

Veronika Budai

**“MOTHER LEFT ME WITH A WORLD, NOT A HOUSE...”**  
**SUPPORTING THE TRANSFORMING SCENE OF WRITER’S**  
**HOUSE MUSEUMS IN HUNGARY**

MA Thesis in Cultural Heritage Studies: Academic Research, Policy, Management.

Central European University

Budapest

May 2018

**“MOTHER LEFT ME WITH A WORLD, NOT A HOUSE...”  
SUPPORTING THE TRANSFORMING SCENE OF WRITER’S HOUSE MUSEUMS  
IN HUNGARY**

by

Veronika Budai

(Hungary)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,  
Central European University, Budapest, in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
of the Master of Arts degree in Cultural Heritage Studies: Academic Research, Policy,  
Management.

Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

---

Chair, Examination Committee

---

Thesis Supervisor

---

Examiner

---

Examiner

**“MOTHER LEFT ME WITH A WORLD, NOT A HOUSE...”  
SUPPORTING THE TRANSFORMING SCENE OF WRITER’S HOUSE MUSEUMS  
IN HUNGARY**

by

Veronika Budai

(Hungary)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,  
Central European University, Budapest, in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
of the Master of Arts degree in Cultural Heritage Studies: Academic Research, Policy,  
Management.

Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

---

External Reader

Budapest  
June 2018

**“MOTHER LEFT ME WITH A WORLD, NOT A HOUSE...”  
SUPPORTING THE TRANSFORMING SCENE OF WRITER’S HOUSE MUSEUMS  
IN HUNGARY**

by

Veronika Budai

(Hungary)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,  
Central European University, Budapest, in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
of the Master of Arts degree in Cultural Heritage Studies: Academic Research, Policy,  
Management.

Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

---

External Supervisor

Budapest  
June 2018

I, the undersigned, **Veronika Budai**, candidate for the MA degree in Cultural Heritage Studies: Academic Research, Policy, Management declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

Budapest, 28 May 2018

---

Signature

# Abstract

Today most writer's house museums in Hungary - museums commemorating a significant location in an author's life – work under the umbrella organization of the Association of Hungarian Literary Memorial Places (MIRE) that was established in 2008 at the Petőfi Literary Museum of Budapest (PIM). The aim of the present thesis is to analyze the management of this Association and to outline the further possibilities that lie in such an initiative. I have conducted a top-down operational survey of the organization, assembling information and opinions that have not been presented in a similarly cohesive and accessible way before. Based on the conducted interviews and the case studies I concluded that MIRE is successful organization for creating a network of writer's house museums, for initiating a discussion among the members on the different techniques of a literary exhibition and for creating possibilities of local community outreach. On the other hand, the Association needs to strengthen its brand and network building efforts and develop its lateral and central communication methods. With sufficient human resources the organization can decentralize in the future, and PIM would remain only as its administrative center. Ultimately, in order to ensure the sustainable future of writer's houses it is the literary heritage of the authors that have to be protected – and for this the museums have to reach the widest possible audience through deliberate marketing and outreach strategies.

# Acknowledgements

First of all, I would like to thank all the interviewees who contributed to my work – Gabriella Gulyás, Ilona H. Bagó, Ilona Kispálné Lucza, Csilla Lovas, Mirella Csiszár. With their help I could gain a real insight into the workings of the Association. I am also indebted to Judit Kodolányi of the Petőfi Literary Museum for organizing my first interview for the thesis, which then led to many others.

I am also grateful to my supervisor, Zsuzsanna Reed, who always provided my somewhat shabby draft chapters with valuable insights and detailed corrections.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my family and friends for their support and patience throughout my graduate studies.

# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Chapter 1 – The history of writer’s house museums .....</b>	<b>11</b>
1. The early history of writer’s house museums .....	11
2. Romanticism and writers’ house museums.....	12
3. The importance of house museums.....	13
4. The history of writer’s house museums in Hungary .....	16
<b>Chapter 2 - The Association of Hungarian Literary Memorial Places .....</b>	<b>20</b>
1. Background history of MIRE.....	20
1.1. Financing.....	20
1.2. Professional network.....	22
2. The work of MIRE.....	24
2.1. Operations management.....	27
2.1.1. Management structure.....	27
2.1.2. Strategic management .....	28
2.1.3. Communication and PR .....	28
2.1.4. Visitors information/Customer relations.....	30
3. Member institutions and categorization.....	31
<b>Chapter 3 - Case Studies .....</b>	<b>35</b>



1. The Birthplace of Sándor Petőfi in Kiskőrös .....	35
1.1. History of the house .....	35
1.2. The Petőfi House today.....	37
2. The Babits Houses of Szekszárd .....	41
2.1. History of the house .....	41
2.2. The Babits House today .....	42
3. The birthplace of Attila József in Budapest.....	49
3.1. History of the house .....	49
3.2. The Attila József Memorial Site today .....	51
3.2.1. The renovation .....	51
3.2.2. The new exhibition .....	54
3.2.3. Events and local involvement .....	56
<b>Chapter 4 - Evaluation and Recommendations .....</b>	<b>58</b>
1. Evaluation of the case studies .....	58
2. Recommendations .....	63
2.1. Regional tourism.....	63
2.2. Outreach within and outside the MIRE network .....	66
2.3. Building a brand.....	68
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>77</b>

Appendix 1 – List of interviews.....	84
Appendix 2 – List of MIRE members.....	85
Appendix 3 – List of modernized writer’s house museums .....	90
Appendix 4 – Visitors’ numbers in the museums of the case studies.....	92
Appendix 5 – Number of permanent and temporary exhibitions .....	93
Appendix 6 – Number of media appearances of the case study museums .....	94

“This is just the beginning, this is only child’s play...”<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

In the 1911 almanac of the Petőfi Association, Hungarian author Gyula Kéry writes about a woman who visited the then newly opened Petőfi House in Budapest. She “upon entering, looked for the holy water stoup and made the sign of the cross.”<sup>2</sup> This behavior not only shows how respected the poet was in Hungarian society, but also talks about the early days of a new museum genre – the writer’s house museum.

Writer’s house museums —museums commemorating a significant location in the author’s life—in Hungary date back to the nineteenth century, when the first institution of this kind opened in the town of Kiskőrös, the poet Sándor Petőfi’s birthplace.<sup>3</sup> Ever since then their number has grown, and today most of them are members of the Association of Hungarian Literary Memorial Places (Magyar Irodalmi Emlékházak Egyesülete, MIRE), an organization that was established in 2008 at the Petőfi Literary Museum of Budapest (Petőfi Irodalmi Múzeum, PIM). The aim of the present thesis is to analyze the management of this Association and to outline the further possibilities that lie in such an initiative.

The exploration of this topic is worthwhile for several reasons. Although, as it will be introduced in Chapter 1, writer’s house museums exist all around the world, MIRE is unique

---

<sup>1</sup>“ Ez csak kezdet, ez csak gyermekjáték...” in Sándor Petőfi, “1848,” Collected Poems of Sándor Petőfi, accessed May 25, 2018, <http://mek.oszk.hu/01000/01006/html/vs184801.htm#23>. All translations are mine unless otherwise stated.

<sup>2</sup> Zsuzsa Kalla, “Irodalmi relikviák, világi ereklyék (Literary Relics, Secular Relics),” in *Tények és legendák, tárgyak és ereklyék (Facts and Legends, Objects and Relics)* (Budapest: Petőfi Irodalmi Múzeum, 1994), 67–90. 68.

<sup>3</sup> Throughout my work I will use the term *writer’s house museum*, even though MIRE’s official English name includes *literary memorial places*, which serves to include members that are not museums from the legal point of view. However, writer’s house museum is a term more widely used in the English language (for example in Anne Trubek’s work), and thus it seemed more suitable for the present thesis.

among similar institutions, in terms of its broad scope of mission and in that it is also actively involved in the financing of writer's house museums.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, there is no extensive literature so far that covers the management of writer's house museums. Harald Hendrix explores this genre of museums from the perspective of literary tourism,<sup>5</sup> and American literature professor Anne Trubek published her essays in *The Skeptic's Guide to Writer's Houses*.<sup>6</sup> There are also works on the power of literary cults, such as Péter Dávidházi's analysis of the Shakespeare cult,<sup>7</sup> and Samantha Matthews's essay on the importance of poets' graves in these cults.<sup>8</sup> The Hungarian-language essay collection entitled *Facts and Legends, Objects and Relics* also focuses on the topic of literary relics. Several Hungarian essay collections were published on the topic of literary exhibitions, such as *The Beginning is the Half of the Whole* and *The Nature of the Literary Exhibition*, both edited and published PIM.<sup>9</sup> Finally, its founders, Ilona H. Bagó and Gabriella Gulyás, have treated MIRE's history and work in various journal articles.<sup>10</sup> These works cover the theoretical reasons behind the existence of writer's house museums', and also show the possible ways of updating their offer to twenty-first-century standards, but hardly

---

<sup>4</sup> A similar association exists in the United Kingdom, called LitHouses – they organize annual meetings to discuss ideas about museums of British literature and music. ICOM also has an International Committee for Literary Museums that holds annual conferences.

<sup>5</sup> Harald Hendrix, "From Early Modern to Romantic Literary Tourism: A Diachronical Perspective," in *Literary Tourism and Nineteenth-Century Culture*, ed. Nicola J. Watson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 13–24.

<sup>6</sup> Anne Trubek, *A Skeptic's Guide to Writers' Houses* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

<sup>7</sup> Péter Dávidházi, "Isten másodszülöttje" - *A magyar Shakespeare kultusz természetrajza* ("The second child of God" - *The Nature of the Hungarian Shakespeare Cult*) (Budapest: Gondolat Könyvkiadó, 1989).

<sup>8</sup> Samantha Matthews, "Making Their Mark: Writing the Poet's Grave," in *Literary Tourism and Nineteenth-Century Culture*, ed. Nicola J. Watson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 25–36.

<sup>9</sup> Gabriella Gulyás and Ilona H. Bagó, eds., *A Kezdet Az Egésznek a Fele (The Beginning Is the Half of the Whole)* (Budapest: Petőfi Irodalmi Múzeum, 2010).

Gabriella Gulyás, *Az Irodalmi Kiállítás Természetrajza (The Nature of the Literary Exhibition)* (Budapest: Petőfi Irodalmi Múzeum, 2013).

<sup>10</sup> Ilona H. Bagó and Gabriella Gulyás, "Lépkedek Haza... - A Magyar Irodalmi Emlékházak Megújulása (Walking Home... The Renewal of Hungarian Writer's House Museums)," *MúzeumCafé* 10, no. 5–6 (2016): 101–37.

Bárkay Tamás, "A ház, amelyben élt és alkotott... (The House Where He Lived and Created...)," NOL.hu, May 11, 2011, [http://nol.hu/kultura/20110511-a\\_haz\\_\\_amelyben\\_elt\\_es\\_alkotott-1065691](http://nol.hu/kultura/20110511-a_haz__amelyben_elt_es_alkotott-1065691).

ever deal with management issues. More importantly, so far there has been no comprehensive study on the successes and problems that MIRE has experienced in the past ten years.

