exit opened up here for Central European lowlanders who wanted to get to know the world. The sea: a distant and wonderful world that the schoolchild could only dream of in geography lessons, and at the sight of which the adult poet could experience the encounter of finite human existence with the infinite. Another Hungarian genius, Petőfi from the nineteenth century, formulated his ideal of freedom in the infinity of the Great Plain. When he arrived to this landscape, Szabó faced a peculiar philosophical paradox contemplating the sea. He could ask the question about the metaphysics of being and time. Sometimes in a terrible state of mind, sometimes in the opposite, rejoice and play. In any case, conversing. Most of his poems are “interwoven with immersion in the lives, thoughts and feelings of others, not only people but also animals, plants, objects — the universe” — as the poet describes in retrospect at the end of his life. And he immediately lists a number of titles: including “To a Ragusan Oleander” (*Egy raguzai leanderhez*) and “A Conversation with the Sea”, both of which were written here. As a poet, he searches for the words with which he can inquire into mysteries that wisdom cannot comprehend. In the poem “A Conversation with the Sea”, he seems to follow the path of Saint Augustine, whom Lórin Szabó held in high esteem: the encounter between the child and the saint, transforming the philosopher’s meditation into poetry. He takes on the consternation caused by the “child”: he begins to drain the sea with a shell. With joy and awe, he observes the game in which the sea “never gets tired” of the movement of the waves. Echoing Valéry’s famous poem “The Graveyard by the Sea”, his poem conjures up the idea of an “eternal living graveyard”, but he is also able to gaze with the innocent eyes of the child at the maddening enigma that beckons us from infinity.

That is why he brings along his poetically imaginative daughter Kisklára and sometimes his son Lóci, who watches the dangers with playful boldness.

Following his father's example, when he grew up he also liked to spend his summers in this region. Here in Dubrovnik, the poet experiences with his son the insanely dangerous moment of life and death, which he immortalised in his poem "Lóci and the Abyss" (*Lóci és a szakadék*). He turns it into a verse anecdote about the theological paradox that develops from a walk on the beach:

"Daddy..." It was really a miracle,
but I managed to catch the child.
"See?! ..." I pointed it down into the abyss.
We listened. Lóci shivered.

He trembled and said much later,
"It is terrible that from such dangers
To life one shall not be free,
Only when..." and suddenly

He stopped. "Only when..."
His voice became veiled and trembling again.
"Only when you obey!" I said. And:
"Only when you're dead!" he said.

Although he saw the "jellyfish at Helgoland", for him the *sea*, the great reference point of existence, remained world of the eastern Adriatic. Pleasure and contemplation were as much a part of his travels here as historical reckoning. According to his letters, and the descriptions and stories told by his children, he could find a refreshing sense of togetherness here, with wife, children and intimate scenes. Here he could do his translation work on his own. He even had a love affair with a Hungarian woman living in England, whom he never met again, but they kept in touch for decades through correspondence. And it was here that he began to familiarise himself with the philosophy of the East. It was then that the experience of being a *guest* turned into a feeling of being on the *road* for him. It is as if in his poem that speaks to the sea he is searching for the word of the Tao in the unique scene, experiencing the eternal story repeated daily. Quiet, yet delighted:

Thousands of years have passed
so quietly on thy shore;
may this one day pass by,
this is the one man who has only
come as a guest from afar
and watches your waves.

The poems written on the Adriatic coast can be described as a turning point in his poetry: in contrast to the maddening facts of the impermanence of personal existence and the destruction of the individual, contemplating the sea, it is here that he discovers the beauty of existence and the opportunity to invent his place in the whole universe:

morning and noon the clock
measures out, yesterday and tomorrow:
rocking yourself,
you show eternity.

A great poet found important lessons in this region, and as a symbol of this, the memorial plaque created by the sculptor István Policsányi, which is now placed here, in the lobby of the Petka Hotel, as a result of the research of Franciska Čurković-Major, should remind us of this connection in the future. It is a manifestation of the loving friendship between the Croatian and Hungarian peoples.

As difficult as it was for Franciska to persuade the Petka Hotel to host the plaque, the history of the plaque was even more turbulent. Changes in the life of the hotel followed the retirement of the director. Visitors looked in vain for the well-advertised plaque. But Franciska's tenacious love for the cause could not be outsmarted. The bitter story was summed up by herself, Franciska Čurković-Major, PhD, associate professor and lecturer at the Department of Hungarian Studies at the Faculty of Humanities, University of Zagreb.

History of the erection of the memorial plaque of Lőrinc Szabó in Dubrovnik

Lőrinc Szabó (1900—1957) spent two holidays in Dubrovnik (Ragusa). The first time was in 1934, when he stayed at the former Petka Hotel. The second time, in 1937, the poet stayed in a pension called Stefani. While researching Lőrinc Szabó's travels to the Eastern Adriatic, I managed to find out reliable data about the hotel and the pension. The old hotel called Petka was bombed in 1944, and the present hotel was built after the war. I looked for the place where the Stefani Pension was located, but the building is privately owned and the owners showed no interest in erecting a memorial plaque. So we decided that the new Petka Hotel should be the place for a plaque commemorating Lőrinc Szabó's stay in Dubrovnik.

The memorial plaque in Dubrovnik, similar to the plaque in Opatija before, was erected by the Lőrinc Szabó Research Centre and the Lőrinc Szabó Foundation of the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Miskolc and the City of Miskolc, and by the Department of Hungarian Studies of the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Zagreb on the Croatian side.

The construction and delivery to the site of the memorial plaque was financed by the Hungarian side. As a lecturer at the Zagreb Hungarian Studies Department, I was responsible for organising the erection of the memorial plaque in my coordinating role.

In 2006, I started negotiating with the then director of the hotel in 2006. He mediated between the owner and me. The owner agreed to place the plaque on one of the walls in the hotel lobby. The location (on the wall) was chosen together with the director because it was important that the wall could bear the weight of the plaque.

On 20 April 2007, the plaque was unveiled. The patronage had been assumed by László Mohai, Ambassador of Hungary in Zagreb. At the inauguration ceremony, Ambassador László Mohai was represented by Antal Dystl, First Counsellor of the Embassy. Speeches were delivered by Dr. Sc. Lóránt Kabdebó, Head of the Lőrinc Szabó Research Centre at the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Miskolc; and on the Croatian side by Dubravka Šuica, Mayor of Dubrovnik; Dr. Sc. Deputy Mayor Vedran Jelavić, Head of the Faculty of Maritime Affairs at the University of Dubrovnik, academic Luko Paljetak, representing the Dubrovnik branch of Matica hrvatska, and myself as coordinator of the commemorative plaque. Many Dubrovnik residents were also present at the event. The plaque was placed on one of the walls in the lobby of the Petka Hotel.

In 2011, the plaque was removed from its place due to the renovation of the lobby of Hotel Petka, but none of the above-mentioned institutions was informed about it. This was reported by a Hungarian tourist who visited the Petka Hotel to see the memorial plaque.

Since autumn 2011, as the coordinator, I have phoned one of the current directors of the hotel several times (the older one I spoke to has retired) to find out when the sign would be put back in place. He promised this for early 2012, when the renovation work was scheduled to be completed. After I called him in early 2012, he again said they would put the plaque back, but when I asked him about it several times later, he did not answer my question on the phone.

On 1 July 2012 I wrote to the hotel manager and forwarded the letter to the then mayor and his deputy, as well as to the president and the academic member of the Matica hrvatska Dubrovnik section. I did not receive a reply from any of the addressees.

On 6 September 2012, I again sent emails to these addresses and also sent them by post. I only received a reply from the academic member of Matica hrvatska, who recommended that I contact the managers of the hotel.

After I spoke again on the phone with the manager of the Petka Hotel, who advised me to write to the owner of the hotel. I did so and wrote to him on 17 October 2012. In his reply he repeated everything I already knew about the reasons for the removal of the memorial plaque, adding that the quality of the current walls in the hotel lobby does not allow the plaque to be returned to its original location. I received no reply to my request to reinstall the plaque in a suitable location, nor to the letter I emailed him again on 9 December 2012.

In January 2013, I explained the complications regarding the plaque to the First Secretary of the Hungarian Embassy in Zagreb and asked him for help in restoring the plaque. At his request to send this in writing to the Embassy's address, I did so.

On 15 February 2013, the meeting of the Charter XXI took place in Budapest. Due to the Croatian aspect of the meeting, the Croatian Ambassador in Budapest was also present. Dr. Sc. Lóránt Kabdebó informed him and those present about the complications related to the memorial plaque in Dubrovnik.

On 17 February 2013, at the suggestion of the Charter XXI Assembly, I informed the Croatian Ambassador in Budapest by e-mail about the events related to the memorial plaque in Dubrovnik.

On 19 February 2013, I received the reply from the Croatian Ambassador in Budapest, informing me that in his report on the Charter XXI Assembly, he also mentioned the case of the memorial plaque in Dubrovnik. This report was sent to the Office of the President of the Republic of Croatia, the Office of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs and the Ministry of Tourism. There was no reply from any of the institutions.

At the beginning of April 2013 I received no reply, although I immediately replied to the owner's letter of October and asked three more times where else in the hotel we could put the plaque. Then I called the director, who had been called rude in the past, and he just told me to call him later, now he had no time for stupid things — using that word. When I called him again, he was willing to listen to me, but again he said that the fate of the board depended on the owner. I wrote to the owner for the fourth time, but he has not replied since.

By 21 April 2013, not even the Hungarian ambassador in Zagreb had replied to my letter of January. That's when I met him and he said that if the people in Dubrovnik "do not want the memorial plaque so much", we should bring it back and put it up in Rijeka, for example. Since the inscription on the memorial plaque mentions Lóránt Szabó's holiday in Dubrovnik, it was pointless to think about this possibility.

At the end of April 2013, I still had not received a reply from the owner of Hotel Petka regarding the sign. Considering the facts and after consulting with Dr. Sc. Lóránt Kabdebó, I called the manager of the hotel with whom I had had discussions so far. I told him that if they did not want to return the board, we would take it back from them. I asked for clarification about the circumstances of the handover. He said the board was at the reception and we could pick it up there.

22 May 2013. A few days ago I arranged by phone with the director of the Petka Hotel that our former student, who had studied Hungarology at the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Zagreb, would pick up the board. When she showed up at the hotel today, the plaque was not there, someone had already taken it. This fact confirms the negligence of the hotel staff. Fortunately, the sign had been taken shortly before by another acquaintance of mine who knew everything and wanted to help because he was there at the time.

So now we had to look for a new place for the plaque. During his second holiday in Dubrovnik, Lóránt Szabó stayed in a pension called Stefani, but today it is a privately owned residential house, so it was out of the question.

Through a relative of the above-mentioned former student, I learned that the Croatian Kindergarten, Primary School, Grammar School and Dormitory in Budapest (1144 Budapest, Kántorné sétány 1–3.) is twinned with the Ženski đacki dom in Dubrovnik, which is located quite close to the Old Town. It was also a fortunate coincidence that our former student stayed in this dormitory when she was in high school. Thus, she also helped pave the way for the memorial plaque to be placed in the proper place in the dormitory building.

On 22 May 2013, I spoke on the phone with the headmistress of the dormitory, who did not rule out our plan but had to wait for the decision of the school board. Therefore, I sent a request to the board outlining the significance of Lőrinc Szabó and the importance of the plaque.

On 6 June 2013, I received notification from the headmistress of the dormitory that the school board had endorsed the request to place the plaque in the dormitory. The official re-inauguration of the plaque was planned for the end of August during the visit of the graduating students of the Budapest twin institution to Dubrovnik.

On 21 September 2013, I spoke on the phone with the headmistress of the dormitory, who gladly informed me that the board was on the wall of the dormitory and invited me to go and see it.

In June 2014, I travelled to Dubrovnik and saw the plaque. The photos were taken at that time.

The new location of the plaque is:

Women's Dormitory Dubrovnik, 27 Branitelja Dubrovnika, 20 000 Dubrovnik

The site is accessible from the Hotel Imperial Dubrovnik on the left, on Ulica Branitelja Dubrovnika, on the way out of town. The high stone wall that starts at the corner of this street and Ulica don Frana Bulića is the wall that encloses the dormitory park. The first gate in the wall is closed, the next gate is the entrance to the dormitory. The dormitory hosts tourists in the summer, so it can be viewed in that time of the year.



When we inaugurated the plaque for Lőrinc Szabó's stay in the lobby of the Hotel Petka in Dubrovnik in an impromptu conference, we had a day off, and two of my PhD students and I took advantage of the time and travelled to the isle of Korčula. We went in search of the small town, the former Venetian colony that Lőrinc Szabó was so fond of mentioning during his lifetime. He even summarised his memories of the place in his poem "What Else?" (*Mi még?*): "Old Korčula," the wonderful old town. "Little jewel box," we've called it since we first had a glimpse of it. We decided that we should have a plaque put up here too. Telephone, a series of emails, poor Franciska was once again thrown into the big task. After Opatija and Dubrovnik, she was to arrange for the third memorial plaque in Croatia.

