

FOR VILMOS VOIGT'S 80TH BIRTHDAY

Vilmos Voigt from Budapest, the unavoidable figure of Hungarian and European comparative folklore and philology, turned eighty on 2020, January 17.

He was born in Szeged, southern Hungary, but he spent his childhood in the Hungarian capital Budapest. He graduated in 1963 from the Faculty of Humanities of the Eötvös Loránd University with a degree in Hungarian Ethnography. After going through all the ranks of the university, he remained at its Department of Folklore until he retired as the head of the Institute of Ethnography and Folklore. Since then he has been an Emeritus Professor. He



was awarded an honorary doctorate of the University of Tartu and became the honorary professor of the University of Bucharest. He obtained several national and foreign awards, honourable memberships and other honours.

Vilmos Voigt is commonly referred to as a teacher and researcher, and it is difficult to decide which position is stronger. Despite his incomprehensibly grandiose publication oeuvre,¹ I would still say that Vilmos Voigt is a born teacher. He has a much mentioned pedagogy that sounds kind of like this: just like a hunter, if he wants to drop a running game, he always targets a little in front of it. Similar to education. A good teacher must see the direction in which their student is moving, and always provide the tasks and problems to be solved in such a way that they constantly move forward. Not too easy, but not even too hard to be impossible to solve. Vilmos Voigt, as he often mentions in his biographical interviews, was given the opportunity to be a part of the ELTE's

¹ See Molnár, 2010; Gönczy, 2015. The second author published replacements for the previous volume, which ends with 2009, and closes the review in 2014. Six years have passed since then... At present I am referring only to the independent publications in Slovak, English, German and Finnish, see Voigt, 1976; 1981; 1990; 1992; 1999; 2005a.

Department of Folklore from his studies till nowadays. So, he isn't a migratory bird type.

A good half-century isn't a small period of time, he had and still has a possibility to teach many students. And I haven't spoken yet about his many stays abroad as a guest teacher – in Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Romania, Finland, and the USA, in such cities as Innsbruck, Sofia, Novi Sad, Berlin, Hamburg, Marburg, Cluj-Napoca, Helsinki, Turku, Tartu, London, Berkeley and Nashville. However, his real students are not those who were taught by him, but who feel that way and have taken something from their master's critical approach, diligence, and perseverance. A story came to my mind about this. At the International Conference on Current Issues in Central European Folklore, held in 2012 for the 15th birthday of the Ethnological Center of the Forum's Minority Research Institute in Komárno, a colleague from Prague, Bohuslav Šalanda, once stood up and said how much he heard at that time, as a student in Prague, from his professor, Jiří Horák, about the then very young Vilmos Voigt. He has been following his career ever since, serving as an example to him, and how grateful he is to be able to shake hands with him here in Komárno. Well, one can have such students. As a researcher and scientist (and in this case the term is more than appropriate!) Vilmos Voigt has done remarkable work in the modern Hungarian and comparative folklore studies, including his fairy tale research (Voigt, 2007–2009), folk aesthetics (Voigt, 1972a; 1972b), Finno-Ugric studies (Voigt, 2005a; 2018), also in the fields of Baltic studies (Voigt, 1997), Icelandic studies (Voigt, 2016), semiotics (Voigt, 1977; 1981; 2009; 2019) and theoretical and comparative religious sciences (Voigt, 2004; 2007). He is a co-author of several Hungarian and foreign language lexicons and encyclopaedias (see Alzheimer, 2020; Clements, 2006), and his encyclopaedia articles in Hungarian are also available in separate volumes (Voigt, 2014; 2017). He is an organizer of prestigious international conferences (e. g. Voigt, 1995), and he is a tireless participant of them. All his manifestations (be it publication or lecture), while being scientific, are educational at the same time. In addition, there are volumes in his bibliography that can be classified as milestones for educational purposes (Voigt, 1989; 1998; 2005b). His sketchily described career above doesn't even scratch the surface, but I hope that it at least reflects on Vilmos Voigt's huge and diversified work. On the occasion of his eightieth birthday, the doyen of the Hungarian and international comparative folklore and philology has already been greeted in many other places. We wish good health and further unbroken creativity to Vilmos Voigt from here too!

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