For this purpose I have conducted a top-down operational survey of the organization, assembling information and opinions that have not been presented in a similarly cohesive and accessible way before—as MIRE’s website only provides the basic facts about the Association. I obtained information from visiting museums in Hungary, and from conducting interviews with professionals of MIRE and the Ministry of Human Capacities. The visited writer’s house museums were selected based on the discussion with MIRE professionals, and the selection aims to provide an overview of all the literary exhibition categories introduced in this Chapter 2. During my visits I used the method of participant observation.<sup>11</sup> My aim was to see how the given exhibition on the author’s life is constructed, what approach the curators chose in displaying literature and literary figures for the public. For this I chose to be a moderate participant; I attended the exhibition both as a regular visitor and as a researcher observing the inner structure of the presentation and the other visitors’ reactions and feedback.

The interviews referenced in the thesis were all semistructured interviews.<sup>12</sup> Although I prepared with the same set of questions for all the interviews to enable analyzing the responses in a comparative way, I also let the interviewee steer the conversation away from the original topic, in order to obtain personal insights and remarks for a more complete picture of MIRE and the possible impact that the presence of a literary house can have on the local community. During the interviews, which were all conducted in Hungarian, I aimed to provide an informal

---

<sup>11</sup> According to James P. Spradley this method has “two purposes: to engage in activities appropriate to the situation and to observe the activities, people, and physical aspects of the situation.” James P. *Spradley, Participant Observation* (London: Thomson Learning, 1980), 54.

<sup>12</sup> These are “guided, concentrated, focused, and open-ended communication events that are co-created by the investigator and interviewee(s) and occur outside the stream of everyday life.” Benjamin F. Crabtree and William L. Miller, *Doing Qualitative Research* (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 1992), 16.

environment, thus only took hand-written notes during the conversations. These will be paraphrased in English in the thesis, with the approval of all the interviewees.

Finally, based on the interviews and museum visits, I created short *case studies* of three Hungarian writer's house museums.<sup>13</sup> In these I aimed to explore how the creation of MIRE affected the particular literary museum's management and the underlying concept or theory they use in the representation of literature and the author.

Writer's house museums have fulfilled different roles throughout the decades—they have been sites literary pilgrimages; nationally recognized *lieux de mémoire* and tools for political propaganda. The goal of the thesis is twofold: on the one hand it aims to show the current function of these museums in Hungarian cultural life, and how this is manifested in MIRE work; on the other hand it will formulate recommendations on how the Association's operations could be further improved. Due to the limitations of the thesis several aspects of MIRE's activities cannot be discussed, such as the theory behind the modernized exhibitions, and the responses of visitors to the new education and representation methods. These topics are recommended to be explored in further research, as they would complement the present work by drawing a more complete picture of the Association's operations.

To accomplish these aims I will cover MIRE's history and current operations, followed by a section showcasing three case studies out of their member institutions, in order to examine how much the Association's clearly stated mission and vision are present in smaller provincial museums. The final chapter will be dedicated to evaluation and recommendations, based on the previous observations. The original hypothesis of my work is that the existence of the Association is highly beneficial for Hungarian writer's house museums; however, there are

---

<sup>13</sup> Based on Robert K. Yin's work. Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research – Design and Methods* (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2009).

certain areas of operation that are in need of further development, such as branding and marketing.

However, in order to understand the broader context of writer's house museums, first a brief historical overview is needed, both in the international and in the Hungarian context.

“You’ve been my ancestor, now be my  
successor...”<sup>14</sup>

## Chapter 1 – The history of writer’s house museums

### 1. The early history of writer’s house museums

The visit, or rather, literary pilgrimage to the houses and places associated with literary figures is certainly not a modern phenomenon. While we have some accounts dating from Antiquity of visits to the former houses of great authors, such as Virgil and Ovid, the literary pilgrimage in the classical sense gained new strength with Petrarch’s travels in Naples, looking for places associated with Virgil. He gave account of these visits in his letters, claiming “*vidi loca a Virgilio descripta*.”<sup>15</sup> The tradition continued even after his death, focusing now on houses and graves associated with Petrarch himself, and his love for Laura. As early as in 1550, public voices insisting on converting his house in Arquá into a museum were heard. The house can still be visited today, and his beloved, now mummified, cat is also exhibited.<sup>16</sup> Graves and tombs of important literary figures were also frequently visited, and no visit could be complete without taking some form of relic from the site (indeed, pilgrims often tried to steal bones from the graveyards<sup>17</sup>) and leaving a sign of their own presence in the form of flowers, wreaths, but also signatures and carvings on the walls. It is of no surprise then that the owners and guardians of

---

<sup>14</sup> “elődöm voltál, légy utódom”: Mihály Babits, “Ady Endrének (To Endre Ady),” Babits Mihály összegyűjtött versei, 1911, <http://mek.oszk.hu/00600/00602/html/vers0501.htm#04>.

<sup>15</sup> Harald Hendrix, “His Master’s House. Pilgrimages to the Homes and Haunts of Great Italian Authors (2017),” in *‘Tu Se’ Lo Mio Maestro e ‘l Mio Autore’. Dieci Studi Su “authorship” e Intertestualità Culturale*, ed. Matteo Brera and Susanna Grazzini (Florence: Cesati, 2017), 23–33, [http://www.academia.edu/35731011/His\\_Master\\_s\\_House.\\_Pilgrimages\\_to\\_the\\_Homes\\_and\\_Haunts\\_of\\_Great\\_Italian\\_Authors\\_2017\\_](http://www.academia.edu/35731011/His_Master_s_House._Pilgrimages_to_the_Homes_and_Haunts_of_Great_Italian_Authors_2017_). 28.

<sup>16</sup> Hendrix, *From Early Modern to Romantic Literary Tourism: A Diachronical Perspective*, 16.

<sup>17</sup> Hendrix, *From Early Modern to Romantic Literary Tourism: A Diachronical Perspective*, 19.



these memorial places soon felt the need to introduce a guestbook in order to meet the patrons' expectations.<sup>18</sup>

## 2. Romanticism and writers' house museums

In the nineteenth century an even greater flux of literary tourists and literary landmarks in Europe can be observed, fuelled by the new possibilities of cheap and fast travel options, the overall development of tourism and mass media, and most importantly, the public's interest in the so-called Romantic genius. As Harald Hendrix puts it, "the romantic nineteenth century interest in personality and genius produces these houses – they are emptinesses that supposedly enable visitors (...) to come into contact with the imaginative world created by the author, and thus to participate in his imagination."<sup>19</sup> An iconic literary pilgrim of the time is Childe Harold, a character created by Lord Byron, who visits the houses of Dante, Boccaccio, and Petrarch, making the plea for their preservation as well. These poems (and Lord Byron himself) became so influential that a local noblewoman of Certaldo, Carlotta Lenzoni, decided to buy the former house of Boccaccio, and turn it into a public museum. After her death she left the building to the city.<sup>20</sup>

At the same time pilgrims have visited William Shakespeare's birthplace in Stratford-upon-Avon as well, even though it was not functioning as an official public museum. This resulted in the incident of 1847, when the house went up for sale, and it was the idea of Phineas T. Barnum, an American showman and businessman, founder of the famous Barnum&Bailey

---

<sup>18</sup> Matthews, *Making their Mark: Writing the Poet's Grave*, 29.

<sup>19</sup> Nicola J. Watson, "Introduction," in *Literary Tourism and Nineteenth-Century Culture*, ed. Nicola J. Watson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 1–13. 8.

<sup>20</sup> Hendrix, *His Master's House. Pilgrimages to the Homes and Haunts of Great Italian Authors*, 25.

Circus, to buy the edifice, transfer it to the United States, and make a spectacle out of it. A significant international uproar followed these news, and the British opposition, led by Charles Dickens, managed to raise £3,000 to save the building. In the end, the newly created Shakespeare Birthplace Trust acquired it, and granted it official protection.<sup>21</sup> This event signifies both the publicly accepted importance of writer's house museums, but also the trend for organizing civil associations to tend for these institutions. Following the Shakespearian example, the Wordsworth Trust was established, and they bought Dove Cottage in Grasmere in 1890; The Brontë Society, which claims to be one of the oldest literary societies,<sup>22</sup> was created in 1893, and owns the Haworth Parsonage since 1928; The Dickens Fellowship opened the Dickens House in London in 1924. Similarly, by 1899, there was a house museum for Cervantes in Madrid, for Dante in Florence, and for Goethe in Frankfurt and Weimar. In the United States sites such as the former house of Henry David Thoreau near Walden Pond and the home of Edgar Allen Poe in Bronx, New York came under protection and visited by thousands of admirers each year.

It is clear from the above that by the end of the nineteenth century writers' houses have become universally accepted pilgrimage and tourism sites, mostly due to efforts of friends, families, and literary associations, as the state was yet to be involved in these institutions. What could be the reasons behind their immense popularity?

### 3. The importance of house museums

Cicero writes in *De legibus*: "Our emotions are somehow stirred in those places in which the feet of those whom we love and admire have trodden. 'twas here they dwelt, 'twas here they sat, 'twas here they engaged in their philosophical discussions. And with reverence I contemplate

<sup>21</sup> Nick Channer, *Writers' Houses: Where Great Books Began* (London: Robert Hale Ltd, 2015). 143-146.

<sup>22</sup> "About Us," Bronte Parsonage Museum, accessed May 25, 2018, <https://www.bronte.org.uk/about-us>.

their tombs.”<sup>23</sup> As early as in Antiquity birthplaces and houses of well-known figures were venerated. Venerated – as feelings and thoughts in visitors of writers’ house museums often resemble those of followers of religious cults. Péter Dávidházi published his seminal work on literary cults in 1989, and based his ideas on the analogy of religion and religious cults.<sup>24</sup> Apologetic strategies of criticism brings up the concept of *theodicy*; followers of the cult conduct *pilgrimages* to Stratford; annual celebrations of the author’s birth and death are part of a sacred *ritual* and the collection of objects belonging to Shakespeare are treated as *relics*.<sup>25</sup> It is often the case that the veneration is not directed towards the figure of the author himself, but rather towards the talent and genius that he possessed. According to the nineteenth-century idea, places can also have a soul, and by visiting houses of famous authors it has become possible to partake in their creativity as well, and receive further inspiration for future literary works.<sup>26</sup>

Anne Trubek, one of writer’s house museums’ fiercest critics, claims that these institutions only “expose the heartbreaking gap between writers and readers,”<sup>27</sup> and that visitors only wish to take part in “lit porn.”<sup>28</sup> It has to be noted, however, that in the context of literary cults houses of authors serve the same purpose as churches do in religious life – a place of communion with the venerated figure. The pilgrimage to the literary site follows the same goals and thoughts as the ones in Christianity:

All sites of pilgrimage have this in common: they are believed to be places where miracles once happened, still happen, and may happen again. Even where the time of miraculous healings is reluctantly conceded to be past, believers firmly hold that faith is strengthened and salvation better secured by personal exposure

<sup>23</sup> Hendrix, *From Early Modern to Romantic Literary Tourism: A Diachronical Perspective*, 14.