In the meantime, we inaugurated another memorial plaque. Admittedly, it had only half to do with the rest of the world. Balassagyarmat, Hungary. The bridge, built on the site of the old Ipoly Bridge, lost its function. However, because the Treaties of Trianon and Paris designated the river as a "navigable" border river, and later the Slovaks diverted the river into another canal, for decades it was an ugly sight behind a stump, a wire mesh. Today it is preserved as an industrial monument at the end of the former Church Street. Today it is called Szabó Lőrinc Street. In a friendly conversation with writers and poets living in Hungary and Slovakia, it was suggested that we decorate the stump and that the city build a Trianon grove around it. Let it be a reminder of all the writers who came into contact with Balassagyarmat. With the financial and spiritual help of friends living beyond the borders, the plaque was created and we asked two new politicians to inaugurate it: the Fidesz-party Mayor of Balassagyarmat and the chairman of the Parliament's Culture and Press Committee, the poet László L. Simon, whom I have praised several times.

Encouraged by the successful ceremony, I asked the poet-politician to make the new plaque possible and come along to the inauguration. He agreed to it recklessly. Meanwhile, the people of Korčula, the head of the tourist office and even the mayor, who is an architect, were delighted. But our poet friend, who should have driven us and the plaque there, was busy with legislative work. Korčula was further away than Balassagyarmat, and the minister promised money, which was later said to be impossible by the staff of his ministry. But there was no turning back. Memorial plaques had been made beforehand with the support of OTKA. We announced it, and we set off. My doctoral students, Balázs Rutkai and his wife, Enikő Órás were my travel companions. Just as I got off the ferry in Orebic and arrived on the island, my phone rang. My friend László L. Simon was calling. "Where are you?" "We have just arrived", I said. "All right then", said he. "The Minister has decided to cover the cost of making the plaque, but please announce it at the ceremony that it is a gift from the Hungarian government." Although the news of the happy turn of events was not included in the previous articles, interviews and significant press coverage, nor was it mentioned on the invitation, the celebrants welcomed the noble gesture of our country's government. At least I can report on the result of a successful interplay. Hungarians, Croats, poets, ministers, PhDs: I have the feeling that they gladly helped to create a good thing. They did not exercise mercy. They have done a service to both nations. They spread good news of our country.

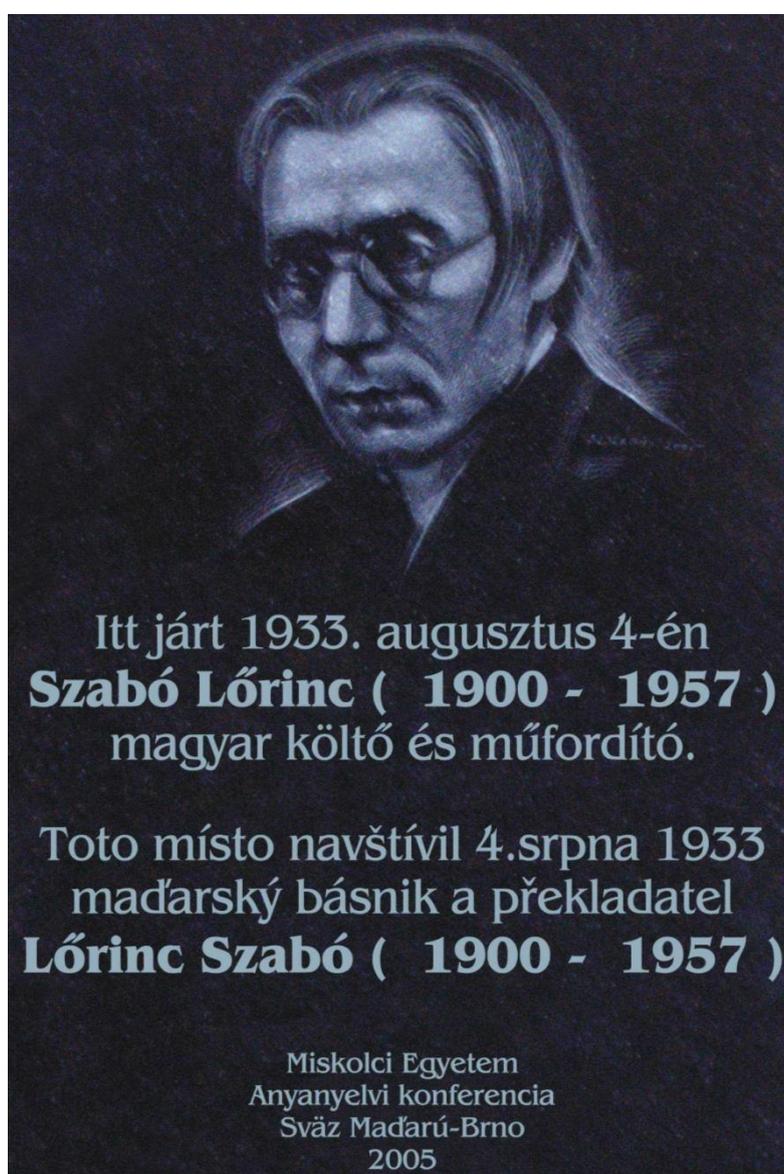


Korčula, after the inauguration

Since then, I have been in contact by e-mail and telephone with one of our hosts, Valerija Kovačević, who proudly reports on the joy of the Hungarian tourists she has driven there and occasionally informs us that the stainless steel plaque will sooner or later await restoration. Let me quote from her latest letter: “Many Hungarian groups come here and I show them the plaque during the sightseeing tour. I also organise excursions for groups, which they are very happy about, because they get nice, useful information at the lowest price from a local guide, an islander (we have lived here with our family for 18 years) and even in Hungarian. People who have been here once always come back again” (11 June 2016).

The memorial plaque in Moravia was inaugurated on 15 October 2005 in the Macocha ravine near Brno. We owe this to the honorary fellow of my Arts Faculty, Richard Pražák, the first ambassador of the Czech Republic in Budapest, who was obsessed with Hungarian literature and history in the Czech Republic. By his own admission, he never visited the world-famous Macocha Cave. (That’s like saying a resident of Miskolc has never been to Lillafüred.) But he got his university to host me and introduced me to the Hungarians in Brno, who organised the commemoration. The memorial plaque made of black Indian granite was made by István Szilaveczy, sculptor and artist from Érsekújvár, and placed on the wall of the Macocha Tourist Hotel. The plaque was unveiled in the company of Attila Komlós, Executive President of the International Society for Hungarian Language and Culture (Mother Tongue Conference). After the inauguration and the laying of the wreath, the poetry performances of Leva, trained by László Újváry, demonstrated the greatness of Lőrinc Szabó’s poetry with a beautifully selected and performed programme. On the flyer, participants could familiarise themselves with the

Hungarian and Czech versions of the poem “My Homeland”. The event was part of the anniversary celebration of Hungarians in Brno, led by President Zoltán Vojtek. The day-long celebrations began with a Holy Mass in Hungarian. Knowing the historical antecedents — that after World War II, in the name of collective guilt, the use of Hungarian was banned in the Czechoslovak state — and knowing Zoltán Fábry’s pamphlet against it, *The Accused Spoke (A vádlott megszólalt)* and once hearing the author’s remarks about the Beneš times moved tears of joy at the solemn mass in the Czech church at almost every Hungarian sentence.





Plaque unveiling in Hafling-Avelengo

“I was writing in Avelengo-Hafling, on the terrace of the Belvedere caffè-ristorante. The night before there had been a big thunderstorm; the Pension Sulfner at an altitude of 1200–1400 m, where I was staying, was swimming in the storm clouds. The next day I sent my poem in Merano to the Budapest evening paper *Az Est* (in June 1924)”, writes Lőrinc Szabó about his poem “Farewell to Avelengo” (*Búcsú Avelengótól*) in the house copy of his volume *Light, Light, Light* (*Fény, fény, fény*), which also collects his travel experiences.

A reminder. The child Szabó, who grew up in the great Great Plain of Hungary, first saw the sea, then the great mountains, on his way here. Here, he began to get to know the world. What the journalist of the Budapest evening paper wrote down in shorthand in the news about the world, he could see with his own eyes on his travels. The depth and the height, the “electricity” of the night storm, the murmur of the echoing mountains and the evening view of the illuminated Merano were wonders. Chance brought him to this pension, but fate directed his steps so that he could learn about the wonders of the world here. There was even a love adventure associated with this stormy night, for towards the end of his life, in a sketch of poetry commemorating his journey, he mentioned “the girl of Avelengo” beside the Val d’Ega and the villa Enzian.

The poet loved this place so much that he later introduced his wife to this world of wonders. And again by chance, he and his wife experienced a similar stormy night when his son followed his father's path decades later.

The poet "robbed" the spectacle in verse and took it with him. Since then, the sight of Avelengo-Hafling has become a vivid image for every lover of Hungarian poetry:

My gratitude and joy,
With which I thank you for these good days,
The Most Divine Will:
I lock you in my eyes, clouds,
Tyrol, snow, crags,

We, celebrating today, greet this landscape by imagining the poet standing next to the old church on St. Catherine's Hill and looking at the image of Christ:

My parting hand
On the holy mountain of Avelengo
Now tears gentians and poppies.



(Z. H.) How did you get back to Miskolc? Tell me about your connection to the Institute of Humanities, which later became the Faculty of Arts.

(L. K.) I will begin with a personal secret. I left the chair of literary studies at Janus Pannonius University in Pécs, where my friend Ernő Kulcsár Szabó and I began to organise specialist conferences about the regime change, and at the same time we were editors-in-chief of two major literary journals: he of *Literatura* and I of *Irodalomtörténet*, where we had the opportunity to train scholars who are now in leading positions. In Pécs, I did not consider university management but the management of professional opportunities as my vocation. My family did not agree to move there, even though fulfilling my task would have required a whole person. At that time, my wife was the author of the first best-selling book about the regime change. As the author of the book *The Volunteers of Charity (A szeretet önkéntesei)*, which was published in fifty thousand copies, she was signing copies together with Baroness Csilla Böselager, the heroine of her book. The Baroness, who was the founder of the Hungarian Maltese Charity Service and of the Ungarische Malteser Caritas Dienst, was named “Woman of Europe” and was awarded the Medal of Honour by the City of Miskolc. But through secret diplomacy, my wife arranged my taking the leadership of the Faculty of Arts at Miskolc, which was then being established. A former metallurgy student and later a heat treatment engineer, my wife became the link that enabled the newcomers, initially derided as “freshmen with totes”, to be promoted to “humanities engineers” in their first year. I brought here conferences, which provided an opportunity to transform the profession, and I continued to edit the journal from here. I had been connected to this university earlier: I introduced the classic novelist László Németh to the students of Miskolc when he spoke about the Herder Prize he had won in Vienna, and I had brought here Jenő Barcsay, the author of the world-famous volume *Anatomy of Art (Művészeti anatómia)*, to see his mosaic that decorates the library. During my deanship two of our prose writers, Győző Határ (a trained engineer, who as an internee of the Rákosi era worked on building the university, now an industrial monument) and the world-famous Magda Szabó, who assisted me with her advice during my years as dean, became honorary fellows of this university. In all this, Zénó Terplán, university professor and executive, whom I hold in high esteem, was my role model and companion. (There still hangs, framed on the wall of my room like a diploma, his handwritten letter of congratulation in which he welcomed the new arts faculty.) He knew that. As did our rector, who initiated the founding of the faculty, and my friend Béla Mang, the then Secretary General of the University, with whom I cooperated in the difficult daily tasks of establishing the Faculty despite our different party affiliations, and who at the last minute brought the chain of deans from the Mint in his car so that we could start the ceremony at the announced time, according to the rules of the faculties.

(Z. H.) What was your most difficult task in this regard?

(L. K.) To go from “totes” to “liberal arts engineers”. To prove that we want to find a home in the community that has saved the traditions of Selmec in Miskolc. That

humanities scholars and engineers can live together in a national tradition that does justice to our own academic particularities. At that time, the majority of us were humanities graduates, and the minister of our then Director General of Economic Affairs insisted that he would rather send ten students a year to Germany to study metallurgical engineering than waste the cost of their education at home. And then we told the renowned historian a resounding no. This is what we get back today when people complain about the lack of engineers and the liberal arts education is called into question. It was with this coordinated support that I spent my years as dean. But oh, if only my time had passed! My wife became, as it were, the wife of Kelemen Kőmíves in this task, which did not bring her any fame, but could not be done without her.

To tell the truth, the Institute was founded by my colleague Professor Béla Pokol, who also developed its organisation and its traditional programmes. He was also the first director of the Institute. Our rector, Ferenc Kovács, still mentions with admiration that what he discussed with him today about founding a programme, Professor Pokol already got officially approved next week. Overcoming the impossible by tackling it was Pokol's method. The old-fashioned engineering professors found his powerfully dominant obstinacy hard to bear, but they had to admit his ingenuity. Nevertheless, they made it thoroughly difficult for him to find his place. In the end, he was forced to resign. Later I also had many fights with Béla, but I knew that we needed his excellent professional skills. Professionally, I felt Béla Pokol and István Fehér were my partners, even though we became foes more than once, as we disagreed on practical issues. Especially when, as everywhere, attempts were made to play us off against each other here. Eventually we reached the point where I begged Béla Pokol, when he was finally committed to move to Budapest, to stay. I remember a meeting of the sociology faculty where the two of us found a quiet place, and he explained his historical vision to me. I am convinced that it was he who dreamed up the three-party political coalition of the first Orbán government. This is no longer talked about today, and when we talked about it here in the Blue Room, I was amazed that it was possible. To win by storm — that is what the figure of Béla Pokol means to me. Only what he dreamed of had to be put into practise. He was not very good at that. That's when they turned to me. I'm from Miskolc, I often studied here, my wife studied here. But still, the rector felt he was jumping into the unknown. He wanted to test me. But I have consistently stuck to my ideas — with diplomatic flexibility. The emblematic leadership of our martyr dean of 1956, Zoltán I. Tóth, the sacrifices he made for the students, was my model. Professionally, the academic rigour of my mentor, József Szauder, became my example. I insisted that I didn't want to be a rooster on a rubbish dump, but one among equal disputants. And I succeeded in winning over the best in each field, using my diplomatic skills. There was a time when our programmes were in the national elite.

