



## József Szili (1929–2021)

### An obituary

Péter Hajdu<sup>1</sup>

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It is with great regret that we received the sad news that József Szili passed away in Budapest at the age of 93. From 1999 to 2011 he served as editor-in-chief of *Neohelicon*, and after the withdrawal of the founding editors he played a crucial role in adapting the journal's editorial policy to the new digital environment. Since then he helped us in our work as an active and reliable member of the Advisory Board.

József Szili was a highly influential figure in literary studies. For most of his life until his retirement he worked for the Institute for Literary Studies of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Budapest (1960–2002). He worked for the Department for Literary Theory—between 1985 and 1999 as its chair. His critical-analytical mindset, his fervour in discussing literary problems, and the openness with which he always scrutinised new ideas created an exciting intellectual climate around him. As a theoretician he had a decisive impact on Hungarian literary criticism (contributing to its liberation from obligatory orthodox Marxism under socialism), not only through his own contribution but also through his translations of some seminal

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✉ Péter Hajdu  
pethajdu@gmail.com

<sup>1</sup> Shenzhen University, Shenzhen, China

books. He must have experienced the revolutions of 1989 as a liberation not only from censorship but also from ideological and institutional restraints: six of his seven academic books were published after that year.

Szili was a comparatist through and through. Among the titles of his monographs one finds expressions like “epistemological questions in the aesthetics of Cristopher Caudwell and György Lukács” (1981), *The intercultural theory of literary genres* (1996), or “an intercultural theory of literature” (2005). Between 1985 and 1991 he served as a member of the Executive Council of the International Comparative Literature Association; from 2002 to 2009 he was the president of Hungarian Comparative Literature Association. He was professor emeritus of Miskolc University, Hungary.

In his late years he focused his energies on poetry (an ambition he had as a young man but suppressed during his active years as a literary scholar) and became a renowned poet with two published poetry collections that enjoyed a favourable critical response.

He is greatly missed.

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