<sup>24</sup> Dávidházi, *Isten másodszülöttje*.

<sup>25</sup> Péter Dávidházi, *The Romantic Cult of Shakespeare - Literary Reception in Anthropological Perspective* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998). 3.

<sup>26</sup> More can be found about the „spirit of places” in Violet Paget’s essays, who published under the pseudonym Vernon Lee. Vernon Lee, *The Tower of the Mirrors and Other Essays on the Spirit of Places* (London: J. Lane, 1914).

<sup>27</sup> Trubek, *A Skeptic's Guide to Writers' Houses*, 5.

<sup>28</sup> Trubek, *A Skeptic's Guide to Writers' Houses*, 3.

to the beneficent unseen presence of the Blessed Virgin or the local saint, mediated through a cherished image or painting.<sup>29</sup>

Early visitors to the former houses of popular writers gave accounts of similar experiences and sentiments.

These visits were never entirely about the author himself, and always had a certain narcissistic tendency in them. Visiting the sites where the genius worked, where the miracle of creativity happened, pilgrims also asked themselves – can I also become a great writer? Can I pick up any hints how it is possible to achieve literary success? A sense of mortality also appeared – how will I be remembered once I am gone? Will I be remembered at all?<sup>30</sup> Thus, writer’s house museums are never solely about the writer, but also about the visitor and the reader. The well-known words of Roland Barthes come to mind: “the birth of the reader must be ransomed by the death of the Author.”<sup>31</sup> Sometimes claims and expectations from the admirers seem to be more important in house museums than the actual life and thoughts of the writer – Louisa May Alcott’s Orchard House in Concord presents a “shrine of domesticity,”<sup>32</sup> even though Alcott was advocating against this lifestyle and aimed to show an example to other unmarried women with her life. However, her beloved novel, *Little Women*, was always seen as a portrait of American domestic life, and visitors to her former home expect to see a similar image.

The reasons for visits and for the conservation of these houses have changed considerably around the turn of the century. Whereas at the beginning of their history, these museums were mostly realized by the efforts of civil associations and private individuals, by the 1900s they have become widely accepted *lieux de mémoire*, “a significant entity, whether material or non-

---

<sup>29</sup> Trubek, *A Skeptic's Guide to Writers' Houses*, 52.

<sup>30</sup> Trubek, *A Skeptic's Guide to Writers' Houses*, 104.

<sup>31</sup> Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” in *Image Music Text*, ed. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977), 142–49. 148.

<sup>32</sup> Trubek, *A Skeptic's Guide to Writers' Houses*, 59.

material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community.”<sup>33</sup> At this point local or national governments gradually took a more significant role in both the establishment and in the management of writer’s house museums.<sup>34</sup> These institutions became sites for advocating a cohesive national, democratic identity and culture (or the dominant political ideology of the state, as later can be observed in Hungary’s example), and “homes are preserved regardless of the significance that writers themselves attached to them.”<sup>35</sup> Today, the local writer’s house museums mostly serve to preserve the idea of a national literary heritage, and function as a learning tool for state education. One of the aims of the present thesis is to discuss their additional role as community spaces, a goal that MIRE also explicitly formulated in their mission and vision. This will be further discussed in Chapter 2 and 3.

There are, of course, still signs of literary cults in the twenty-first century. For example, when Jorge Luis Borges visited the town of Hannibal in the United States, where his greatest influence, Mark Twain, was born, he insisted on putting his hand in the Mississippi—in Mark Twain’s Mississippi.<sup>36</sup> However, long gone are the days when the woman made the sign of the cross in the Petőfi House, as quoted in the Introduction.

## 4. The history of writer’s house museums in Hungary

As for Hungarian writers’ houses, the idea of literary shrines or museums were present since the middle of the nineteenth century. The idea first appeared in connection to Ferenc

---

<sup>33</sup> Pierre Nora, “Preface to the English-Language Edition,” in *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), XV–XXIV. XVII. \*foreword page numbers are lowercase.

<sup>34</sup> Elizabeth Emery’s book on French writer’s house museums discusses this change in more detail. Elizabeth Emery, *Photojournalism and the Origins of the French Writer House Museum* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2012).

<sup>35</sup> Emery, *Photojournalism and the Origins of the French Writer House Museum*, 9.

<sup>36</sup> Trubek, *A Skeptic’s Guide to Writers’ Houses*, 46.

Kazinczy, author and spearhead of the eighteenth-century Hungarian language reform. As his memory was indisputably connected to national language, and thus, to national identity, prominent literary figures paid frequent visits to his former estate at Széphalom. Sándor Petőfi also made the pilgrimage, and described his experience in his diary, comparing his visit to a religious experience:

It is in any way a sacred place; sacred because of the man whose house and tomb are placed there. It should be an obligation to every Hungarian with a patriotic spirit, to do a pilgrimage there, like the Mohammedans do to Mecca.<sup>37</sup>

In 1882, a building was erected on the estate, in the Doric order, similar to an Ancient Greek church, to house some of his manuscripts, busts, and a few objects that were in his possession—such as a mirror and a lock of hair.<sup>38</sup> However, the first official writer’s house that was opened for visitors was the birthplace of Sándor Petőfi in Kiskőrös, which will be introduced in more detail in Chapter 3.

Until the end of World War II two other house museums were established, the Csokonai House in 1906, and the Mihály Fazekas House in 1945, both in Debrecen. The real golden age for these institutions began in the 1950s, partly because of the work of Dezső Keresztúry, who in his articles published in the periodicals *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények* and *Csillag* advocated for the protection of these buildings,<sup>39</sup> and partly did so because of current political agenda.<sup>40</sup> According to István Villangó, who led the Ministry of Culture’s Public Collections Department between 1979 and 1990, although the creation of writer’s house museums of the period was partly based

---

<sup>37</sup> Quoted in Mihály Praznovszky, “Az Irodalmi Emlékhely, Mint a Kultusz Egyik Intézménye (The Literary Memorial Site as the Institution of the Cult),” in *Tények És Legendák, Tárgyak És Ereklék (Facts and Legends, Objects and Relics)* (Budapest: Petőfi Irodalmi Múzeum, 1994), 11–21. 12. The translation provided is my own.

<sup>38</sup> Praznovszky, *Az Irodalmi Emlékhely, Mint a Kultusz Egyik Intézménye*, 14.

<sup>39</sup> Mihály Praznovszky, “Irodalmi emlékházak térben és időben (Writer’s house museums in space and time),” *Irodalomismeret*, no. 1 (2012): 19–26. 20.

<sup>40</sup> More about museums and political propaganda in the Chinese context in Kirk A. Denton’s book. Kirk A. Denton, *Exhibiting the Past: Historical Memory and the Politics of Museums in Postsocialist China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2014).

on the opinion and support of contemporary authors, it was always the Propaganda Committee of MSZMP (the ruling Socialist party of Hungary) who had the final say in the matter.<sup>41</sup> The Mihály Vörösmarty House in Kápolnásnyék (1952), the Babits House in Esztergom (1961), the József Katona House in Kecskemét (1971), and the Ady House in Budapest (1977) were all established in this period. By 1983 there were forty-one writer's house museums in Hungary.<sup>42</sup>

At the time of their opening, usually all of these houses enjoyed great popularity paired with the enthusiasm of the local community, especially if the opening fell to the time of some kind of anniversary of the given author. Visitors' numbers were more or less satisfactory, as the government and government-led institutions frequently organized visits and tours to authors' museums. This situation changed drastically after the change of the political system in 1989. On the one hand, the age of state-led cultural propaganda tours was over, on the other hand, the state of the buildings and the exhibitions rapidly deteriorated. On the fiftieth and centennial anniversaries of writers, efforts were always made to renovate the houses, and organize events and new exhibitions connected to them, but subsequently both the financial aids and the enthusiasm dissipated. The average life span of a permanent exhibition, without any modifications, is 8-12 years, not to mention the fabric of buildings built hundreds of years ago.<sup>43</sup> It is of no surprise then that the occasional visitors found most writer's house museums in a state of decay. The problem was also connected to the changes of the literary canon – for example, László Nagy, whose house was opened as a museum in Iszkáz in 1984 despite political disapproval, was a popular poet of the era and the opening ceremony turned into a political

<sup>41</sup> Marianna Berényi, "Az Irodalmi Emlékházak Ki- És Megalakulása (The Establishing of Writer's House Museums)," *Múzeumcafé* 10, no. 5–6 (2016): 80–99. 86.

<sup>42</sup> Praznovszky, *Irodalmi emlékházak térben és időben*, 21.

<sup>43</sup> Praznovszky, *Irodalmi emlékházak térben és időben*, 22.

demonstration with hundreds of participants.<sup>44</sup> However, today his works are usually not part of school curricula, he is less frequently read by academics, and visitor numbers to his house museum have dropped consequently.

As a response to the critical situation, the Ministry of Education requested the Petőfi Literary Museum of Budapest (PIM) to devise a comprehensive plan for the renovation of writer's house museums, including the facilities and the exhibitions. This initiative has finally led to the establishment of the Association of Hungarian Literary Memorial Places (MIRE), designed to support the continuation of the almost 140-year-old tradition of Hungarian writer's house museums.

---

<sup>44</sup> Berényi, *Az irodalmi emlékházak ki- és megalakulása*, 90.



“I have been alone for long; then many people came to me.”<sup>45</sup>

## Chapter 2 - The Association of Hungarian Literary Memorial Places

### 1. Background history of MIRE

As mentioned in the previous chapter, in 2007 the Ministry of Education requested the Petőfi Literary Museum to create a revitalization plan for Hungarian writer’s house museums. There were two professionals at PIM who dedicated most of their time to this task, Gabriella Gulyás, who is currently the Deputy Director, and Ilona H. Bagó, who now works as Head of the Exhibition Department. Together they devised a seven-year plan for the development of the museums, including facilities and exhibitions, with an emphasis on adopting modern education methods as well. In the course of their work they also realized that a professional association, uniting Hungarian writer’s house museums, was also needed for financial and professional reasons.