For a few years we got the rector's apartment for the faculty. It was not the faculty but the university that needed my constant presence. During the summer holidays, the office is also on vacation. The office of academic affairs is as if deserted. And then came the flood of appeals that followed the admissions. My wife held the front. They switched the phone calls to my apartment. The phone kept ringing. But we

solved everything. Then I moved the entire faculty into the former TÜKI building. At the beginning of the academic year we started moving into the building. Béla Pokol was inflamed: he heard I was collecting armchairs for my room. I invited him into my office. The farthest and smallest room in the building. No armchair would fit there. He looked around and laughed. Then he cursed. “I was conned”, he said. If not friendship, a sincere attachment was born between us. As a backdrop for an open debate. We’re having a modest party, my “foe” and I are having the nicest conversation when the rector arrives. As he leaves, I hear back that for the first time he says, “I made the right choice”.

But he still had no confidence. So he asked me to deliver the welcome speech at the opening ceremony of the academic year. I think I managed to compose the fundamental text of our university. The Rector was not allowed to read it beforehand either. Let it be a surprise for him! I have won the first battle. Here’s the text:

Year-opening thoughts in September 1993

There are legendary golden ages in the history of mankind when the prosperity of a culture lays the foundation for the progress of economic and cultural life at the same time. I suspect, of course, that a more thorough historical analysis could easily reveal events that contradict this harmony. Indeed, my own research and especially my life experiences show that the courses of history and culture often present opposing results. I became aware of all this when I bowed my head in the Tower in the room of the Wakefield Bastion. There, according to legend, the most unfortunate monarch of the Wars of the Roses, King Henry VI, who wavered and swayed like a shadow king almost from his birth, was killed. The same Henry about whose misfortunes Shakespeare wrote three plays. Nevertheless, in memory of this almost-king, candles are lit every year on the anniversary of his death, and lilies and roses are strewn on the pavement where he bled to death. By whom? By representatives of Eton College and King’s College, Cambridge. For it was this shadow-king who was a figure of such great intellect that he founded some of the internationally renowned educational institutions of English culture. I ask: was there a deeper point in English history than the Wars of the Roses?

But let’s not go so far abroad. In the abbey church of Tihany rests the prince of the House of Árpád, our King Endre the First, who was called home from exile in his youth and whose life was spent not only in heroic defence against external interference but — perhaps through his own fault — in a perilous fraternal struggle. Nevertheless, he founded the abbey in 1055, a fact known to all young Hungarian school-leavers, for from it we quote the first known coherent Hungarian text, one of our most precious linguistic testaments: “Fehérü váru reá meneh hodu utu reá.”

And we? Shall we wait for a golden age that may never come? It would be a shame and an embarrassment if we were to abandon the development of our education with the argument that our country is in financial difficulties. János Apáczai Csere, frightened and dying, dreamed of renewing Hungarian education when another Tatar invasion burned down the cities. Can we not take advantage of a wonderful opportunity because of financial difficulties?

For who could have seen a more beautiful opportunity, in defiance of all historical misery, than what has happened in “Dudujka valley” in recent decades? We, the older generation witnessed it. What started as a devilish enterprise — interned prisoners working on the site of the former swamp — now graces the most beautiful parkland and park campus in the country. Teachers and students who were forced here against their will, first as stateless persons from Selmecbánya (Banská Štiavnica) and later, due to domestic political fears, from Sopron, saved and still preserve the centuries-old student traditions of one of the oldest Hungarian universities, which has been connected with Europe from the very beginning. It is precisely for this reason that this university gained worldwide renown after 1956: our friends who had to flee from here asserted themselves all over the world, because they left the school with a strong professional footing and a strong study ethic. The Technical University, which had gained an outstanding professional reputation, then reorganised the former law school in Upper Hungary that had once raised a Kossuth; and instead of proud withdrawal, it set itself a goal: we have never managed it in our region, but now we will create a “*Universitas*”. And indeed, the university is thus enriched by new faculties almost every year.

I, the youngest, as a member of the faculty that does not even exist on paper, although it has just moved to a new home, the former TÜKI building at the beginning of the year, am amazed to take part in the creation of this university. For no one should say that the foundation of the Faculty of Arts is a separate matter.

When my colleagues from other universities ask me how you can develop *here today*, I answer: it is not we who are developing, but a centuries-old university that feels the need to renew itself and broaden its scope. When the possibility of dialogue between different views in politics and economics was born, it was only natural that the university, which thanks to its technical character was able to acquire and maintain its professional prestige even in difficult years, took a breath and wanted to give scope to the fields of sciences. The faculties draw each other with love, at least that’s what I’ve experienced. They see themselves as part of an all-encompassing university to which even the younger ones have to adapt. Self-aware, with specific qualities as individuals and as functioning components.

But let’s not bury our heads in the sand. Of course, we have difficult years ahead of us. I just want to emphasise that *we* should not make the job any more difficult. We must adapt the tradition that our ancestors shaped. And we have to do it separately. That is quite natural. But also collectively — that is even more natural. Technical sciences and humanities breathe together here. Let us help them complement each other and harmonise their thinking — as László Németh, who once honoured this university with his presence, thought in his best moments.

Both in history and in the present, several traditions can be linked together. I would like to give just one historical example that I myself encountered in my particular field of research. 1927: in this year, the Heisenbergs created and defended the so-called Copenhagen formula, Heidegger published his fundamental book of modern philosophy, *Being and Time*, and Lőrinc Szabó wrote poems that represent one of the first manifestations of the dialogical poetic paradigm. There was *something* in the air that needed to be questioned in a similar way from several sides. What is this *something*? I think this something, this shared thing, can be sought after *here* and *now*. But that is only one of many common themes.

Another takes us to our present time. In the swamp, in “Dudujka Valley” a ghost town was built under conditions that would be unimaginable today. Among the internees was the engineer Győző Hack, who as a writer under the name Győző Határ had already published a novel and two volumes of poetry. His novel *Heliane* was kicked into the dirt with a gloss by a leading representative of political criticism — no wonder he wanted to leave the country. When he built the walls of the “Great Kocsedo” and he and his friends made sure that the hands of their fellow internee, pianist György Cziffra, are spared from hard work, he could not have imagined that he would be the first person living abroad to receive Hungary’s highest creative award, the Kossuth Prize. But neither could he have imagined that one day, that is, now, the camera-ready copy of his three-volume biographical memoirs entitled *Life’s Journey* (*Életút*) would be prepared within these walls. His memoir includes a narrative of the events that happened here. Not only could he not think it at the time, but I could not believe it myself when I recorded the first version of this narrative on tape in an interview with the author in Wimbledon almost a decade ago.

But how fortunate for today’s university students — engineering students, future lawyers, economists, sociologists, political scientists — to be able to live side by side, even in their shared dormitories, during their study years, and discuss all the forces that afflict industry and society and wreck this region probably the most in our country. What can they expect? Perhaps not the brightest future. But by helping each other, they can better prepare for what is to come. In this way, it is easier to endure difficulties. Both in the present and in the future.

Every university has proclaimed in the world the name of the city that has given it a home: Bologna, Paris, Prague, Krakow — but even smaller places could become world famous cities this way: Oxford, Cambridge. The university built in Dudujka bears the name not of a historical figure, but of a hospitable town: the University of *Miskolc*.

Let’s face it, this city has not one of the best sounding names. When I invite a guest, I prefer to mention Tapolca, it is better known, and it attracts those who live far away. But the university has a responsibility for this city.

If the university does not help the city, its own name will also be devalued. This city is now in its years of crisis. At least let's not let its culture go to waste. I have mentioned it more than once: when I was a young man living in this city, this "merely technical" university managed to become an important factor, its professors were present at every event and their wise, cultured words were the benchmark in the life of the city. I only meet the memory of most of them now: some names, deservedly, coming back as street names. At a time when the citizens of the extended *Universitas* are flocking to the opening of the academic year — I bow to the memory of those illustrious professors who founded the tradition of the university here, in this then swampy area, renewed that tradition here, created a new university, and so the academic year 1993/1994 can now begin on a new, larger scale.

And when it comes to tradition, let me refer to the age-old ritual with which all the great undertakings of humanity were begun. Say, writing an epic poem or a world-deciding battle. In the European tradition, there has been for centuries the ritual at the beginning of each academic year to prepare for the spiritual growth to come. *Asking for help* — that's how we learned it when we learned about the epic. *Veni Sancte* — that's what cultural history calls the ceremony at the beginning of the academic year. I suppose our fellow believers arrive refreshed in spirit or will visit the shrines of their religions after this opening ceremony. For in the past, most students educated in monastic schools were able to continue their studies here, and it was always possible to meet them in the churches of the city. I can only hope that in the years to come the university, which proudly calls itself a *city*, will build within itself — making the campus *whole* — the external form of internal celebration, a church — or even several churches: the halls of the soul, alongside the halls of science. Not as an obligatory act, nor as an institution that excludes others. But to make it available to those who desire it out of inner need: a house of spiritual renewal on campus.

In remembering the old professors, welcoming the new students and preparing them for difficult years, I would like to point out one more thing. Something we tend to forget. But it is the basis of our living together. We must recognise that every human being is *different*. Everyone is an *other*. I would like to make this clear even now when I emphasise the tradition and the new will that gave birth to the *Universitas*. For these two are inseparable. If we understand this, we can begin this academic year here, at least among ourselves, in peace and love. For this I wish you much patience, understanding, diligence — and above all a loving harmony that recognises and appreciates each other's differences.

I was speaking of the outside world. The city also became curious about what was said in Dudujka. I wrote a report about it in the local daily *Észak-Magyarország*. A photo was also placed next to it. I am photographed in the armchair of my friend

Zoli Nagy, the editor-in-chief, with our dog Beppo. The only objection the Rector had to my dogs was that they were small. Compared to his wild kvass, of course. His deputy and later successor, a dog owner himself, also rebuked me and thought I was frivolous. I told them that only with Beppo could I be one of the leaders of this university. Because of the memories of my youth. When it seemed I was not to be admitted to ELTE University, even though I had won the national study competition, the headmaster of Földes Grammar School, Miklós Tok, took me to see Rector Sályi so that I could start studying engineering, at least for the duration of the post-admissions, at my father's request. There were three seats in the Rector's office: two were occupied by Sályi and Miklós Tok, the third by Motyóka, the rector's legendary dachshund. I naturally took part in the conversation standing up. — There could be no objection to this argument.



(Z. H.) How did you get to the leadership of the faculty? Tell us about your years as dean.

(L. K.) I found my end-of-year speeches in my computer. They speak more accurately about what happened than my blurry memories. I used to say that the price of creating a university faculty in my case was a heart attack and a quadruple bypass heart surgery. But the fact that stress, conversations requiring immediate answers, and caring for people not only destroys one, but keeps one alive, shall be an example that in my 78th year I finished my book that changed my understanding of Lőrinc Szabó, and I have been able to settle another old debt thanks to room confinement due to my temporary ailment: to turn into a book my highly successful ten-part conversation with Otto Orbán conducted at the Petőfi Museum of Literature. I can say highly successful, because the press launch of the volume, published by Magvető, was two days ago. Being a hypochondriac, when I start crying, I had better sit down at my computer and start writing again. My uncle, Jenő Barcsay, said at the age of 85, after surviving an unexpected cholecystectomy: “I stayed alive because I

still have problems with my painting. And as long as I have, I will survive.” His mother lived to be 102. When the Council of Ministers unexpectedly took its turn to vote for our faculty rank a week before it was due, an early afternoon phone call shook me out of the nap I had learned from my father to have as a daily habit. “Professor, I have some good news for you that will do your ailing heart good: your institute has been promoted to the rank of university faculty.” How did they know that was when I had a heart attack? But it really filled me with joy.

Thoughts at the closing of the academic year

1996

Magnifice Domine Rector, Professors, our dear Guests who are with our University not only on festive occasions, and above all the Parents, honourable for their sacrifice and loving concern for many years, and most of all, my young new Colleagues! All of us, together with whom I can be part of the traditional celebration of a centuries-old historical process — the mutually dependent existence of a culture, a people and a *universitas* — a celebration of the traditional sanctity of the moment of joy.