#### 1.1. Financing

In 2007 PIM professionals estimated that the execution of the whole seven-year plan would require approximately 850 million HUF, and at first they relied primarily on the Ministry of Education for funding.<sup>46</sup> In the first years of the project, this seemed operable, especially with the Renaissance Year taking place in 2008, which, organized by the Ministry of Education,

---

<sup>45</sup> “Egyedül voltam én sokáig. / Majd eljöttek hozzám sokan.”: Attila József, “Ime, Hát Megleltem Hazámat (There, I Have Found My Home),” Collected Poems of Attila József, accessed May 25, 2018, <http://mek.oszk.hu/11800/11864/html/index.html>.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Ilona H. Bagó. The list of interviews can be find in Appendix 1.

aimed at placing Hungarian public education at its center, and provided funds for arts, sciences and literature. Within this framework the PIM received 120 million HUF to develop writer's house museums both in terms of infrastructure and education, and it also became possible to provide training for the staff. Altogether 250 million HUF was provided in 2008 for the purposes of the Literary Renaissance, but only part of this went to writer's house museums—the rest was used for translations, as well as a short story and comic book competition.<sup>47</sup> The so-called Alfa Program, founded in 2004 to finance the modernization of exhibitions outside the capital, was also a significant funding source.<sup>48</sup> However, these financial resources did not cover the entire budget of the seven-year plan, not to mention the money needed for the upkeep of the museums after the renovations. In 2009, the funding received from the Ministry was halved and PIM had 60 million HUF at their disposal for MIRE projects. From this year, the museums also applied for other means of financing. For example, they received money from the Norwegian grants;<sup>49</sup> they take part in the European Union's rural development projects; and they can apply for funding by the National Cultural Fund of Hungary, which has special divisions for public collections, public education, and heritage protection.<sup>50</sup> The Ministry of Human Capacities, which took over the role of the former Ministry of Education, also offers funds through its annual Ágoston Kubinyi Program. As is clear from the above, securing the necessary funding for museums has become very competitive over the years, with rather unpredictable results. Since the museum staff needs information about new funding opportunities and the assistance of

---

<sup>47</sup> NEFMI, "Reneszánsz Év (Renaissance Year)," text, Website of the Ministry of National Capacities, April 2, 2008, <http://www.nefmi.gov.hu/kultura/reneszansz-ev-2008/oktatasi-kulturalis-090803-1>.

<sup>48</sup> Dóra Csiszér, "Az önkormányzati múzeumok modernizációja – a múzeumi stratégia egyik eleme (The Modernization of Local Museums - An Element of Museum Strategy)," *Múzeumi Közlemények (Museum Bulletin)*, no. 2 (2005): 6–12.

<sup>49</sup> More about the Grant on their website: "Norway Grants - EEA Grants," accessed May 27, 2018, <https://eeagrants.org/Who-we-are/Norway-Grants>.

<sup>50</sup> More about the Fund on their website: "National Cultural Fund of Hungary," accessed May 27, 2018, <http://www.nka.hu/english/nka>.

someone with experience in successful applications, the help of a professional association has become invaluable for the institutions concerned.

## 1.2. Professional network

The situation of smaller museums became more complicated when the government resolution 1311/2012. (VIII. 23.) was passed in the Parliament. Before this, according to the 1981 resolution about the county museum organization system, provincial museums were under the jurisdiction of the respective county councils. The center in each county was the county museum, and all other museums in the area functioned as affiliations. This also meant that most of the professional, experienced workforce was situated in the county museum. However, the 2012 resolution passed the maintenance responsibility to local governments. To be more precise, county museums and libraries now belong to the county capital, whereas institutions in smaller towns and villages (formerly owned by the county) belong to their respective municipalities. If there were more than one museum in a town they were merged and became each other's affiliates. According to László L. Simon, Minister of Culture at the time, there are a few exceptions to this rule.<sup>51</sup> For example, museums that are too costly and big for the local government to manage: the Museum of Hungarian Language at Széphalom is an affiliate of the Petőfi Literary Museum in Budapest; the Báthory István Museum of Nyírbátor is under the jurisdiction of the Hungarian National Museum; and the Mátra Museum of Gyöngyös is maintained by the Natural History Museum. It is also worth noting that the buildings of these museums still belong to the state, but the local government can use them for cultural purposes free of charge.

---

<sup>51</sup> Gábor Tölgyesi, "Múzeumi reform: visszatérés a nyugat-európai modellhez (Museum Reform: Return to the Western-European Example)," MNO.hu, October 10, 2012, <https://mno.hu/grund/muzeumi-reform-visszateres-a-nyugat-europiai-modellhez-1110406>.

With this change local governments not only face heightened financial burdens, but also the lack of professional workforce and experience in their immediate surroundings. According to the 376/2017. (XII. 11.) resolution, all museum spaces are required to employ a professional trained in museology, museum pedagogy, or public education.<sup>52</sup> Based on my interview conducted with Mirella Csiszár many museums and exhibition spaces had no chance to find and hire professionals, due to lack of trained human resources outside of the capital. In bigger towns where a library is also operating, it is usually the librarian who takes care of the smaller museums, but in villages without any other cultural institution this is hard to realize. Controversially, local teachers cannot be involved in the work of these museums, since their employment is regulated by KLIK (Klebelsberg Center – the government office responsible for education), and not by the local government.

Furthermore, the end of the county museum system brought about the sudden disappearance of an intermediate level of operations and now there is no intermediary between the Ministry of Human Capacities and the local or regional museums. Also, in the original county museum organization, smaller museums tended to depend on the professional knowledge and experience (not to mention network) of the county museum. However, the 2012 edict was not preceded by preliminary training or consultation provided for the local governments who have no experience in taking care of their cultural heritage. An example for this is the house museum of the poet Sándor Weöres in Csöngé, in Western Hungary. The museum is the only cultural institution in the small village of 400 people and the current mayor, a hard working

---

<sup>52</sup> The CXL. Law of 1997 differentiates museum categories – public museum exhibition spaces; public museum collections; thematic museums; regional museums; county museums; national specialist museums; and national museums.

railway employee, has no previous experience in maintaining cultural institutions. Without the support of the county museum the Sándor Weöres House faces an uncertain future.<sup>53</sup>

To summarize, the need for a professional association that deals with issues of writer's house museums and helps out the local governments was apparent even before the 2012 resolution. In addition, finding funding opportunities and completing applications was also a difficult task for individual museums. These needs together led to the creation of the Association of Hungarian Literary Memorial Houses in 2008 and the challenges of managing the changes brought on by the 2012 resolution further confirmed the need for such an umbrella organization of support.

## 2. The work of MIRE

MIRE's primary aims are twofold: on the one hand they focus on the museum facilities, premises and their exhibitions, with the primary aim to protect, develop and modernize them. On the other hand, their other purpose is to build a network of writer's house museums, and offer training opportunities and conferences for their employees so that they can learn about modern museology. Importantly, the association envisions that writer's house museums will be living cultural spaces for the local community, where people connect with each other through the literary works; for this reason they try to engage with local life and events as much as possible.<sup>54</sup> In order to ensure the sustainability of the museums' operations, MIRE also focuses on the cult of authors, so that the country's literature consuming audience would be constantly reproduced.<sup>55</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup> Interview with Ilona H. Bagó.

<sup>54</sup> MIRE's Constitution is available online, in Hungarian: "Alapszabály (Constitution)," Association of Hungarian Literary Memorial Places, accessed May 25, 2018, <http://www.mire.hu/hu/about/statutes>.

<sup>55</sup> For this reason one of MIRE's publications interviews contemporary authors on their classical predecessor. Gabriella Gulyás and Csaba Horváth, *Jelen Időben (In Present Time)* (Budapest: Petőfi Irodalmi Múzeum, 2010).

In the evaluation of the case studies in Chapter 4 it will shown in more detail whether these aims are actually realized in the member institutions.

The idea for creating a professional association of this nature stemmed from the already existing Association of Regional Houses, established in 2002. This is a non-governmental association supported by the Ministry and most of all, the Hungarian Open Air Museum of Szentendre.<sup>56</sup> The Association shares similar aims and structure as MIRE, only they focus on regional houses in the country.<sup>57</sup> However, over the years the Association managed to become a more active and established brand. In Chapter 4 I will examine in detail what lessons can be learned from their work, which are also applicable for MIRE's future.

In order to realize these aims, MIRE focuses a great deal on facility and exhibition modernization aligned with the current literary canon and the national school curriculum. By 2018 twenty-three writer's house museums received funding for these purposes.<sup>58</sup> The result of the modernizations and renovations was immediate, for example, the Petőfi House in Sárszentlőrinc, the József Katona Museum in Kecskemét and the Petőfi Apiary in Borjád, visitor numbers doubled in one year, and the feedback from the visitors' books was also positive. The Babits House in Esztergom, the Petőfi House in Kiskőrös, the Babits House in Szekszárd, and the Attila József House in Budapest all received awards for their innovative exhibitions.

In the first years of its operations, the Association also organized reading camps for children—eight in 2008 and fifteen in 2009. Another initiative was the literary tour section of their website, which provided self-guided literary tours in certain regions. MIRE also

---

<sup>56</sup> Bereczki Ibolya, "Mitől jó egy tájház? (What makes a good regional house?)," Magyar Múzeumok (Hungarian Museums), accessed May 25, 2018, [http://archiv.magyar-muzeumok.hu/tema/168\\_mitol\\_jo\\_egy\\_tajhaz](http://archiv.magyar-muzeumok.hu/tema/168_mitol_jo_egy_tajhaz).

<sup>57</sup> "Regional houses" are museums designed to present a region's distinct vernacular architecture, ethnography, and natural resources. The Association's Constitution is available online, in Hungarian:

"Hivatalos iratok (Official Documents)," Association of Regional Houses, accessed May 25, 2018, /hivatalos-iratok.

<sup>58</sup> See the complete list of these houses in Appendix 3.

participated in the organization of the cultural festivals in towns and villages, promoting their museums as ideal community spaces.<sup>59</sup>

An important and well-received initiative of MIRE was the training sessions that PIM organized for member institutions from May to December in 2008.<sup>60</sup> According to Ilona Kispálné Lucza,<sup>61</sup> these training sessions were always useful and creative, and provided a good opportunity to visit other museums (altogether they visited seventeen writer's house museums), to meet other professionals and facilitate the exchange of ideas and good examples.

At this time the Association received substantial media coverage as well. To mention a few examples, a longish article in *Válasz* celebrated the possibility to be able to have 'rendezvous' with authors from the past;<sup>62</sup> *Magyar Nemzet* also published a piece on the Association and its work;<sup>63</sup> and *Magyar Múzeumok* wrote a summary of MIRE's main activities.<sup>64</sup> These articles drew more attention to MIRE as a brand, and also brought more visitors to the freshly renovated museums.

However, by 2018, the training opportunities and many of MIRE's former activities have ceased, together with the media attention. Their website is now rarely updated, the literary tours, the summer camps and events have been discontinued, which mainly has to do with lack of funding. However, renovation projects are still on the table—according to Ilona H. Bagó the next step will be the renovation of the Berzsenyi mansion in Nikla, which also boasts a garden of

<sup>59</sup> NEFMI, "Irodalmi Emlékház Program (Writer's House Museums Program)," June 11, 2010, <http://www.nefmi.gov.hu/kultura/muzeumi-szakmai/irodalmi-emlekhaz>.

<sup>60</sup> Gulyás, H. Bagó, *Lépkedek haza...*, 107.

<sup>61</sup> Interview with Ilona Kispálné Lucza.

<sup>62</sup> Viktória V. Nagy, "'Hol Lakott Itt Vörösmarty Mihály' |('Where Did Mihály Vörösmarty Live?)," *Válasz.hu*, September 30, 2009, <http://valasz.hu/itthon/hol-lakott-itt-vorosmarty-mihaly-24421>.

<sup>63</sup> Levente Csenger, "Megéledő Irodalmi Emlékházak (Reviving Writer's House Museums)," *Magyar Nemzet*, July 25, 2008, [https://mno.hu/migr\\_1834/megeledo\\_irodalmi\\_emlekhazak-363708](https://mno.hu/migr_1834/megeledo_irodalmi_emlekhazak-363708).

<sup>64</sup> Heilmann Anna, "Élő hálózatba fogva (In a Living Network)," *Magyar Múzeumok* (Hungarian Museums), May 12, 2011, [http://archiv.magyar-muzeumok.hu/latogato/209\\_elo\\_halozatba\\_fogva](http://archiv.magyar-muzeumok.hu/latogato/209_elo_halozatba_fogva).

several hectares. This renovation alone will cost about 400-500 million HUF, and would probably be the only significant project of MIRE in the following years.

## 2.1. Operations management

### 2.1.1 Management structure

The Association consists of the Directorate, the General Assembly and the Surveying Committee, whose role is to oversee the operation and finances of MIRE. The Directorate comprises the president, who is always the current director of PIM, a secretary, a treasurer, and two other board members. The members of the Directorate and the Surveying Committee are both elected by the General Assembly every four years. The Assembly and the Directorate hold annual meetings together, whereas the Directorate is obliged to meet three times a year, as stated in the Constitution of the Association.

The aforementioned structure works well for MIRE. Typically, the best professionals are elected to work in the Directorate, who have both ample work experience and an extensive network both in the ministry and elsewhere. For example, until 2017, the Secretary was Csilla Lovas, curator at one of the most well-managed writer's house museum, the Babits House in Szekszárd; and one of the board members was Ilona Kispálné Lucza, curator of the Petőfi House in Kiskőrös—again, one that is considered a best practice institution in Hungary. However, even though the structure suits the aims of the association, MIRE activities demand considerable extra work over daytime obligations for all members, and as will be shown further on, this situation causes other ruptures in the operations.



## 2.1.2. Strategic management

Since MIRE has no revenue of its own and their operations mostly depend on external funding, both from the state and the European Union, strategic planning is necessarily ad-hoc and must be constantly adjusted to the annually changing financial circumstances. This also means that not all writer's house museums can be equally cared for at the same time—the association frequently utilizes important anniversaries of certain writers and request money in order to renovate their former houses and to organize anniversary events. The latest example for this is the János Arany Museum of Nagyszalonta, which was renovated due to the János Arany Memorial Year of 2017-2018. However, as is clear from the curators' accounts and interviews, this system also means that sometimes the buildings and exhibitions are completely neglected until the next anniversary. Therefore, even though the short term objectives are aligned with the Association's mission, due to the current financial issues their vision is yet to be realized: writer's house museums cannot be an active, living part of local communities if attention is only given to them every ten-fifteen years.

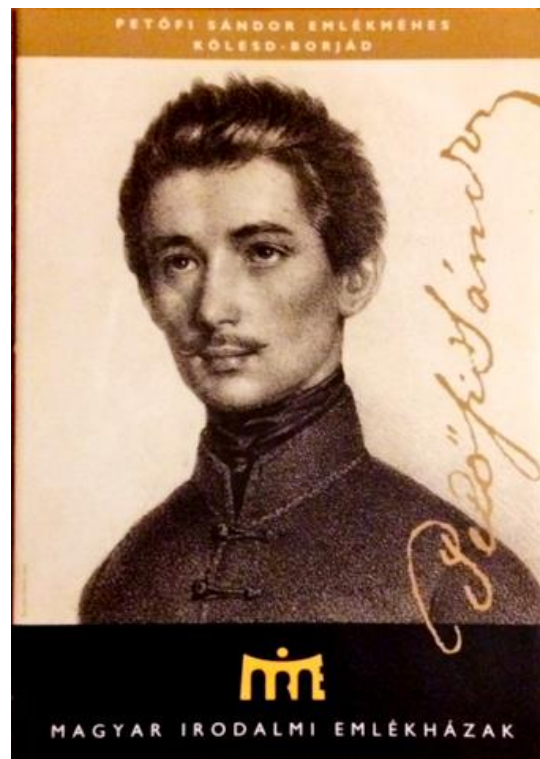
## 2.1.3 Communication and PR

MIRE is a brand that joins together over sixty writer's house museums in Hungary. However, measures to highlight this brand always come second when applying for funding, as the upkeep of the facilities and exhibitions is a priority in the association's financial planning. There were initial attempts to represent MIRE as a brand at the beginning of their work: leaflets for every museum were created with the logo of MIRE, with a consistent design that made the association easily recognizable.<sup>65</sup> The original aim was to display all the leaflets in all the

---

<sup>65</sup> Figure 1.

museums, so that the visitors can learn about other similar institutions as well. This plan quickly came to a halt when some museums refused to display information about other literary destinations.<sup>66</sup> Since then attempts to strengthen the brand value of MIRE have been scarce, both in terms of institutional marketing and programmatic marketing. The opening of a new exhibition or an author's anniversary receives moderate media attention; and the MIRE website remains incomplete. Recommendations to strengthen the marketing area in MIRE's operations will be discussed in Chapter 4.



*Figure 1.*  
*The leaflet for the Petőfi Birthplace, with the MIRE logo at the bottom. Photo by Veronika Budai.*

---

<sup>66</sup> Interview with Gabriella Gulyás.

## 2.1.4. Visitors information/Customer relations

Today writer's house museums mostly build on organized visits from schools, thus in the modernization process they invested heavily in creating modern spaces and equipment for museum pedagogy. Their buyer persona is a child or teenager, attending elementary or high school, who most probably have no strong interest in literature, and their attention span is limited. They are usually on an obligatory class trip. Making them concentrate requires modern technology—touch screens, audio-visual presentations—and interactive games and tasks. The original objects of literary figures, such as pipes, typewriters, or handwritten notes, do not necessarily fascinate them: they require a new and innovative approach. At the same time curators also have to think of another buyer persona, domestic tourists who visit attractions of the region and feel obliged to pay their respects at former homes of famous authors. They, as opposed to children, value authenticity and historical descriptions, and also original furniture and interiors, and expect to get these for their money. Curators have to balance between these two very different visitor categories, and provide ample entertainment and information for both. It is a hard task, especially if the museum does not have money to employ a dedicated professional to deal with museum education. They also cannot expect that visitors have actually read works by the author, so it is especially hard to have an impact in that regard. Based on the above, there is clearly no single type of writer's house museum, since they have to cater to a rather wide audience. Depending on the aims, funding, and the available professionals, the concept of these institutions vary to a great extent.

### 3. Member institutions and categorization

Despite the central role of the Petőfi Literary Museum, MIRE's true core comprises of its member institutions. According to a list finalized on November 6, 2017, the Association has 65 members.<sup>67</sup> Not all of the member organisations are writer's house museums—some are memorial rooms or memorial places (such as the Júlia Szendrey Memorial Room in Keszthely); some are civil associations who agree with the mission of MIRE (such as the János Arany Association for Culture). The Department of Public Collections at the Ministry of Human Capacities' Department of Public Collections is also a member of the Association. Where the writer's house museum is under the jurisdiction of the county museum—for example, in the case of the Babits House in Szekszárd, which is part of the Wosinszky Mór County Museum—the main institutions is the official member of MIRE. In the case of the city of Pápa, where the church collection also holds objects relating to Petőfi and Jókai, the city municipality is the member organisation in MIRE, whereas the István Fekete Museum is a member under the name of its private collector, Imre Bodó.

---

<sup>67</sup> I received the list from Mirella Csiszár after our interview, and it can be found in the Appendix 2. According to the MIRE website the Association has only 49 members, but it is not frequently updated.



Figure 2.  
The distribution of MIRE members. Map created by Veronika Budai.

As the map in Figure 2 shows there is a wide distribution of member institutions throughout Hungary, including some museums across the state border as well. Most writer's house museums are concentrated in the western part of Hungary.

The interviews and investigations made it instantly clear that there is an immense variety among these institutions, and all of them should be treated as individual cases. This variety is also visible in the different membership statuses described above. Still, for the sake of the thesis, I created a framework for categorization, so that representative samples can be selected.

Firstly, I relied on the three categories Andrea Benkő offered in her essay on the Petőfi Literary Museum's commemorative exhibition about the Revolution of 1956.<sup>68</sup> Her primary goal was to set up different categories of literary exhibitions, but her ideas are applicable to writer's house museums as well. The first category is the *reconstructive* exhibition. The aim of these exhibitions is to reconstruct, with archaeological preciseness, the surroundings and the interiors where the author lived, without providing any additional material. This type of representation

<sup>68</sup> Gulyás, *Az Irodalmi Kiállítás Természetrájza (The Nature of the Literary Exhibition)*, 20-31.

relies heavily on original objects or objects that look authentic.<sup>69</sup> The second one is the *illustrative* exhibition. Here images and texts are combined, mutually explaining one another, similar to a picture book. Thirdly, there are also *metaphorical* exhibitions, where objects, images, texts, and other materials work together to express a certain understanding of the author's work—usually that of the curator. In this case the curator has a major role being a mediator between the visitor and the author, providing a subjective explanation of the literary works along certain motifs, genres, or biographical events.

By nature, writer's house museums are connected to material objects or buildings, as the reason for their protection is the authenticity they provide, a chance to get closer to the author by observing the room where they were born, a collection of pipes, an original desk or typewriter. Based on this characteristic, they originally all belonged to the reconstructive category. However, during my visits to writer's house, I observed the variety of different ways in which curators currently use the authors' original objects and furniture. Some base the entire exhibition on these items, while others choose to push them to the background and place the literary texts in the centre, using the objects as metaphors rather than the core of the presentation. My visits to museums and the case studies demonstrate that most writer's house museums in Hungary have left the realms of the reconstructive exhibition and they now fit in the other two aforementioned categories.

The case studies for the following chapter were selected in order to present one museum in each of these categories. The Petőfi House in Kiskőrös houses a primarily reconstructive

---

<sup>69</sup> The question of authenticity in museums has been widely discussed in international scholarship. See: Anne-Marie Hede, "A Journey to the Authentic: Museum Visitors and Their Negotiation of the Inauthentic," *Journal of Marketing Management* 26, no. 7–8 (2010): 686–705.

Juan Gabriel Brida, "The Visitors' Perception of Authenticity at the Museums: Archaeology versus Modern Art," *Current Issues in Tourism* 17, no. 6 (2014): 518–38.

Constanze Hampf, "The Role of Authentic Objects in Museums of the History of Science and Technology: Findings from a Visitor Study," *International Journal of Science Education* 5, no. 2 (2015): 161–81.

exhibition; the Babits House in Szekszárd and the one in Esztergom are examples for the illustrative category; while the József Attila exhibitions in Balatonszárszó and Budapest create a highly metaphorical environment that invites the visitor to leave behind the canonized image of the poet.