When I took on this honour four years ago, in my year-opening speech I recalled the moment when I bowed in the Tower in the room of Wakefield Bastion where, according to tradition, the most ill-fated monarch of the Wars of the Roses, King George VI, who had wavered and swayed like a shadow king almost since his birth, was killed. Henry, about whose misfortunes Shakespeare wrote three plays. Yet, in memory of this almost-king, on the anniversary of his death, candles are lit every year, and where he has bled to death, lilies and roses are strewn on the pavement. By whom? By representatives of Eton College and King’s College, Cambridge.

I cited this scene at the time as an example of respect for tradition. As an explanation of homage to our University. For our alma mater, more than three and a half hundred years old, must evoke in us poignant respect, which, by almost mythological power, by regrouping its own energies, has created several new faculties, the most recent of which is ours.

Quoting this parable from the past again today, I see rather the bitterly ill-fated Shadow King, who was a figure of great enough intellect to found one of the internationally renowned homes of learning in English culture. And I see the self-destructive England of the Wars of the Roses, which at a low point in its history was able to generate the intellectual charisma that produced one of the most prestigious schools in the world.

De profundis clamavi. Is the bar too high? This is the only way worth living and working: strive for the highest. If we have survived the dangers, only such examples can help. And yet I wonder how we were able to build and maintain the intellectual edifice that produced 283 new graduates last year and 407 this year, amidst the carnage of financial crisis and internal struggles and self-destruction. I thank all my colleagues and all our students for taking on the task together.

If we survive and thrive, it is only because of the collective will of all. Which can explain the parable of world history. In emergency situations it becomes even clearer that “life lives and wants to live”. For it is in times like these — and when in our country has been no *such* time? — that we are most curious about how we exist, and it is then that the need to ask questions about our existence becomes crucial.

The great natural scientists of the century, almost at the same time as the poets and philosophers, and in accordance with historical experience, which was becoming more and more prevalent, thought of avoiding thinking about “clear” laws. Our consciousness simultaneously tests and shapes our existence: life is a stage where we are the spectators and the players, as Heisenberg describes with a quote from Niels Bohr. Let me say with pride right afterwards: Lóriné Szabó, a global classic of Hungarian literature, comes from Miskolc and has built his own poetry accordingly.

The facts are on the shelves of our library, our knowledge consists in when and what we look for in our books. This is what Albert Szentgyörgyi once taught in his first class.

If there is a school of liberal arts in Miskolc, it trains us to do just that: to learn how to find information among the facts. We don’t need Beckmesser-like schoolmasters who look for flaws in everything but Hans Sachs-like schoolmasters who show a variety of methods: their pupils could be the Walter Stolzing of the future, the future “Meistersingers” who create new variations. Seven full-time and 15 part-time academic doctors, 33 full-time and 50 part-time candidates at the Hungarian Academy, in many cases well-known beyond our borders, formative figures in their profession, have come together to create this school. Even though there have been personal differences over the years, there has always been professional harmony within these walls. After all, it is *precisely* the demonstration of diversity that makes us work together.

We have taught you to ask questions and to make comparisons, and my colleagues and I have educated you to become persons who *question* things. One of my students wrote and published a paper with an argument that contradicted mine. I congratulated him and added that if we were doctors, one of us could diagnose the death of our patient. But the beauty of our profession is that approaches from different horizons are not mutually exclusive, but collaborate and open up new horizons of questioning. At the beginning of the decade, this method was proposed and introduced in Hungary, known as the “Pécs School” — we gathered here on the Dudujka campus to implement it.

We have not expected rote answers, but smart questions that can be asked when confronted with facts and information. We have chosen to invite working partners for this task, and we are raising young talent. After all, the opinions of my colleagues and the experience of last year's final examinations show that our young colleagues are largely up to the task.

For if I may give you a guide here, it may sound strange. You have not shut yourselves away in an abstract, seemingly closed profession, but have become professionals who are constantly ready to renew themselves and who are capable of asking questions. In blood-spattered centuries, this has always been necessary. To question and argue ways, to make your own. This is what the song of the mediaeval universities can also teach, choosing a role model and inspiring the scholarly ethics of the chosen example you have made your own:

Catherinae collaudemus virtutum insignia
cordis ei presentemus et oris obsequia
ut ab ipsa reportemus aequa laudum premia

as adapted by our colleague Aron Petnek:

Defender of the humanities, whose footsteps we follow:
A native of Alexandria, hail, Saint Catherine!
Let your example be praised by heart, by mouth, guide us!

And what follows:

In dispute with the pagan thou hast defeated the wise men,
Thou hast listed the arguments with pure faith, pure reason.

After all, can you be satisfied? Ask yourselves. The most beautiful celebration can be an introspection. The most beautiful feast can be an introspection. Those who dare to do so after a successful final examination have not been educated for nothing.

We celebrate. Each according to their faith and conscience. I celebrate with you. I gratefully thank my wife for keeping me alive through the struggles of these years, and I thank God for choosing me for this task.

1997

Magnifice Domine Rector, Dear Public University Council Meeting, Professors, dear guests! And most of all, my young new colleagues!

With whom we have now entered history. After the novelty of the liberal arts degree conferred at the end of last year, today I emphasise continuity. Today I feel, for the first time, that it is natural and final that this will also happen here and now for humanities; and this will be repeated as long as there will be a university on this campus, in the Dudujka Valley.

Until the end of time, I hope. Per omnia saecula saeculorum.

That is why it is no longer news to me when I report that last academic year, almost like a Christmas present, the Hungarian Accreditation Committee unanimously decided that, from an academic point of view, we deserved the rank of a faculty. And on the very first day of this week, the Steering Committee for Education of the Scientific Council for Higher Education recommended — also unanimously — that we be granted the rank. By law, the Minister and the Council of Ministers make the final decision based on the proposals of these two advisory bodies. So we can hope: we hit home run. And I am not only emphasising our humanities note when I talk about the fact that we managed to organise the humanities section of the National Study Competition for Students in the spring.

We have been able to become equal members of the University, in that this year — also as a result of consistent academic work — the humanities doctoral programme has begun at our University, with two programmes at once: in the almost unique *textual and textological field*, and in the field of scholarship that examines the theoretical and historical models of *modern Hungarian literature*. At the beginning of the next academic year, the highest level of university qualification procedure will take place, with two habilitation reviews post-doctoral reviews. With all this, we have grown irrevocably: we meet all the legal criteria of a University Faculty.

“After so much misfortune, after so much strife”, these matters no longer — or not only — pertain to the humanities. When I speak of these matters, I greet the university as a whole, the unity of the *Universitas*. The name obliges each individual to work together as equals to secure the academic prestige of the University of Miskolc and its rank in the hierarchy of institutions of higher education and to take part in the always renewing labour. The value of this university will accompany you throughout your life. Today you enter the creative world of humanities graduates with the passport of a valuable degree from a prestigious university — some of you are already nationally known writers or poets. And we who are going to go on shaping this university after you have left — promise to enhance the reputation of our university for you too. May its light shine upon you. Keep your eyes on your Alma Mater. I hope you can continue to be proud of your successors.

“Not a multitude, but a soul ... makes miracles”, the poet says. I can quote this line because, as a member of the largest university in the country outside Budapest and currently the largest educational unit in our university, I do not call on superiority in numbers. Not that I couldn't! But I call on the spirit of unity that has prevailed through the than two and a half centuries of history of our university. As a humanities scholar, I respect the history of our university. I consider ourselves part of it. We have adopted its traditions, we have transformed them. We live, celebrate, struggle and hope together with all members of the university. We hold the torch together as we march through the city to show: “This is who we are.”

And we celebrate together at a series of degree ceremonies that have repeated almost daily in the same traditional ritual for two weeks now, for we are already so many that we could no longer fit in this hall at the same time. By dividing ourselves up, we want to do the same thing every day — according to the custom of our ancestors, in their memory.

Even though we humanities scholars have only been around for five years, we too are part of the 262-year-old past, just as the musicians who will join us will be part of it in the near future.

With the approval of all the faculties and departments of the University, I can welcome the graduates and newly qualified teachers of philosophy, who have received their degrees for the first time at our University. We have been waiting for them, we welcome them and congratulate them, just as we are already inviting and expecting our colleagues with majors in political science and cultural anthropology to graduate next year. And we would also like to welcome the high school teachers majoring in Hungarian Language and Literature and History. They have spared no effort or expense to add to their knowledge, most of them not quite young anymore. I congratulate you on your achievement. I have heard more than one exit exam candidate: it was good to listen to their thoughtful, well-formed answers based on true knowledge.

I salute all of you who today join the great stream of graduates of the University. The turn of your individual destiny is also another chapter in the history of the University. Selmecebánya (Banská Štiavnica)—Sopron—Miskolc; engineers, lawyers, economists, philosophers — you are now partakers, admirers, promoters and shapers of the history and traditions of the united University. For my part, I emphasise precisely this, the exemplary community and cooperation between teaching staff and students. I do not want to just show you my wishes. Living among you, I believe I speak reality.

The community also protects — even during storms and economic depressions. Even shared despair can be a form of encouragement. Today, this kind of protection is disappearing around you and even within you. From today onwards, you will have earned your living on your own. Which, I hope, despite all, is not wishful thinking. After all, last year's first graduates all got jobs. I wish you the same. Not only for you personally, but also for your surroundings. For the future of our sweet homeland.

We, humanities scholars, look to the future with a constant awareness of our past. And the past encourages us. This country and, more broadly, this land have been the scene of struggle for thousands of years. The wish to survive animated those who settled here. Today, “one thousand and one hundred years ask for life or death.” And here and now, two hundred and sixty-two years encourage us to survive. If you leave here: continue this tenacious struggle — for yourselves and for the future generations.

And when I speak of history, I would like to refer to tradition, which for hundreds and even thousands of years has summed up their achievements and thanked them for their successes.

During the torchlight procession, my new PhD students said: today's celebration is not really ours, but our parents'. Dear parents, dear colleagues, let us join the young graduates who have just received their degrees, let us praise the One from whom we derive our achievements according to our faiths and beliefs. Let me invite you all to a service of thanksgiving: at three of the clock in the afternoon in the Jesuit Church we can give thanks ecumenically for the past years. For being here and making it this far. If you feel the need, let us gather on the hill above our university, in the church that looks down on us from Avás, that stands out so naturally from the jungle of high-rise apartment buildings with its red bricks, and from which the welcoming bell rings so auspiciously to us at certain times of the day.

I hope that many of us will follow the millennia-old tradition. Those who follow the call of faith, with respect for the traditions of the past and with curious love. As we are here together, let us add to the minutes of togetherness, let us delay the time of farewell a little longer. Let us come together once more, together with your parents and colleagues, and I, accompanied by my most important helper and supporter, my wife, let me invite the leaders of our university and the students and graduates of the other faculties to say words of thanks together.

Creating and continuing an old and new tradition. I weave my own words into the traditional text with confidence, I might say intertextually: *Te Deum laudamus*: "Thee, O God, we praise."

Then, after a few well-deserved weeks of rest, we will be able to begin a new phase of our lives. Since you are liberal arts students, most of you will probably continue to teach at schools. I hope that you will sing and say the traditional *Veni Sancte* at the beginning of your school year with the same joyful heart with which we celebrate the *Te Deum* this afternoon. May the eternal cycle of good endings and happy new beginnings shape and mould your life so that you are successful and happy. I wish you successful and happy professional careers and successful and happy futures.

1998

Magnifice Domine Rector! Dear University Council, Professors, dear guests, and you, for whom we are all here on this festive occasion, Dear Graduating Students! Today is a unique moment for you, an event that can only happen once in your life: the opportunity to receive your first degree. It is not the first time that we have all participated in such an event, and I hope it will not be the last. Nevertheless, we always experience with you, your predecessors and future successors, this uplifting and always touching moment of uniqueness

In such cases, we always feel like a graduate: an important piece of the past is torn from us, and we look with confidence into the future with you. For which young person does not believe that they will be the great thinkers, educators, analysts or even the future leaders of the world? This was formulated by Lóránc Szabó in the title of his poem: “Children, the Future is Yours”. But history also shows that your elders, and your mentors, dream and hope with you, for our future is now interwoven with your successes. And at the moment of the handshake after graduation, when our eyes meet to say goodbye, we also ask: Will you succeed? And I’m sure: you must succeed. Must — “muszáj” in Hungarian: this sounds ugly in Hungarian but Jókai once canonised it because he saw it as an expression of willpower that knows nothing impossible.

But allow me now to go beyond this annual connection between students and teachers. As I say goodbye to you now, I say goodbye to you, my own first students, to those whom I first admitted here in Miskolc, whom I first shook hands with when I accepted you as students of the university five years ago. And with you, I celebrate the first *full* ending of our academic year at today’s graduation ceremony: the impressive parade of eight departments, each almost as big as a university faculty.

You have made through these five years of struggle. Proud, ready to fight, with youthful vigour and confidence, I have waited for you to open the academic year, to take the oath. I have asked the political scientists: which one of you will be my prime minister; the anthropologists: do you know what you are doing, do you know that in the part of the world from which we were formally and politically separated for a few decades, there is no university without an anthropology degree? I single you out from the other eight because you entered the life of the faculty at the same time as I did and this is the first time you have been awarded a degree in your mature major. As a degree programme in our country, we are still the only one here. May success accompany you on your future journey.