“You will never guess the truth, but the road itself might guide you.”<sup>70</sup>

## Chapter 3 - Case Studies

### 1. The Birthplace of Sándor Petőfi in Kiskőrös<sup>71</sup>

#### 1.1. History of the house

The figure of Sándor Petőfi has been cemented in Hungarian cultural history ever since the Hungarian uprising and revolution of 1848-49. The former destitute actor from the countryside, who became a popular journalist and poet in the 1840s, performed his perhaps most influential historical act on March 15, 1848 when he wrote his *Nemzeti Dal* (National Song), and stood in front of the National Museum to read the list of twelve demands aimed at the ruling power of the time, the Habsburgs. His martyr death in the battle of Segesvár in 1849 only strengthened his popularity, and legends began to circulate about his possible survival and escape immediately. Although literary history has always been indeterminate about the value of his poetry, Petőfi's name has been inextricably bound up with ideas such as national sovereignty, liberty, and his cult has been an integral part of Hungarian cultural life for more than 150 years.

It is, thus, not surprising that his birthplace became the first writer's house museum in Hungary—or rather, a site of literary pilgrimage. The building was acquired by the Hungarian Association of Writers and Artists, a non-governmental group of civilians, in 1878. Interestingly,

---

<sup>70</sup>“Sohase sejtethet az igazit, / de tán az út maga eligazít”: Lőrinc Szabó, “Csavargók (Vagabonds),” Collected Poems of Lőrinc Szabó, accessed May 25, 2018, [http://dia.pool.pim.hu/html/muvek/SZABOL/szabol00154\\_kv.html](http://dia.pool.pim.hu/html/muvek/SZABOL/szabol00154_kv.html).

<sup>71</sup> The information in this section comes from my interview with Ilona Kispálné Lucza, unless otherwise referenced.



at the time of the official inauguration, where Hungarian writer Mór Jókai gave the opening speech, only the room where the poet was born could be visited, as the other half of the house was still occupied by a tenant. At the time, the shrine itself was empty, without any relics or objects. The Association donated the house to the city of Kiskőrös in 1890, stating that they wish it to remain open to the public, and house objects and relics related to Petőfi.<sup>72</sup> It was only at the time of the centenary of the Revolution, in 1948/49, that a plan for an exhibition was first devised; and the whole house opened as an official writer's house museum in 1951, complete with the former furniture of the Petőfi family.<sup>73</sup>

It is not a coincidence that the real museum came into existence in the 1950s, at the beginning of the Socialist era in Hungary. Although Petőfi's constantly changing image of in Hungarian political life would fill a separate thesis, it is worth to note here how much the cult of Petőfi was supported by the Communist government. At the ceremony organized for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the poet's death, Márton Horváth, one of the leaders of the culture department of the Hungarian Communist Party, stated that Petőfi was the "bolshevik of his own time."<sup>74</sup> The title of Horváth's lecture—"Our flag: Petőfi"—became a catchphrase and a part of the new government's agenda. The party aimed at creating a unified communist culture in Hungary, for which the simple and folk-based approach of Petőfi's poetry seemed an ideal tool. Therefore the house in Kiskőrös saw no end of organized visits from schools, factories, and government institutions. After the change of the political system in 1989, these mandatory visits ceased, and a new era began for the Petőfi House.

<sup>72</sup> Praznovszky, *Irodalmi emlékházak térben és időben*, 20.

<sup>73</sup> "Birthplace of Sándor Petőfi," Association of Hungarian Literary Memorial Places, accessed May 25, 2018, <http://www.mire.hu/hu/museums/32/description>.

<sup>74</sup> Márton Horváth, *Lobogónk: Petőfi. Irodalmi Cikkek És Tanulmányok (Our Flag: Petőfi. Articles and Essays on Literature)* (Budapest: Szikra Könyvkiadó, 1950). 186.

## 1.2. The Petőfi House today<sup>75</sup>

The Petőfi House is unique among the other MIRE members in that the local government undertook the role of the caretaker long before the 2012 resolution—since January 1, 1998, the writer’s house museum, which welcomes around 20,000 visitors annually, is under the jurisdiction of the town of Kiskőrös. This move symbolizes the overall attitude of the local government to the literary heritage of the town—they realize its value and do everything in their power to cultivate the Petőfi cult. Over the years they created a town center that, in the words of the curator, Ilona Kispálné Lucza, “radiates Petőfi.” Two examples for this are the Petőfi Trails, where the visitors can walk along a wooden walkway to tour the major Petőfi-related sights in the city; or the town-wide competition in which citizens could nominate their favourite Petőfi quotes and suggest where they should be displayed in Kiskőrös. The winning quotes are still visible as we walk through the town of 14,000 inhabitants.

Today the Petőfi House consists of three separate but thematically somewhat connected parts—Petőfi’s Birthplace, the Slovakian Regional House, and a Petőfi-themed art exhibition. These are all located within walking distance from each other in Kiskőrös. According to the curator, Ilona Kispálné Lucza, the aim of this structure is to present the value of Petőfi and the town from three different aspects—that of a literary cult, ethnography and art.

The birthplace is a traditional peasant house with three sections, built towards the end of the eighteenth century<sup>76</sup>. The bedroom where the poet was born is the one that stood empty and welcomed visitors since the nineteenth century. It now contains the original bed and some other pieces of furniture. The kitchen area is equipped with bowls and instruments of the age; and in

<sup>75</sup> To supplement the case studies and contemporary portraits of the museums, statistics on visitors numbers, the number of temporary and permanent exhibitions and media appearances can be found in Appendix 4,5 and 6.

<sup>76</sup> Figure 3.

the third room documents and equipment relating to Petőfi's birth, and contemporary childhood in general, are exhibited. The visitor can also observe Petőfi's pipes and inkwell, and the kitchen utensils of his childhood nanny. The former pantry now functions as a library and office.

The birthplace is a traditional example of reconstructive exhibition: it is intended to recreate the environment and the atmosphere of the poet's early years, relying on original belongings and period furniture, without any further explanation of the literary works. However, the museum is unique in the sense that it also has an additional building besides the house, which houses a more detailed exhibition on the life and reception of Petőfi.<sup>77</sup> This exhibition is also traditional, following the narrative of the poet's biography, but at the same time it gives an overview of the history of the region as well, bolstering Petőfi's identity in the town of Kiskőrös.



*Figure 3.*  
*The birthplace of Sándor Petőfi in 2018. Photo by Veronika Budai.*

This building is also home to art exhibitions, which provides an opportunity for the management team of five to open up the traditional concept of the reconstructive exhibition, and

---

<sup>77</sup> Figure 4.

involve local and international audiences in the museum. They showcase the works of the local art school and hold competitions every year for Petőfi-themed artworks. Joining forces with civil organizations, they also organize an annual international camp for graphic designers.



*Figure 4.*  
*The exhibition in the new building of the Petőfi Museum. Photo courtesy of the museum's website, [petofimuzeum.hu](http://petofimuzeum.hu).*

Another place designed to facilitate local involvement is the Slovakian regional house and the ethnography collection of the museum. The curator recounted how they try to involve local craftsmen in showcasing traditional arts and crafts and how successful this method is for reaching wider audiences. One of the craftsmen who was asked to participate admitted that she has always been interested in the museum but was afraid to enter her whole life, so she valued highly the curator's invitation.

Local outreach is also visible in other efforts. The museum has a good relationship with the local minority governments, and they house the annual recital competition where contestants

present Petőfi poems in three different minority languages. For local students they invite contemporary authors and offer literature classes, all free of charge.

There are also events that reach people outside of Kiskőrös, such as the annual Petőfi New Year's Celebrations. The poet was born on January 1, 1823, and every year the local government invites one-year-old children with the same birthday to Kiskőrös to take part in the celebrations and to present them with a numbered copy of Petőfi's works. The event includes a dinner, a concert, a theater performance, and the visitors place a wreath at the birthplace. Finally, after midnight, the group visits the local church where the original copy of the poet's birth certificate is kept. This event is well known in the whole country and has become a celebrated occasion to honor Petőfi's cult and to involve people from different backgrounds.

To conclude, the first Hungarian writer's house museum managed successfully to depart from the traditional reconstructive exhibition, where local involvement would have been hardly conceivable. Today the museum still functions as a place for literary cult but at the same time provides space for local art and socializing. This would not be possible without the dedicated involvement of the local government—every year at the New Year's Eve celebrations the mayor pledges to continue to support the museum and to cultivate the poet's legacy. The results are visible: the multifaceted museum has won several awards in the past years, for example, they were named Museum of the Year in 2011.<sup>78</sup>

---

<sup>78</sup> "Az Év Múzeuma-Díj (List of the Museum of the Year Recipients)," Pulszky Társaság (Pulszky Society), accessed May 25, 2018, <http://pulszky.hu/diak/az-ev-muzeuma-dij/>.

## 2. The Babits Houses of Szekszárd <sup>79</sup>

### 2.1. History of the house

Today the works of Mihály Babits, a poet from the famous *Nyugat* group, are still read by many and are part of the national school curriculum, celebrating his aims to create the concept of the modern Hungarian poetry. However, contrary to the figures of Sándor Petőfi and Attila József, his reception was not always favorable. Even in his lifetime his self-doubting character, his professional rigor and his wish to differentiate his poetry from his contemporaries caused debates in the literary world.<sup>80</sup> He had strong objections against the work of György Lukács, a Marxist literary historian after their first meeting in 1910, and especially after Lukács invited him to join the then illegal Communist party. Consequently, after World War II the Communist Party ignored his poetic oeuvre, and the previously mentioned Márton Horváth wrote several articles against his work.<sup>81</sup> Only a selection of his writings were allowed to be published for decades, and the first complete collection of his poems came out in 1991. However, his former home in Szekszárd has been used as an exhibition space since 1967.

The building in Szekszárd was built in the 1780s. Babits's grandfather purchased it in 1855, and Mihály Babits was born here November 26, 1883. He spent the first six years of his life in this house, before the family had to move to Budapest and Pécs for work. After the death of the father in 1898, Babits's mother moved back to Szekszárd with his two younger siblings, so he returned to the city frequently during his studies and after his marriage. His last visit was in 1939, two years before his death.

<sup>79</sup> The information in this section comes from my interview with Csilla Lovas, unless otherwise referenced.

<sup>80</sup> Lajos Sipos, „„Mindig Lesz Benne Felfedeznivaló” - A Babits-Recepcióról (‘We Will Always Have Something to Discover in Him’ - On the Babits Reception),” *Forrás* 41, no. 6 (2009): 63–82.65.

<sup>81</sup> Sipos, 67.

The house became the property of the state in 1952, and renowned author Gyula Illyés opened the first exhibition in 1967. It is worth noting that this was not the result of state initiative: an employee at the county museum, Lajosné Vendel-Mohay, took up collecting Babits-related documents and other memorabilia.<sup>82</sup> At this point only the ground floor was available to visitors, the first floor was used by tenants. The whole building became a museum in 1983, in the year of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the poet's birth.