Of course, I also asked the others this and that during this handshake, because for me, each student is a world of their own, an individual who needs to be addressed in different ways. And today I ask myself whether in these five years I have succeeded in addressing each of you personally, in a way that is unique to you personally, at least once. For me, too, this exchange of glances in conjunction with a handshake is a tough examination of conscience. And have you all addressed me personally over the years? We award an alarming number of degrees in this quantitatively large faculty. Does the *quality* of intellectual collaboration also determine when we say goodbye? Are we saying goodbye to acquaintances or are we just part of a formal act?

For me, there is also a symbolic bridge that connects the handshake five years ago with the current farewell: at that time, one of the young men — who is now saying the words of farewell on your behalf — appeared, according to grandfatherly tradition, in the uniform that has since become the official uniform of our faculty at the suggestion of the student association. We wear it all, those who graduate and those who confer the degrees at this ceremony. I believe it can also give shape to the future and is not just formality.

We have lived together for five years; we have spent these five years of our lives on the only such purpose-built campus in our country. You and me, with my family, wife, granddaughter, doggie. It was natural for us to see each other every day. The five years I spent among you also gave me personal security, and that convinced me and my family to embrace this sense of belonging — not only out of a sense of duty, but also because of the eternal right to belong to this community. In that time, the faculty we could only dream of five years ago has grown and gained in stature. And in the meantime, we have experienced difficult years here. We have seen staff cuts, termed “rationalisation”, headwinds — even storms — that threatened the university as a whole, and sometimes the gruelling and destructive effects of personal conflicts or simply helplessness. The former fighter who struggled as a young man five years ago is now an old man striving for wisdom. But he sees more and more clearly that it was worth fighting for you and with you all these years. Thank you for convincing me that you are worth fighting for and living for. Yours was a very good year, outstanding by comparison. Academically, the quality of the exit exams and the high standards at the recent PhD admissions convinced me of this. Along the way, I wished that your descendants could rise to this intellectual level.

Now, at last, I am glad. You will start your careers as you leave a university that has rejuvenated with ambitious plans and aiming at the great renewal of tradition. Let me cite Shakespeare’s lines:

Now is the winter of our discontent
Made glorious summer by this sun of York...

Let’s forget the winter of our discontent and believe that the sunshine of York will henceforth beam on our Alma Mater. I ask God’s blessing to assist you in your further journey in life and to make the University and the Faculty flourish in the time to come through the realisation of great plans. For the current prestige of the University passes on to the generations of its students, just as the personal success of its graduates shines back on us and strengthens us.

I believe, as I have for the past five years, in the future: we will continue to belong together; without each other we can only be less. Shall we say goodbye? I said welcome five years ago, now I say goodbye to the class of 1998, and I thank you for what you have given me.

1999

Magnifice Domine Rector! Professors, Dear Guests, Parents, and most of all — my young, new colleagues!

Recently, the director of our recently founded first faculty institute approached me with an invitation that sounded very sweet to my ears: the lecturers of the five departments think that they want a short, informal gathering, which is why we will be together. And he said all this at the house party of one of my closest colleagues who was celebrating his recent professorship and his fiftieth birthday. Also present was my closest friend, an internationally renowned lecturer at our faculty, who used to invite most of our lecturers for New Year's Eve. I also remembered that our other senior lecturer had introduced the dear New World custom to us by holding an annual "open house" on his birthday and inviting his colleagues for a friendly chat.

It all seemed natural to me. After all, while living here in Dormitory 6, my wife and I lived in the community of students and lecturers. For a long time I thought that this was all more of an opportunity offered by the campus, an enviable example of the cohesion of the students living here and the colleagues visiting us. The moment I was invited, I realised that in the meantime a community has been created that connects the so-called "intercity train professors" with Miskolc and with each other. An ensemble of colleagues living in Miskolc and travelling to Miskolc has emerged at the occasional informal meetings of friends, creating a real campus for our faculty members. At these personal, informal gatherings, a team of senior lecturers discuss their official and private affairs. Not only in a closed circle, but also in each other's presence, from various disciplines and levels of officiality.

I cannot speak about all this without emotion. After all, there have been liberal arts students and faculty on this campus for less than a decade. Not long ago we were only calculating to see if we were sufficient for accreditation, and now, at this fourth graduation ceremony, I can already speak of a community purposefully united in love.

Of course, the events of one or two tenders emphasising rivalry can creep into the developing harmony as loud dissonances, but let me celebrate the much more important event, the formation of the faculty, and the togetherness. In 1993, when the then Rector of the University brought me back to this city for the honourable assignment of establishing the Faculty of Arts, I felt as if I were walking hand in hand with destiny and as if my whole life so far had only been a preparation for this test. In the meantime, I can say that in addition to the helpfulness of our students, we have a faculty whose members feel not only as guests, but also as persons instrumental to creating a school, who find a home and a vocation here.

In this uplifting moment of reckoning, let me celebrate the academic and pedagogical achievement with which the new faculty has found universal perspectives in the life of Miskolc.

The programme and practise of the school's foundation are now linked to the regional conditions, to the challenges of the *genius loci*, the spirit of the place.

Perhaps the figure I have drawn, not for the first time, can be a simplified metaphor: the voluntary parable of the initial of the town of Miskolc. I spoke about it in the solemn atmosphere of the "ring inauguration", but I also emphasised it more than once during informal meetings. We learned in primary school that the M, or should I say the letter "Miskolc", has three "legs". Let me remind you of the academic workshops that have now "inhabited" this trinity on the part of the humanities.

Following the historical chronology, I would like to mention first the prehistory, the process of researching the "Szeleta" culture, which connects our researches from Haifa to Cro Magnon in studying the oldest past of mankind. But let's jump. One of the crucial centres of the greatest diplomatic, economic and political historical events of the Middle Ages was the "Castle of the Queens", Diósgyőr, which connected the waters of three seas in Central Europe and whose twin brother can be admired in Naples, where recently one of the keynote lectures of the World Congress of Hungarian Studies was given by one of our professors. He heads our doctoral programme, and besides his name at the conference in all languages: a professor of the University of Miskolc. The present cultural enterprise of the city is interwoven with this history. The first volume of a series of monographs about the city, which contains work by our faculty members, was edited by our founding professor, who will soon receive an honorary fellowship. And one of our colleague's books mentioned in the introduction is also about the castle of Diósgyőr. But let's jump even further, to modern times. In 1900, in one of the noisy streets of this city, perhaps the greatest poet of this century was born. His centenary we will celebrate next year. We study and edit the documentation of his life and his works in the academic research centre established at our university.

All this is, of course, only the tip of the iceberg. Finally, I would like to add that three of our staff members, a professor, and associate professor and an adjunct will give a series of lectures on our saints of the House of Árpád at a conferences of mediaeval studies in Leeds. Just as His Holiness the Pope recently canonised a member of the medieval Hungarian royal family of Árpád. But our eight faculty department, each weighted in terms of quantity and quality, can boast countless similar results. In the great test of our university's introspection and intellectual self-realisation, we have organised the deservedly famous conferences of the series of events "50 years in Miskolc" and will do so again in the coming semester. Finally, I would like to inform you that one of our vice-deans recently received the city's academic recognition, the Otto Herman Award, and our other vice-dean received the Grand Prize of the Hungarian Accreditation Committee (HAC).

I would also like to add that as of September, in addition to the two doctoral schools that have been active in the faculty, a third programme in the field of philosophy of science will be launched. And at this moment, before the end of the academic year, I received the official notification that our new sub-programme, political science, has been accredited by the HAC.

Why am I talking about it at the closing of the academic year? Because I am now in a position to give a factual answer to the excuse given by the Ministry's investigator when the "Bokros package" was adopted: the rank of a faculty also requires academic workshops that create schools. Not one such workshop has been established at our faculty but several of them. The contribution of students has been instrumental: our recently appointed teaching assistants come from our first graduates. Those who have learnt the love of the academic profession and prepare themselves for their future vocation.

But let me not only speak of them, the most excellent or the luckiest. All those who graduated here have got a job so far. They come back and tell us about their careers, ask for advice, and enroll in our PhD programmes. A humanities degree may not bring the highest earnings today. But the teachers are indispensable for the future of the nation. The next and future generations will be in your hands. To educate them, to prepare them to love one another: that will be *your* special assignment.

My young friends who graduate today! Those who stay in our city and those who prepare further away from us! You can proudly present your degree certificates. The more than 260-year old university, which now certifies the results of your work, has been at home for half a century in a city that, together with its university, lives in an age of great hopes. A fortunate coincidence: the leaders of the city and university have developed a new vision for the future of the city and its university. It is no coincidence that you have chosen the Mayor as *your* honorary classmate. This honour is an affirmation and a further encouragement, as you said.

Minutes earlier, he had fought an important battle at the Regional Development Committee meeting. After the torchlight procession called „the Salamander”, I said goodbye to him with the words of Amneris: „Return victorious.” I am delighted that our Mayor, *your* Honourary Fellow, is back in time for our ceremony.

A few years ago, I lured my fellow academic staff members and guests to Tapolca. Even though Miskolc is the ugliest town in the country, believe me, this town has the most beautiful neighbourhood. Since then, during the years of your studies, the city has changed its face: it has become beautiful, its air has become cleaner and in its spirit it became an academic and student hub.

Now that we all say *Te Deum*, spoken or unspoken, I hope for God's blessings on your careers as well as on your old colleague from Dormitory 6 — on me and my wife for the remaining years.

And let me add in parting, looking back on our years together: I am grateful that you were citizens of a university that today not only lives on its past, but can also say on the basis of its present achievements: even if this city and its university exist for another thousand years, people should remember this era in this way: “You have shown what you are worth!”

2000

Magnifice Domine Rector, Professors, our distinguished guests, and above all the protagonists and celebrants of today’s meeting of the University Council: graduating liberal arts students, future teachers and their parents!

The degree certificates we are awarding this year have a special distinguishing feature. Date of issue: Year 2000. The last chapter of the second millennium of Christianity, which has shaped European culture. It is also the thousandth anniversary of Hungarian statehood, which was founded in the spirit of Christianity. The symbolism of this anniversary is the happy personal meeting with the honorary fellows proposed by our school, which underlines precisely this celebration. Professor Jerzy Wirozumski deals with the connection of Hungarians with Christianity from the beginnings, among other things as a monographer of Saint Kinga, the recently canonised princess of the House of Árpád. Professor Tõnu Seilenthal, as the ambassador of the Finno-Ugric ethnic family, which includes Hungarians, and as the president of this year’s Finno-Ugric World Congress, draws our attention to the origins, brings the greetings of the Estonian people and Estonian culture. From the moment of the foundation of this faculty, he has sent his students here and lovingly welcomed our students, organising comparative conferences.

And while we are together from perhaps the most weathered corners of Europe, let me remind you of the moment we all experienced together in the early nineties, in 1991, when we were in the period of regime change. That was only a few years ago — but thank God, historical eras separate us. When His Holiness, the head of the Catholic Church, John Paul II, who had risen from the Archdiocese of Krakow to the papal dignity, was in Hungary — at the moment of the bold declaration of freedom of the small Estonian people — the Iron Curtain showed its reality for the last time. The image of the news spread all over the world: Soviet commandos wanted to forcibly occupy the broadcasting tower of the television proclaiming national freedom. It was the first request of my Estonian friends when I later came to their now free country that I should make a pilgrimage to the iron gate on either side of which sat the sacrificial defenders of freedom and the black-masked devils of tyranny.

There, at that iron gate, the battle was symbolically decided: the Central European states, which had been forced into the role of puppets for decades, could return as equal members of the Christian world to their place they had occupied for a thousand years. The opportunity was there to set right the time that had been out of joint. Both our guests and our people can enter the new millennium with their heads held high. “Beata, quae credidisti” — I can quote the text from the Gospel of Luke (1:45), sent to my wife as a handwritten greeting by John Paul pastor pastorum secundus at Christmas 1987.

Dear students, the worth of your degree, with which you can now greet the coming millennium, is for the new millennium, and you will be able to hold your own in it. Thousands of years of humanities, philosophy, art and faith send a message to the future through you.

Degree in humanities. The word has a particularly noble ring in today’s pragmatic world. “The whole world is for sale”, sings Mephisto sarcastically. What is the price? How much does it cost? It’s the first question in any negotiation. The humanities, culture — no matter how much you want to reduce it to material returns — do not have a price and cannot have one. The value that, for example, the Wawel in Krakow, the classicist majesty of the building of the University of Tartu, or even the castles of Diósgyőr and Sárospatak mean to the nation and the cultural heritage of the world cannot be expressed in monetary terms. The degree we have just awarded may not open the way to the most lucrative jobs for you. But the vocation for which your studies here have prepared you is the guarantee of independence of spirit. History proves that this has been the case ever since man has lived on this earth. And I hope that it will also be so in the future, forever. Make sure that this spiritual independence, this freedom to speak your mind, is not for sale. The human spirit should never be up for sale. Unknown or known influences and foundations may seek power as a material force. Revealing the facts of history, weaving philosophy, the world of art is not the most lucrative career wherever you look in the wide world — let us face it — and small incomes are always transparent in any economic analysis. They represent a small percentage — but do not let that depress you. Because at it is our profession that feeds the consciousness of humanity as a whole. We are also in the year of the Olympic Games: the winners are greeted with the national anthem. Who created the anthems? Poets, composers. One of the lecturers in our faculty in particular explains in his forthcoming book what these anthems have meant, especially in this weatherbeaten region, to awaken the consciousness of the peoples and express their desire for freedom. The spirit cannot be bought. But the civic community is obliged to support it, precisely for the sake of its own prestige. It enhances itself by introducing culture and the humanities.

Let me connect my concluding story with this thought. The year 2000 is also the personal celebration of the faculty. 100 in the national 1000 and in the year 2000 of Christianity. One of the most important Hungarian poets, Lőrinc Szabó, was born in our city. A series of local, national and, I can say, global events celebrate the value of his poetry. On this occasion we can also celebrate our own achievements through his person. We were able to establish the first research facility of our faculty with support from the Hungarian Academy to study his work, and our faculty organised its first conference in the great hall of the Hungarian Academy. When the General Secretary visited us for the first time and looked at the building of the former TÜKI, he said, smiling satisfied: “It is a miracle that a Faculty of Humanities thrives at this technical university.” In the great hall of the Academy at Roosevelt Square in Budapest, our Rector said that he could be proud of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Miskolc in the academic life.

Dear students, dear guests! Do not think that I am here to praise a single department — Hungarian language and literature — in my farewell speech. We have conferred 546 degrees today. In eight departments. The eight departments are as independent of each other as if they formed eight independent schools: both in terms of the number of graduates and the number of lecturers. And I have not even mentioned the teacher training programmes associated with each major, which is also part of the faculty accreditation and consequently (as you have learned) of the exit examination.

In the life of our university, the past year was already an anniversary year. The anniversary of the establishing of the university in Miskolc. The anniversary also brought out the best of the individual disciplines in our degree programmes. Conferences were held almost weekly on the campus and at headquarter of the Hungarian Academy, where historians, philosophers, political scientists, anthropologists, sociologists, linguists, and industrial historians held discussions with their domestic and foreign colleagues. The conference proceedings summarise the academic achievements of the university’s youngest faculty.

While the spirit is not tied to a place but to the established school, and thus our university can measure its existence over centuries against the “Scola” of Sárospatak and the “Mining School” of Selmec (Štiavnica), its current connection to the region and the city is also crucial. Above all, if the region and the city want us to be here, they confirm our aspirations. Well, last week’s torchlight parade, the “Salamander”, sanctioned by city tradition, had the largest turnout ever. Students from the six faculties marched together, a sign of friendship within the university. Never before have had so many marched — both former and prospective graduates. References to various corners of the city also cropped up in the farewell speeches. It’s the testament: our students have inhabited this city. We have always known that Sárospatak is an academic town. But now Miskolc has also shown itself to be an academic town. This was symbolised by the crowd of students marching from the Town Hall to the Petőfi statue.

Dear graduates, in your life you will always be able to say in the new millennium: Miskolc has grown into a worthy academic city. You lived in this city. Those who stay among us should live with this awareness, those who leave should remember it. The degree Mayor of our city, who honoured your graduation ceremony with his presence. Let me present them the latest achievement of the Lóránc Szabó Research Unit, the book published for the Book Week, the volume of correspondence, which documents the love between Lóránc Szabó and Erzsébet Vékesné Korzáti.

Related to that, let me get a little personal. At the time of the Bokros package, when the faculty that had not yet been established was already mutilated and pruned, the ministerial commissioner said: “You have created a nationally recognized research centre in Pécs at that time, so why not try it here?” “Are you making fun of me?” I said. I knew that I had such colleagues that each of our departments would build its own research centre, even if it was truncated.

Dear students, now with a degree in your hands — My Colleagues! These research centres increase the value of your degrees. I hope you (and I) will educate our future faculty members. Therefore, thanking God for our achievements, I present the visible symbol of our work to the head of the university and the city as if it were our joint degree. At the same time, I ask God’s blessing on the work and lives of each of us.

Closing the academic year in Dudujka, 2001

1. After eight years

“Now we say goodbye and leave, our time is up”, you sang, and I sang with you. Because I’m saying goodbye too. But you leave preparing for life, and I leave preparing for a different kind of goodbye. The goal is in front of you: the course of your careers. The words of my farewell were formulated by — for me — the greatest Hungarian poet, Endre Ady:

Should we stop now,
Not the goal, not the course:
It is the stupidest comedy in the world,
Alas, we get old, we get old, we get old.

Let me console you: after Endre Ady had sent his poem to Gyula Krúdy, when he wrote this, a significant part of his work still lay ahead of him. Certainly, he also had the story of his sufferings before him.

Who knows what our fate will bring? One thing is certain: “The word of the law shall be sacred.” After the age of sixty-five, no professor can hold a university post. Except one: the most important one, of teaching.

What can I say as I’m saying goodbye as head of the arts faculty? While taking stock of the past, I came across a text: “CONCEPT. On the Management of the Institute of Humanities of the University of Miskolc.” Instead of moving words, I chose the boldest: I read out the text of a fifty-seven year old young man, who set about founding a school of humanities:

“What was a disadvantage of the *Heavy Industry University of Miskolc* — it is an advantage of the *University of Miskolc*: its geographical location between Tapolca and the city. In the old cumbersome transport conditions this was a separating factor, and today public transport has already integrated the campus into the city. Although it is located in the city, it also forms its own entity: it is the only Hungarian university organised in a campus. This can be a great challenge for both the dignitaries and the faculty: to build their organisation in its remoteness and to ensure a harmonious interaction with the cultural institutions of the city.

(If, as far as I can remember, a technical oriented university may have been a factor in the musical, theatrical and artistic life of the city under much harsher conditions, now with a humanities faculty we have a much better chance of continuing this tradition and building new relationships.)

My personal memory, one of the “memorable” moments of my life, was when in 1967, accompanied by Professor Zenó Terplán, I welcomed László Németh, one of the great minds of the century, within the walls of this university. It was a shared musical and cultural interest with several renowned professors of the “old” university that made us become friends.

I recall László Németh’s name not only out of nostalgia, but also because of the challenge that this *campus* can offer. He was a consistent advocate of the principle that the humanities can only be meaningfully approached in conjunction with the natural sciences. I understand that moving across disciplines is already in practised. I for one would not only allow it, but would be happy to organise it. (From basic IT skills to basic knowledge of physics, mathematics, etc., which are essential for a humanities student these days. And vice versa: I would be happy to offer lectures or even courses to students of any faculty on topics of their choice, with lecturers of their choice.)

The new location of the Faculty of Humanities in the former TŰKI building has a similar advantage: switching between courses is not only desirable but would also earn credits, and I strongly support it. (I usually complain about the major shortcoming of the University of Pécs that the departments of literature and history are located in two far-flung parts of the city, making cooperation at the level of staff and students almost impossible.) In this context, the role of language courses will increase: I would like to require that liberal arts students gain experience in the use of at least two languages during the five years and, on this basis, demonstrate their professional skills in their final thesis.

In all my previous management positions (as editor, head of a museum department, head of the literature department) I have this principle: preparation of decisions based on joint discussion and consensus. As far as the Institute is concerned, I have so far insisted on this as head of department, and as head of the institute I will ensure *the independence of the departments under the guidance of competent academics*.

As for my plans: I want to implement a narrower, pragmatic programme but with a broader vision. The most important and narrowest task is to transform the Institute into a Faculty. This is not a formality: until then, we cannot confer doctoral degrees, and every minute of delay can lead to decades of setback. Plans for the accreditation of doctoral degrees are being worked out and grant applications are being prepared.

To represent an acceptable academic level in the liberal arts, a sufficient number of accredited faculty members is needed. In order for our own university to produce the necessary faculty, we must continue to employ part-time faculty members who selflessly train their junior colleagues. For this reason, I want to employ lecturers who may be able to stay here for a few days every week. We need to create suitable accommodation conditions within the campus, among the students. When I decided to adopt a similar lifestyle a few years ago, I received an encouraging example from the excellent part-time faculty of the “old” university.

A quick look at the list of lecturers gave me encouragement. In each of the humanities faculties of the country, I saw familiar names whose works I have used in my previous research. In the following, I would like to bring here colleagues from the academic institutes, because it is easier for them to spend time away from their full-time job, especially during examination periods, and education can be a favourable confirmation for their theoretical work.

The Institute of Humanities urgently needs to be included in the academic “traffic”. The participation of our colleagues at conferences and the OTDK ranking of our students urgently needs to be addressed.

As lecturers I’ll invite the best of the professions who teach with *different* approaches and according to different methods. They should also know about us, and our students should get to know them up close. In this respect, the narrower programme focuses on domestic staff, the broader one on international excellence. (To give an example from my narrower metier: under the leadership of my colleague László Ferenczi, we organise the Department of Comparative Literary History, which — among other things through AILC — establishes contact with the most important comparative literature centres in the world, organises our supply of the latest literature through donations, and later, after providing financial conditions, the exchange of staff and students and then joint doctorates.)

As part of the narrower programme, I move the editorial board of the long-standing journal *Irodalomtörténet*, which has been renewed under my editorship since this year (1993) and is funded by the Hungarian Academy to the university; as of the broader programme, I organise a multilingual journal on Historical, Linguistic and Comparative Literary History with an international editorial board. (Here is the blueprint for the recently launched *Praehistoria*, *Modern Filológiai Közlemények* and *Irodalomtudomány*.)

My principle: to improve the quality of teaching by involving as many lecturers as possible, preferably at professorial level, with different approaches, methods and personalities. Not as heads of department, but “only” as lecturers. So they do not need assistant teachers or secretaries, but students to train. They give the future faculty the prestige and the name. When I took over my literature department at the University of Pécs years ago, I promised and I kept my promise: I would only bring colleagues of my level or even better. I have nothing to fear, nothing to be jealous of. Besides, a good team is not just a question of money — of course it is! —, but good academics attract each other. And I am honoured to have more and more renowned colleagues around me who are also liked by the students.

At the same time, we have to educate the prospective academics. By organising ourselves into a faculty, we launch doctoral training, then we can employ postdoctoral students. Until then, we also need to make seminar work more difficult at a kind of “assistant professor” level. I would very much like our teaching assistants and assistant professors not to see this level as the “end of the line”, because that could mean the death of the faculty. For my part, and I commend this to all my colleagues, I want to do all I can to ensure the professional development of our staff. I would also like to publish the results of the research centre in *Irodalomtörténet* and in the planned foreign-language journal of the Faculty (just as I have tried from the beginning to introduce *Irodalomtörténet* as a forum for young academics).

And a few more personal notes. I was a pupil in Miskolc from the second grade of secondary school, later a teacher and editor. (Now, in November 2001, it will be exactly half a century since my feet first touched the land of Miskolc.) My wife graduated from this university. I would like to serve the university of this town with my experience and in my managerial capacity. When the Rector approached me, I thought that I would be able to fulfil this honourable but very difficult and complicated task. At the same time, I asked to be post because of rank or title, but to meet this great intellectual challenge with my experience and organisational skills. But the years will pass, and I hope that we will succeed in building a young team permanently attached to the University: let them continue what we are now beginning, just as I have carried on the work of my mentors and those who already work here. And I intend to stay here and continue teaching Hungarian literature, one of whose classics was born in this very city.

I want to spend the next phase of my life within these beautifully designed walls (where my uncle Jenő Barcsay's mosaic adorns the foyer of the imposing library and my friend Mihály Schéner, a painter, promises me the free design of a wall in the new building).

From here I intend to make the work of Zoltán Bay's classmate and best friend Lőrinc Szabó, who has already found a home at this university, accessible to the public and to make my department the centre of Lőrinc Szabó research. Not alone, not on my won: together with the researchers I — and we — have trained."

Budapest, 5 May 1993. Signed: Lóránt Kabdebó. Sentences written eight years ago! Addressed to Ferenc Kovács, the Rector.

And now I stand here, with you and among you. I myself am a recent graduate. "After so much bad luck, after so much strife." I thank God with a cheerful heart for helping me to achieve all that I had set out to do. I also want to thank my wife who gave up an internationally fulfilling career as a journalist and writer to be my partner in this task. And I remember my colleagues who perished during the long struggle, János Gárdus, Ernő, Gusztáv Heckenast, Márta Fügedi and Jácint Bodóné. I am grateful to all the lecturers of the faculty for their years together, to list their names could take another ceremony. But let me mention the name of Béla Mang, the Secretary General of the University, who has stood by me with his work in the foundation and with his selfless help to this day, and whom I usually refer to as the Honorary Dean of our Faculty this.

And now, as I hand over the chain of deanship to my successor, my faithful friend to the end, I wish that each of my successors, when he passes on the badge of dignity, will face the "concept" formulated for him with the same serenity as I can now look back on the beginning here among you, before my companions and witnesses. I wish that time may turn the winter of our discontent into a glorious summer and that our faculty may continue to develop in material prosperity. And I hope that Master Schéner's *panneau* prepared and displayed in the Dean's Office, will one day hang on the wall in the Faculty Hall.

For all this, I ask God's help for our descendants. The tradition of thanksgiving has sanctified him in the words: *Te Deum laudamus*.