## 2.2. The Babits House today

The Babits House is under the jurisdiction of the Wosinszky Mór County Museum of Szekszárd, and in fact houses not one but four writer's house museums: the bequest of writer Miklós Mészöly, philosopher and dance theorist Valéria Dienes and poet István Baka can also be found in the building.<sup>83</sup> Mészöly's widow, Elaine Polcz, donated the bequest to the town of Szekszárd in 2004, because it was the hometown of the writer and because opening a separate museum for him in Budapest was not possible at the time. The Mészöly exhibition is a reconstructive one: the curators essentially recreated the interior of the couple's Budapest apartment, with items such as part of their library, the desk, the typewriter, reading diary, slippers, and a checked shirt.<sup>84</sup> The town purchased the house next to the Babits House to realize the exhibition, and the two spaces have been connected. The enterprise cost the town nearly 30 million HUF, and the sole ownership of the recently deceased author's objects was a matter of prestige for the management. The case of Valéria Dienes and István Baka are similar: both are connected to the town, and the local government finds it important to exhibit their legacy and to

---

<sup>82</sup> Judit Jankó, "Szekszárdi Emlékszobák Születése (The Birth of the Memorial Rooms of Szekszárd)," *Múzeumcafé* 5, no. 26 (2011): 68–73.

<sup>83</sup> Figure 5.

<sup>84</sup> Figure 7.

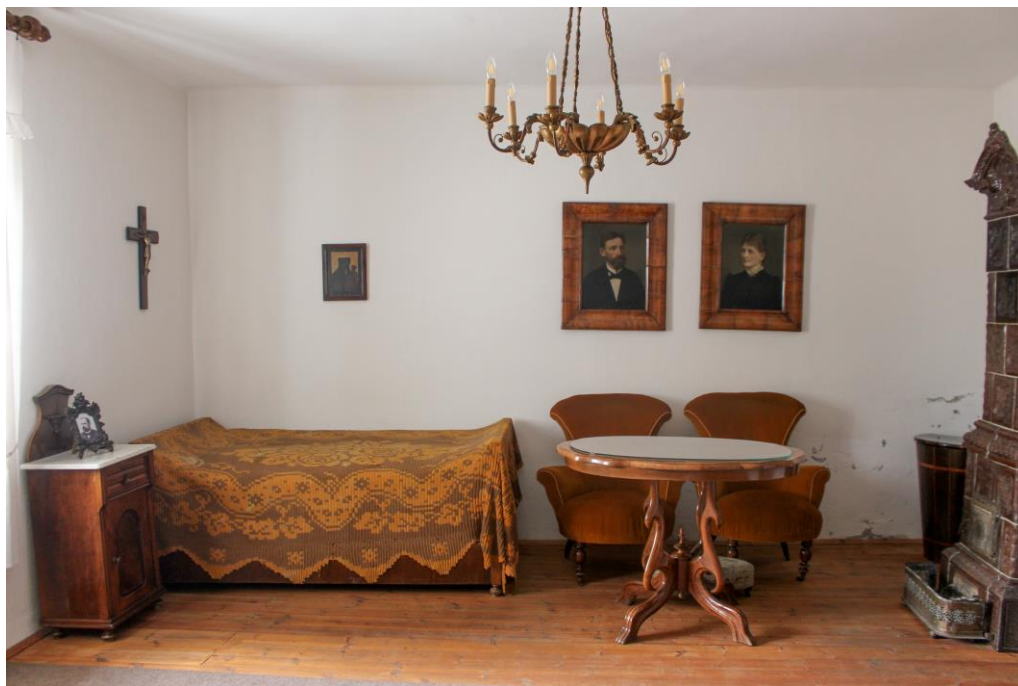


keep their memory alive. Mészöly's name also marks the annual prize of 500,000 HUF awarded to talented young authors. As a matched fund, half of this sum is provided by the local government, the other half by the Miklós Mészöly Association, which owns the rights to Mészöly's work.



*Figure 5.  
The garden of the Babits House of Szekszárd. Photo by Veronika Budai.*





*Figure 6.  
The room where Babits was born. Photo by Veronika Budai.*



*Figure 7.  
A reconstructed room at the Miklós Mészöly exhibition. Photo by Veronika Budai.*

Besides the Mészöly, Dienes and Baka displays, the main attraction of the museum complex is the Babits House, and it is the main destination of visitors and school groups. Today the exhibition consists of two separate sections. On the ground floor they introduce interiors and furniture that inspired Babits's work, with a special focus on his novel, *Halálfiái*.<sup>85</sup> This idea stems from the first exhibition, and according to the curator, Csilla Lovas, it is still the best way to introduce Babits to the public. Original objects include the bed where the poet was born and pieces from his extensive library, donated by his wife, Sophie Török. The Babits House, however, is not a reconstructive exhibition. It pairs interiors with poetry as a testament of Babits's idea: "The writer writes about the impressions of his childhood and youth in his whole life—with every nerve he lives in the world that he saw around him at that time."<sup>86</sup> Thus the Babits House is presented as a picture book, where the poetic texts are in the focus and the rooms and furniture serve as illustrations. For this purpose, recommended poems are showcased in every room, providing an opportunity for the visitor to find the connection between life and art.

The education room is found upstairs, with equipment for watching videos and listening to Babits poems, many of which are recited by the poet himself. To involve visiting students and young people, there is also an interactive game where they can vote for their favourite Babits quote using coloured pieces of paper.<sup>87</sup>

---

<sup>85</sup> Figure 6.

<sup>86</sup> "Mihály Babits House in Szekszárd," Association of Hungarian Literary Memorial Places, accessed May 25, 2018, <http://www.mire.hu/en/museums/50/description>.

<sup>87</sup> Figure 8.



*Figure 8.  
Young visitors vote for their favourite Babits poem. Photo by Veronika Budai.*

In the 2000s the house underwent extensive renovation works. In 2008 they received funding from the Renaissance Year and the Alfa Program, and the Babits exhibition received its current illustrative form. Before, as visible in the pictures from Csilla Lovas's personal archives, the house contained more of a reconstructive exhibition, with documents, photos and books exhibited in glass cases, and no parallel was drawn between the biography of Babits and his poetry.<sup>88</sup> The Mészöly exhibition was also refurbished in 2010. Recently the curator was able to open a position and hire an education officer who provides activities and special classes for the school groups that frequently visit the museum. This is also part of the modern approach that Csilla Lovas advocates, while at the same time she still builds the displays on the “spirit of the place,” on the authenticity of the building and the objects.

The professional opinion is divided about the new museum complex which is what the Babits House has essentially become. Author and educator Judit Jankó celebrates the hard work

<sup>88</sup> Figure 9.

of the authors' widows and that of the curator, and claims that the museum was essentially a crowdsourcing venture, depending solely on the enthusiasm and faith of its dedicated founders and employees, especially in the contemporary climate of cultural financing.<sup>89</sup> This resonates with what Csilla Lovas says about MIRE and writer's house museums in general: most of the time their success is due to the one employee who strives to find creative solutions and financial resources. On the other hand, professor of aesthetics and author Péter György in his article on the museums of Szekszárd claims that county museums are products of the nineteenth-century, an era that is long gone, and these institutions still struggle to find their new role in the provincial community. He also criticizes the Mészöly, Dienes and Baka exhibitions, saying that since none of them actually lived in the rooms where their belongings are exhibited, the literary pilgrimage can never be fulfilled there: "In the empty space filled with objects we suddenly feel that the person we love had stood here once. If this is only an embarrassing fantasy, we only face the frightening orphanage of the slippers, the red-checkered shirt and the glasses. Ghosts prefer original venues."<sup>90</sup>

---

<sup>89</sup> Jankó, "Szekszárdi Emlékszobák Születése (The Birth of the Memorial Rooms of Szekszárd)."

<sup>90</sup> Péter György, "Múzeumkritika - Wosinszky Mór Megyei Múzeum (Museum Criticism - Mór Wosinszky County Museum)," *Élet És Irodalom* 50, no. 29 (2006), <http://regi.sofar.hu/hu/node/59656>.



*Figure 9.*  
*The original Babits exhibition consisted mainly of glass cases and original photographs, documents.*  
*Photo courtesy of Csilla Lovas.*

Regardless of the debate, the Babits House receives 6000 visitors annually, the Miklós Mészöly House 2500. This figure, compared to the 15,000 visitors to the Mór Wosinszky County Museum, is not insignificant. The museum team also strives to engage as many local visitors as possible, sometimes with exhibitions that are not fully related to Babits. For example, in 2009 they organized a ceramic exhibition, in 2011 on the Night of the Museums there was an evening dedicated to the portrayal of eroticism in art responding to the collection of Babits's well-known translations of erotic poems.<sup>91</sup> In 2014 the VízP' Art Foundation organized a summer camp called Garden of the Muses for children together with the museum. During the week 13 children created artworks with the help of professional artists. Regular family days are also organized, where children can draw, see plays, and have child-friendly guided tours. The museum also tries

---

<sup>91</sup> "Erotika a szekszárdi Babits-házban (Eroticism in the Babits House of Szekszárd)," Kultúra.hu, June 22, 2011, <https://www.kultura.hu/irodalom-archivum/erotika-szekszardi>.

to organize events outside its walls, for example, they had a popular walking tour to the former vineyard of the Babits family. In all, despite the lack of funding they are eager to find creative solutions to involve the local community. The aim is the same as in the other writer's house museums: to keep the legacy of the author alive, which means keeping alive the museum as well.

### 3. The birthplace of Attila József in Budapest<sup>92</sup>

#### 3.1. History of the house

Similarly to the previous authors, the poetry and biography of Attila József is also a central part of Hungarian literary canon, and he shares a few similarities with Sándor Petőfi. His 1937 death, hit by a train in Balatonszárszó, has become the topic of heated debates and theories about whether the incident was a suicide or not, and if so, what were the main causes of the poet's lifelong depression. The Communist government also appropriated his figure after World War II. As József was for some time a supporter of the then illegal Communist party, it was easy to characterize him as the first proletarian poet. The previously mentioned Márton Horváth even claimed that the only real community to which the otherwise homeless József belonged was the Communist Party.<sup>93</sup> The poems inspired by the ideas of Communism were placed in the center of the canon, and the later works of his poetic development were largely ignored.

Opening a memorial place at the house where Attila József was born April 11, 1905, was certainly on the agenda of the government. The original house is under 3 Gát Street in the Ferencváros district of Budapest. The area at the time was known for its factories, and most of the residents were workers, just as the parents of Attila József. The building at 3 Gát Street was

<sup>92</sup> Information in this section comes from the interview with Ilona H. Bagó, unless otherwise referenced.

<sup>93</sup> Márton Horváth, "A Kommunista József Attila (The Communist Attila József)," in *Lobogónk: Petőfi. Irodalmi Cikkék És Tanulmányok (Our Flag: Petőfi. Articles and Essays on Literature)* (Budapest: Szikra Könyvkiadó, 1950), 70–73.

built to satisfy the increasing need for small, affordable rental apartments—by 1896 there were around 8,000 people working in Ferencváros.<sup>94</sup> Due to their dire financial situation, the family had to move several times over the years, especially after the father, Áron József, left them in 1908. Although the poet only lived in Gát Street for three months, the address became a symbolic place for modern Hungarian poetry.