2. Our honorary fellow: Magda Szabó

On the proposal of the Chair of Comparative World Literature and Art History and the Chair of Modern Hungarian Literary History, the Council of the Faculty of Humanities proposes that Magda Szabó, who graduated from the Count Tisza István University of Debrecen as a teacher of Hungarian and Latin and received her doctorate in Latin there in 1943, an honorary doctorate from the Reformed Theological Academy of Debrecen, a member of the Széchenyi Academy of Literature and Art, and in 1992 received the Hungarian Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Getz Corporation. The honorary citizen of Debrecen, the Kossuth Prize-winning writer and creator of Hungarian literature on a classical scale, should be awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Miskolc.

By way of justification, let me read out the text of the proposal sent to the Nobel Prize Committee by the Széchenyi Academy of Literature and Art, which I myself formulated: “The message of Magda Szabó, the Central European writer, raises a unique problem. In a human being torn from his traditions by means of power and forced by manipulated means, she constantly registers the reordering of moral tradition brought about by the force of the laws of nature. The Calvinist-educated writer likes to show every element of human cultivation by tracing the mental reconstructions of her protagonists.

A given political situation (the contrast between Christianity and modern totalitarian dictatorships) shapes her stories, and yet her novels are adaptable to all social and historical contexts and cultures today. In the face of spiritual decay, any human being can develop a suggestive compulsion to introspection: moral needs always blossom in her stories. This awakening of consciousness built into accurate stories valid everywhere in the world.

Magda Szabó (born 1917) is one of the outstanding writers of Hungarian literature, who has made a lasting contribution in all genres of fiction and in literary history, even by international standards.

She began as a poet, and she is one of the successful Hungarian playwrights of recent decades. Her essays open up new horizons in the examination of the Hungarian literary tradition. Her travel memoirs are a happy interweaving of personal experience and cultural-historical interest. Beyond that, she is an expert translator of Latin antiquity and of Shakespeare and — although she is regarded at home and abroad as a prose writer par excellence. Her novels have been published in 34 countries, in English, German, Russian, French, Dutch, Italian, Danish, Polish, Spanish, Finnish, Turkish and Japanese, some of them with several translations in the same language (like *The Door* [*Az ajtó*] in German). According to surveys, she is one of the most widely read Hungarian writers.

She follows a tradition that sees the writer’s existence as morally determined. The phenomena she observes and perceives pose a moral challenge for her, transforming her indignation into stories. In the novels she wrote at the beginning of her career secretly during the years of the Rákosi dictatorship (*Fresco* [*Freskó*], published in 1958, *The Deer*, 1959), moral passion becomes an aesthetic achievement. Over the decades, traditional realist representations have morphed into a continuous confrontation of personality and history, a demonstration of the presence of the past in the present (*Old Well* [*Ókút*], 1972, *Old-fashioned Story* [*Régimódi történet*], 1977), then an inner introspection that changes the horizon (*The Door*, 1987) and a reckoning with history that leaves us vulnerable (*The Moment* [*A pillanat*], 1990), which also makes use of the devices of postmodernism. Previously, there was an archaic, moral archetype behind every story.

All this could only be related in an elevated style. But Magda Szabó had had enough of history. And if there is no history, then every story can be told in as many ways as many characters it has, and it has as many readings as readers. In her last two novels she reflects on this in tragic and ironic ways. In her novel *The Door*, Magda Szabó went from heroic struggles with history to depicting a moral phenomenon that exists outside history. But in her novel *The Moment*, she goes further. She twists history in the novel, which unmasks the tactics of self-legitimation by those in power. Inverting the *Aeneid*, she takes cruel revenge on power: she laughs at it. She creates a formula that exposes not only the mendacious world, but also all the lies and external and internal constraints that degrade human dignity. She looks back on history with bitter hatred and in a seemingly playful style. The poetic joy of creating the novel and the author's reawakened joy in its writing is the characteristic tone of the novel: she takes victory over hell.

The lonely heroine of *The Door* comes into contact with all the historical changes of the last century and with a multitude of people. Yet, she retains her human integrity; she rises with dignity above all the tragic and humiliating situations. Contrary to legend, Creusa, the heroine in *The Moment*, does not perish in Troy. She kills her husband, Aeneas, and lives through her husband's adventures. The story of a woman reliving the life of the seductive hero. She becomes a cruel, rational adventurer, a determined, triumphant deceiver and an unhappy woman. The moment, also mentioned in the title of the novel, is when fate offers one the opportunity to transform their regular, measured, miserable life into a successful story.

But the circumstances are such that this moment offers no sense of wholeness, no personal fulfilment, but only a kind of triumphal loophole. In return, she must bear misfortune. Because she can only succeed by seeing other people as tools, despising them, taking advantage of them and doing something other than what she wants. The woman who longs for love has to play a man who can never love. And finally she despises both her means and herself. Hell is not the underworld where the legendary Aeneas sought her, but it is in the liberated Creusa, for whom every success is also a failure.

Magda Szabó's work is associated with the most important rhetorical achievements of the century. It is both the fulfilment and the liberation of the epic form. The elevated tone and the experience of bitter disillusionment are replaced by the elemental serenity that pervades the work: the joy felt over the freedom to play, over the deconstruction of history over putting an end to a bitter story. In her earlier novels, she fights out the one's struggle for freedom under the realistic mask of heroines who have mythical backgrounds. Later she veils the bitterness with cheerful, postmodern play. In both rhetorical modes, she organises the hope of reordering the personality through introspection into a work of art."

In addition, the journal *Irodalomtörténet* edited at the University of Miskolc prepared a special issue for Magda Szabó's 80th birthday, which was presented to her at the festive welcome of the Hungarian Academy. Her biographical portrait was written by a professor of our faculty for the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* published by Gale Research in Detroit. Her monograph, which will appear in parallel with the series on her work published by Europa Publishing House, is being written by the director of the doctoral school of our faculty. She has facilitated the process of our becoming a humanities school through her wise advice in countless conversations.

Due to their other occupations, the writer Árpád Göncz, former President of the Republic, and Domonkos Kosáry, academician, former President of the Hungarian Academy, could not attend our ceremony. Árpád Göncz sent his congratulations by telegram.³ Academician Kosáry sent his congratulations in a letter.⁴

³ University of Miskolc
Faculty of Humanities Mr. Lóránt Kabdebó, Dean

Dear Mr. Dean, dear friends!

I am very sorry that, as I have been abroad for nearly a week, I will not be able to attend your university's celebration immediately after my arrival. Let me mention by way of an apology that, as part of the Europe Days, I participated at a Hungarian ceremony at the University of Passau, a higher education institution that not only provided a real home for Hungarian culture for a time, but is also involved in the education of Hungarian students.

Even though I cannot be present, I want you all to feel that I am with you in spirit: I am pleased that the University of Miskolc has awarded Magda Szabó an honorary fellowship in recognition of her work in literary studies and fiction. I could hardly think of another writer or artist more worthy of an honorary degree than Magda Szabó. We are all admirers of her work, and her art has shaped the entire cultural life of the country, and we can be proud that we, as her contemporaries, were also allowed to get to know the magic of his person.

Therefore, I ask both Magda Szabó and you to consider my letter as a sign of my presence in thought. With warm and friendly greetings: Árpád Göncz, Budapest, 27 June 2001.

⁴ Domokos Kosary
Former President, Hungarian Academy, Institute of History, HAS
Budapest, 13 June 2001.

Mr. Lóránt Kabdebó professor, dean Miskolc
University of Miskolc
Faculty of Humanities Dear friend,

I gratefully accepted the invitation of the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Miskolc to attend the annual graduation ceremony on 29 June, at which the writer Magda Szabó will be awarded an honorary doctorate. I am very happy that this award will take place. I believe it is justified. Unfortunately, I will not be able to travel to Miskolc at this time, but I will be there in my thoughts. Please convey my sincere congratulations to Magda Szabó and the Faculty of Humanities.

Sincerely, Domokos Kosary

This was the last graduation ceremony I presided over. According to the tradition of the University of Miskolc, the Rector and the Deans dressed in robes march out. I broke with this tradition and by breaking it I emphasised its importance. Before we left, I went down to my successor, who was sitting in the front row and had already been elected and appointed at my suggestion. I took the dean's chain off my neck and hung it around the neck of Professor József Bessenyei, who had already received the title of professor during his years at our arts faculty. Then I returned to the pulpit, took off the dean's gown, folded it neatly and placed it on the armrest of the chair. I walked behind my splendidly dressed companions in the uniform of the arts faculty, the so-called "Bocskai" suit. Magda Szabó, a writer who knows so much about theatre, remarked in Tapolca, in the former Financial Resort, at present run by my student Pali Dicsuk, where we used to hold our ceremonial receptions and conferences: "You staged your exit like a scene in one of Shakespeare's history plays." She was not aware that was what I was originally referring to in my first speech, in the autumn of 1993.

And I did all this so that when I had left Marianne before the ceremony began, she was happily chatting with Magda Szabó in the council chamber. When I marched in and took my seat, her seat in the front row was empty. What could have happened? It was only during the degree ceremony that a note from Dr Sára Felszeghi reached me: "Marica had broken her ankle on the stairs and I had taken her to hospital."

Let's say it with Shakespeare: "All's ell that ends well." A taxi took her to the reception in Tapolca with her leg already in a cast, and one of my fellow professors and I took her upstairs in our arms. That's how the whole story goes.

(Z. H.) What talents did you need to get through all that?

(L. K.) My father had a hundred volumes of Jókai! I started reading them out of boredom, but then I learned a lot from his novels. I grew up on Jókai. My yardstick, my sense of orientation in the world, is the first volume of *One God (Egy az Isten)*, the Roman revolutionary scenes, and *György Fráter (Fráter György)*, which is not only an exemplary work on politics and history, but also a great achievement in historical fiction. Jókai never writes about triumphant heroes, but about politicians who balance between opposing forces to ensure the *survival* of the nation. Their triumph is precisely the outcome of this unrewarding role: the unspectacular result. Whoever wants to be a balancing force between two extremes will sooner or later be destroyed by opposing forces. Either this or that. And no one cries for them. Like György Fráter, Mihály Teleki or Rossi.

The figure of the latter has stuck with me since my youth — not even his figure, but the consequence of his role. As Jókai showed in the self-ironic plot. I could not even remember his name, so I had to pick it out of the pages of *One God*. Let me quote Jókai: "The Pope invited Rossi into the government! The brave, the wise, the patriot of pure character, who cannot be said to be either a poisoner or a bandit. Who neither destroys the altar nor betrays freedom. Who does not want to kill or plunder, but wants to reconcile, enlighten and establish prosperity, the will to work and noble

virtues among his people. Who belongs neither to the ten kinds of reactionary nor to the twenty kinds of radical parties, and therefore all thirty are mad at him.”

Of course, Jókai’s irony weighs precisely in this: peacemakers cannot survive their initiative either in triumph (in Rossi’s Rome) or in failure (in post-Mohács Hungary), not even in times of some kind of compromise (in Transylvania, where the schism was resolved):

“No one needed reconciliation then: no one believed in peace.” “What about Rossi? The murdered Rossi? — There was no more talk of him in the chronicles. In the great sea time, from yesterday to today, his name was completely forgotten. He got in everyone’s way: both the revolution and the counter-revolution. (A selfless citizen who loves his country!) He was the thread on which the sword of Damocles hung. When the sword has fallen, who will remember the thread that was cut?”

This model must have taken root in me too, because it was inspired by years of reading Jókai. At best, in *One God* it crystallised and was formulated lyrically, in the novel’s self-ironic plot structure.

Models? Sooner or later, in Jókai’s novels this becomes a model of private life: this is how Jenő Baradlay would want to live, and this is how Adorján Manassé acts.

“My vocation is to appease. Therefore I hasten home to my brothers.” “Are you behaving like Rossi?” “And maybe I will come to the fate of Rossi... But I will try. The model is contagious. Especially of the dead ones.”

Today it is also no longer fashionable to refer to József Darvas, but he has tried to make amends for his past in the drama *Not On the Map* (*A térképen nem található*), which premiered in Miskolc. It recalled my basic experience of character formation as a teenager when the protagonist describes himself thus: “Well, you old compromiser!” That’s what I was being told, all the time, during my years as dean, the way like the tinnitus I’m having lately.

You see, we are not a world power that can stand traumas — to cite the Roman examples — like Marius, Sulla or Gracchus, not to mention the bloody battles of the Triumvirates. There are not so many of us that the Hungarian nobility can eliminate each other as in the War of the Roses. The nation can only survive here through compromise, in the interest of the country, not of the individual. That is what everyone is afraid of. I did not learn from the Irish, Portuguese or German examples that all reasonable people have to stand together, but from Jókai. He was for peace, we learn about him in the school. He really was, the only problem is that it’s always mentioned as if it were a negative trait in him. What has been the fate of compromise seekers in Hungary? They were declared traitors.

I liked Ferenc Bessenyei very much. We became friends at a very good moment: at Miskolc he played Kossuth in Gyula Illyés’s play *Torch Flame* (*Fáklyaláng*), and at night, when he was driven home to Budapest, he learned Görgey’s part from László Németh’s play *The Traitor* (*Az áruló*). Kossuth and Görgey at the same time! In one play he spoke Kossuth’s truth, in the other he spoke Görgey’s. And in both he suffered the pain of the other. That is really wonderful. For me, Görgey is the solution, because he did not allow thirty thousand more Hungarians to perish. I will go further: I consider Sigismund to be one of the greatest Hungarian monarchs, because to bring Visegrád

and Buda up to world standards, to put the Western Church in order and at the same time to bring the German Empire to its knees is no small feat. We also had a successful state under the Hunyadis, but our greatest victory since then was the Treaty of Szatmár. After many years of war, the Hungarian constitution was guaranteed, the lands were returned to the landowners, and even Rákóczi would have had his land back if he had returned. What János Pálffy and Sándor Károlyi achieved in secret... If the Kurutzs are then killed, there will be even fewer Hungarians. That is why I am in favour of compromise. I know that from Jókai too! From *The White Woman of Levoča (A lócsei fehér asszony)*. That is why I was glad that my wife took up the subject of Bogdan, the helper of the “Man of Peace” (Sándor Károlyi), and brought the exemplary Kelemen Didák into the public consciousness in Central Europe.

(Z. H.) This reminds me of the conference lecture by your wife Marianne Dobos, which I published in the university journal.

(L. K.) Bogdan Adamczyk, a Minorite monk and former parish priest of the Minorite Church in Miskolc, with Marianne’s help, renewed the process that had become so fatally deadlocked. Let me at least publish here the supplementary documents to the initiation of the commemorations in Miskolc and the four conferences initiated by my wife. They have remained in my computer and correspondence. My wife and I visited the deputy mayor Péter Pfliegler and together we chose the place that could be worthy to commemorate the once great public figure of Miskolc. It surrounds his work and — this is not the last consideration! — would require only a few renewals of identity cards and documents. The area around the monastery and the church should be named after Kelemen Didák. The place is worthy and the solution is a lucky compromise. The deputy mayor’s enthusiasm for such a balance of memory and economy was boundless. Excerpt from the letter of 26. 08. 2011, 11:32:

Dear Professor,

Let me to inform you of this:

— In consultation with the Chief Architect, I can say that we will support the naming of public places after Didák Kelemen. Unfortunately, this has been delayed somewhat due to illness and holidays, but I will pay attention and will work to ensure that this happens as soon as possible.

Dear Professor, dear Lóránt,

First of all, I wish you a Happy New Year, rich in strength and health!

I would like to respectfully remind you that on your initiative we are looking into the possibility of naming a public square (a part of it) in Miskolc, in the immediate vicinity of the Minorite Church, after Kelemen Didák. It would be of great help to my colleagues if you and Marianne would kindly send me a one-page summary of K. D.’s work in Miskolc, his achievements in the moral and intellectual education of the town and his positive work here as a whole.

I look forward to hearing from you.
With respectful friendship, Peter

Pfliegler Péter alpolgármester Miskolc MMJV
alpolgarmester2@miskolc.hu phone: 46/512-706
www.miskolc.hu

Two days later, we sent the requested proposal:

Dear Peter,
I am happy to enclose our proposal. Sincerely, lovingly, M+L

Proposal

Street name in memory of Didák Kelemen

The memory of the late Minorite monk Kelemen Didák was already marked by a street name in Miskolc, which was later changed to Endre Latabár. Our proposal does not concern the change of the street name. This is because the first important personality of the Latabár family, who is interesting in terms of cultural history and has a connection to Miskolc, also deserves to be commemorated with a street name in the city. Our proposal refers to the naming of a street or a square in the vicinity of the Minorite Church and the monastery, as well as to the commemorative statue to be erected in this area.

Reasons:

Kelemen Didák, perpetually ordained Minorite priest (monk), highly respected church orator, town and cultural organiser, was born in Baksafalva in Szeklerland in 1683 and died in Miskolc on 28 April 1744. In the public consciousness of literary history, town history and church history, his name, personality, work and afterlife have become intertwined and even identified with the town of Miskolc.

His career spanned the territory of historical Hungary, he was active in the Southland and the Uplands. As spiritual advisor, counsellor and collaborator of General Sándor Károlyi, the organiser of the Treaty of Szatmár, which ended the fighting in 1711, he actively participated in the reorganisation of the regions destroyed and devastated during the expulsion of the Turks and the Rákóczi War of Independence. On his initiative, schools and churches were rebuilt in the destroyed villages. Regardless of denomination, he took care of those affected by the epidemics in an exemplary manner. During his work he came to Miskolc and, in view of the local conditions, organised the construction of the Minorite Church, the building of the monastery and the foundation of a school next to it, which became one of the forerunners of today's György Fráter Grammar School, as the final achievement of his life's work.

Through his contacts with the Károlyi family, he lobbied the National Assembly in Pozsony (now Bratislava) for the location of the church and monastery in Miskolc. During his lifetime he succeeded in having the new, representative church built and consecrated in the Baroque style. Later, an illness that limited his mobility tied him to the monastery. He was active here until his death. According to memories, he was already venerated as a saint in the town of Miskolc during his lifetime.

His beatification was initiated by Mrs Gábor Haller (née Count Klára Károlyi), the daughter of Sándor Károlyi. She emphasised that Kelemen Didák fought for the resurrection of his people and his city “with the strength of faith and love in a land that was on the edge of its coffin”.

An important role in the continuation of his beatification process was played in the twentieth century by a minorite postulator of our town, Fr. Wojciech Topoliński, who died a martyr’s death in 1939 during the first month of the invasion of Poland, during the process of beatification of him and some other Polish saints while connecting his church activities with organising the emigration of Polish refugees.

In 1980, the remains of Kelemen Didák were solemnly removed from the crypt of the Minorites and interred at the altar of St. Elizabeth in the church. His grave is surrounded by signs of gratitude. At this altar we pray for his beatification at the turn of the day of his death, on the 28th of each month and every day after evening Mass.

In the latest edition of the 1999 Latin Catalogue of Canonisation Processes, the section on Father Didák states that the process is being conducted by the Archdiocese of Eger, and the Holy See gave permission for the process to be initiated by the diocese on 28 April 1981. As part of the canonisation process, Kelemen Didák is currently granted the title of “Servant of God”.

His work, crowned by his activity in Miskolc, has been acknowledged in several books published in Hungary and Rome (also in Italian!), and in recent years four international conferences have dealt with the evaluation of his work and activity in Miskolc.

In his memory, there were social science conferences on the burning issue of our time, poverty and the life of the minorities.

His literary achievement is discussed in doctoral theses and monographs. His career and reception in the twentieth century was the subject of a doctoral thesis at the Péter Pázmány Catholic University by fr Bogdan Adamczyk, a Polish Minorite monk and former parish priest of Our Lady of the Assumption church in Miskolc.

Marianne Dobos, Dr Lórántné Kabdebó, Lórin Szabó and Pál Gyulai, award-winning writer.

Lóránt Kabdebó, professor emeritus

Soon the proposal seemed to be a home run:

Pfiegler Péter [pf lieglerp@miskolc.hu] 2012. 03. 21. 13:33:23
 Lóránt Kabdebó [kabdebolorant@gmail.com];
 Marianne Dobos [dobosmarianne@gmail.com]

Dear Marianne, Dear Lori,

I am writing to you with the pleasant news that the initiative you have launched, on the basis of which, I hope, a public area of Miskolc (the part of Deák Square opposite the Minorite Monastery) will be named after Kelemen Didák on 22 March.

Thank you for your help. With friendly greetings,
 Peter

Then the following letter informed me of the interruption of the case:

2012. 03. 23. 7:52:48

Dear Lóránt,

I am sorry... the topic was removed from the agenda due to the protest of the leader of the Order.

Peter

Pfiegler Péter alpolgármester Miskolc MMJV
 alpolgarmester2@miskolc.huphone: 46/512-706
 www.miskolc.hu

Today, the original plan that we originally thought through with the greatest patriotic fervour for the good of our city has come to fruition. As background information, I have heard: the area was thought to be too small. Were they going to rename one of the “big” streets? But that’s just hearsay. Since then, my friend Bogdan Adamczyk OFM Conv. has defended his doctoral thesis on Kelemen Didák. And since September, he has been the leader and spiritual advisor of the Hungarian- and Polish-speaking pilgrims in Assisi. Years later, with the support of the Christian citizens of the town and the General Assembly, the head of the Minorite Order managed to realise our old plan. And at the suggestion of the diocese, the “process” of the beatification of Clemens Didak got going again. *Dignum et justum est!* — no comment.

If our city ceased to be a “strong bastion” of “iron and steel”, how beautiful it would be if its character as an academic centre and tourist attraction could be combined with the spirit of the place of pilgrimage, and alongside Częstochowa and Csíksomlyó, people who want to pray could also come here.

(Z. H.) Can you still follow Jókai’s examples today? — Anita Major asked you in an interview. What does it take?

(L. K.) Time. I have it. But we also need people willing to compromise, even to the point of self-sacrifice. Both at the local and national level. Each epoch has to choose its own politicians, who may or may not save the country. Poland has been divided several times and its borders have been shifted on the map. Nevertheless, it is a great power in Central Europe. It has forty million inhabitants!

Of course, everything is relative. An academic told a friend of mine in Armenia, where my ancestors come from, that the Hungarians are a great power because they have an independent country, and there are many of them. Now Armenia is also independent, and Armenians are quite viable.

My father did not even know Armenian anymore, but Armenian identity was strong in the family. Other Armenians fled here to escape the genocide, and many of them still speak Armenian. I was baptised according to the *Unitus habitus* — the Armenian rite of the Roman Catholic ceremony. When I talk about Armenians, I am again reminded of Jókai’s heroes of compromise: Mihály Teleki from the novel *The Golden Age of Transylvania (Erdély aranykora)* and the *Turks in Hungary (Török világ Magyarországon)*, and Mihály Apafi, who is looked down upon by everyone. However, Apafi needed insight to invite Armenians from Moldavia to Transylvania, which had been devastated by the Tatars. They then built Szamosújvár on the banks of the Szamos. Remember, at the beginning of the 18th century there were two towns in Europe designed with a compass and a ruler: Szamosújvár and St. Petersburg! The Kabdebos (formerly Yesayans) were given their Rumanian name, which, according to one idea, refers to the ox’s head in the coat of arms of Moldavia. The Armenians, with their diplomatic cunning, remained an honest Christian people. The Armenian kingdom embraced Christianity half a century earlier than Rome. The Armenians also became loyal citizens of the homeland in Hungary. Two of the 13 martyrs executed in Arad were Hungarian Armenians. One of the emblematic leaders of revolution and freedom struggles of 56 is also of Hungarian–Armenian origin. Their millenarian cunning is not Byzantine ambition but an escape from it.

As an example, in response to Anita’s question, I gave my own life’s journey. What I have undertaken, I have fought for. Both for the elevation of Lőrinc Szabó to the canon and for the establishment of the Faculty of Humanities at Miskolc University. According to Jókai’s recipe, and I believe rightly so. And I hope both tasks were worth it. I consider it a national task, it has given meaning to my life.

(Z. H.) What do you think about the legitimacy of humanities education in Miskolc?

(L. K.) If in Budapest the humanities faculties of three universities could be accommodated on 1,000 square feet, complementing each other, then here in Upper Hungary there is a bad need for this humanities faculty. Anyone who thinks that the humanities faculties of the former technical university are superfluous today would be giving up the entire Uplands, selling out and betraying this land with its wonderful past and natural talents. After all, the Hungarian language we speak today comes from this region. It is our vocation to preserve and develop the culture of those people whose way of speaking we use in our everyday life. I hope that my university has also found its balance. Its leaders and the present heads of the arts faculty are professionals with a combative nature who adhere to standards. I have handed over the faculty to its today's leaders with the words: do it differently from me, but just as well, if not better. I look forward to the success of their struggles.

We support families, we plan to increase the number of our children. If we allow our history, literature and world culture to perish, our country will go to the dogs. When I was a young teacher and argued with my then superior in the school corridor, I told him that we'd see which of our pupils we would meet decades later at theatres, exhibitions, concerts and cultural events. Even my former student, who lives in Canada, sends me pictures of two of my favourite "cats" guarding the side altar on the right side when he is in Rome at the cathedral on the banks of the river Tiber, after our recent graduation meeting, on his way home. "There stood a castle, now it's a pile of stones", my grandson quotes the national anthem. But you must also feel the sacredness of that pile of stones. To know that for it "so many times / The blood of your fathers flowed". And if you rightly know who Puskás was, then you must also know who the above-mentioned Jenő Barcsay or Béla Bartók was, who György Fráter was, who tried to unite the divide homeland, and who Didák Kelemen was, who rests in Miskolc, who tried to make "a country on the edge of its coffin" healthy and cultivated, God-fearing community.

(Z. H.) As an academic and a patriot, how do you see the relationship between the university and the city?

(L. K.) The "salamander" at the end of the year, the torchlight procession through the main streets of the city, is a symbol for me: a Selmeci tradition and a wow of today. "When Miskolc calls, we go there" — the students sing before they leave the university in all directions. The Mayor and the Rector say goodbye together to the young people who grew up at the city's university. I have the feeling that our students feel at home not only in the Dudujka Valley, but in the whole city. You can count them on one hand who are invited by the Student Association as honorary guests to these farewell receptions. What is discussed at these receptions is the issue of the city as a whole. I say it is a common concern of our citizens. I am becoming old, but I still look at the common future when my country calls. I want to be filled with hope.

Kiadja a Miskolci Egyetem
A kiadásért felelős: Prof. dr. Horváth Zita rektor
A kéziratot gondozta a Miskolci Egyetemi Kiadó
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