As a consequence of constantly moving, Attila József never really felt at home anywhere, a fact impressed upon the visitor by the present website of the museum. As there is no certifiable evidence for which apartment József was born in exactly, the first memorial place was opened on the ground floor in 1964, in an apartment purportedly similar to the original one, with only one room and a kitchen area.<sup>95</sup><sup>96</sup> The opening of the museum was part of the first commemoration of the newly introduced National Day of Poetry held on the birthday of Attila József.<sup>97</sup> This day continues to be celebrated every year in Hungary, and the museum at Gát utca is still open for the public, although in a considerably different form.

---

<sup>94</sup> Tamás Födő, “Gát Utca: Itt Született József Attila (Gát Street: The Birthplace of Attila József),” *National Geographic Hungary*, April 11, 2018, <http://www.ng.hu/Civilizacio/2018/04/11/Gat-utca-itt-szuletett-Jozsef-Attila>.

<sup>95</sup> Website of the Attila József Memorial, accessed May 25, 2018, <http://jaemlekhely.hu/>.

<sup>96</sup> Figure 10.

<sup>97</sup> Serf András, “József Attila államosítása: amikor először ültük meg a költészet napját (The Nationalization of Attila József: When We First Celebrated the Day of Poetry),” *Qubit*, April 11, 2018, <https://qubit.hu/2018/04/11/jozsef-attila-allamositasa-amikor-eloszor-ultuk-meg-a-kolteszet-napjat>.





*Figure 10.*

*The original Attila József museum was located in a simple apartment with a kitchen and a bedroom. Today only a model of it remains in the new location. Photo by Veronika Budai.*

## 3.2. The Attila József Memorial Site today

### 3.2.1. The renovation

The original building was built in 1891 and no structural renovations took place until 2014, when the district decided to modernize 3 and 5 Gát Street. The new buildings, with 38 modern and insulated apartments for those in need, were inaugurated October 9, 2014.<sup>98</sup> However, since the structure was unsalvageable and the walls had demolished completely, the original Attila József Memorial Site is now gone. According to the local government this step was necessary due to modern insulation requirements, which were not viable with the original

---

<sup>98</sup> "Szociális Városrehabilitáció: Megújult József Attila Szülőháza (Social City Rehabilitation: Attila József's Birthplace Has Been Renewed)," Website of Ferencváros, October 9, 2014, [http://www.ferencvaros.hu/index0.php?name=hir\\_141009\\_gu35](http://www.ferencvaros.hu/index0.php?name=hir_141009_gu35).



thickness and material of the walls.<sup>99</sup> The museum received a new area in the street-facing side of the new building, with a significantly larger exhibition space and a new welcome area. As previously there were no toilet facilities and the site was not wheelchair accessible, with this decision the museum was updated to meet the twenty-first-century requirements and visitor expectations. At the same time, eighteen families in financial need received modern, comfortable council homes in the building.<sup>100</sup> Bearing these facts in mind the Petőfi Literary Museum Budapest, whose team was given the task of creating a new exhibition, could easily accept the venue change and the loss of the original museum.<sup>101</sup> Not so much the public. Right around the time of the demolition heated discussions emerged, debating the authenticity of the new building and the new exhibition. Urban critic and journalist Lajos Csordás wrote two articles in the daily newspaper *Népszabadság*, focusing on the loss of the original apartment, and likened the questions around the renovation project to that of the similarly debated Várkert Bazár.<sup>102</sup>

---

<sup>99</sup> Csordás Lajos, “József Attila szülőháza: Törölték az emeletet (The Birthplace of Attila József: They Demolished the Upper Floor),” NOL.hu, March 2, 2014, [http://nol.hu/kultura/20140301-toroltek\\_az\\_emeletet-1447993](http://nol.hu/kultura/20140301-toroltek_az_emeletet-1447993).

<sup>100</sup> Figure 11.

<sup>101</sup> H. Bagó and Gulyás, “Lépkedek Haza... - A Magyar Irodalmi Emlékházak Megújulása (Walking Home... The Renewal of Hungarian Writer’s House Museums).” 125.

<sup>102</sup> Csordás Lajos, “A Gát utcában is kísért a Várkert Bazár szelleme (The Ghost of Várkert Bazár Haunts Gát Street),” NOL.hu, April 14, 2015, <http://nol.hu/kultura/harmincket-ev-egy-teremben-1527873>.



*Figure 11.*  
*The new apartment building at Gát utca. The museum is behind similar green windows. Photo by Veronika Budai.*

Despite the seemingly general disapproval, as Ilona H. Bagó highlighted in our interview, the exact apartment where the poet was born remains unknown, and the fact that József's story began at 3 Gát Street suffices to justify the presence of the museum here. Her words are also reflected in professional opinion and visitor numbers: the new exhibition was awarded the "Best Exhibition of 2015" title by the Hungarian Museum Association, and visitors numbers rose from 1,057 (2012) to 4,737 (2016).<sup>103</sup>

The finances behind this success, however, are only partly related to the activities of MIRE. The district received funding for the project from the European Union, and asked for the

---

<sup>103</sup>Kalla Zsuzsa, "Az év kiállítása 2015: Eszmelet. A József Attila Emlékhely kiállítása (Exhibition of the Year 2015: Consciousness. The Exhibition of the Attila József Memorial Site)," May 21, 2016, [http://archiv.magyar-muzeumok.hu/kiallitas/3296\\_az\\_ev\\_kiallitasa\\_2015\\_eszmelet\\_a\\_jozsef\\_attila\\_emlekhely\\_kiallitasa](http://archiv.magyar-muzeumok.hu/kiallitas/3296_az_ev_kiallitasa_2015_eszmelet_a_jozsef_attila_emlekhely_kiallitasa).

help of PIM only after the application was submitted.<sup>104</sup> However, the memorial site is now part of MIRE, and the curator of the new exhibition is Ilona H. Bagó, one of the leading figures of the Association.

### 3.2.2. The new exhibition

The new Attila József exhibition consists of three circles that lead the visitor through the poet's life, from birth to death, symbolizing his disheveled road from childhood in poverty, through university studies in Szeged, Vienna and Paris, his relationship with women that usually ended in heartbreak and anxiety, and eventually his tragically early death at Balatonszárszó.<sup>105</sup> The exhibition provides photographs, original documents, videos; visitors can listen to poetry recitals and see József's few remaining original objects. The whole journey is narrated in the poet's own words. There is no curatorial text in the museum. His notes, his poems, his letters are the eyewitnesses of the life that ended in tragically early. Instead of interpreting the available facts, Ilona H. Bagó gave the role to József, who is perhaps the most reliable narrator. His poetry tells more about his life and speaks more to his fans than a few meaningless objects that were previously exhibited. as his wallet and his passport cannot tell the story by themselves, even the most prestigious object, his pocket watch, is out of the focus of the exhibition, and is placed above the interactive device on display in the middle of the innermost circle.<sup>106</sup> This device symbolizes a well, where the visitor can drop the "stones" (cardboard tokens with touch sensors) in the middle to release further information about various aspects of József's life—his great love affairs or the chronology of his life. The display also invites the visitors to play a game where

<sup>104</sup> H. Bagó and Gulyás, "Lépkedek Haza... - A Magyar Irodalmi Emlékházak Megújulása (Walking Home... The Renewal of Hungarian Writer's House Museums)." 125.

<sup>105</sup> Figure 12.

<sup>106</sup> Figure 13.

they have to recognize his poems from a word cloud—while the pocket watch merely reminds them of the finiteness of life. This display element encapsulates many functions that a modern literary exhibition can offer. Instead of reconstruction, it provides a highly metaphorical view of József's life, something that adult visitors can contemplate after their visit; at the same time it offers a new perspective and fun games for visiting children and young adults. The exhibition manages the perfect balance of edutainment: it is very informative about the life and works of one of the most famous Hungarian poets, while its technological inventions and zigzagging pathways entertain the younger generation as well.



Figure 13.

*The interactive device in the exhibition serves many purposes – in these photos it present the great loves of the poet's life, and also offers a game where visitors have to recognize a few of his literary works. Photo by Veronika Budai.*



*Figure 12.  
A winding spiral path leads the visitor among Attila József's poems and memories. Photo by Veronika Budai.*

### 3.2.3. Events and local involvement

Besides the innovative exhibition, the other attraction of the Attila József Memorial Site is the extensive offer of education sessions that school groups can choose from. There are classes for different age groups and they aim to process different aspects of the poet's life, highlighting the social-historical aspects as well. Younger visitors can learn about toys in József's age or memorize poems in an entertaining way; for high school students sessions are available about the society and trades of the 1920s and 1930s, and they can also find out more about the complicated love life of the poet.

Furthermore, the museum organizes 1 or 2 events every month, mostly literary nights with contemporary authors and journalists. They have a yearly poetry recital competition, where contestants choose a poem by Attila József, and two others by other Hungarian poets. The museum also developed a mobile application that introduces other sites related to Attila József in the area. The local government also takes part in keeping the memory of the poet alive and they organize several events during the annual Day of Poetry, for example, a competition of video

work based on the poems of József.<sup>107</sup> The memorial site also liaises with the schools in the district. In 2018 they organized a competition for the students based on the aforementioned mobile application, and they also organised the so-called “poem couriers”: groups from local schools who commemorated the National Day of Poetry by reading out poems for the members of the public at various institutions and on public transport.<sup>108</sup>

To summarize, both the local government of Ferencváros and Attila József Memorial Site aim to involve the locals—especially the younger generation—in the cultivation of the poet’s literary heritage. As Gáborné Kállay, the district’s Deputy of Culture, claims “the main goal of these events is to raise young people’s awareness of the literary value of Attila József; and once they become involved, the future of Hungarian poetry will no longer be in danger.”<sup>109</sup> It is worth noting, however, that whether the interest of the younger generation in poetry is really sustained in the long run by these official events has never been surveyed before, and certainly the protection of Attila József’s poetry does not secure the future of Hungarian literature in general. On the other hand, the approach of gamification that the local government and the Memorial Site’s curators take in order to involve children and teenagers is one step towards a sustainable management of writer’s house museums.<sup>110</sup>

---

<sup>107</sup> Budapest Főváros IX Kerület Ferencváros Önkormányzata, “József Attila mindenkiNET,” Website of the Attila József Video Competition, accessed May 25, 2018, <http://www.jozsefattilamindenkinet.hu/index.html>.

<sup>108</sup> In a similar initiative in the same year the museum published a performance video created on their premises with the participation of local schoolchildren singing an Attila József poem, led by the song’s composer, Ferenc Sebő.

<sup>109</sup> “Költészet Hete (Week of Poetry),” Website of Ferencváros, April 11, 2018, [http://www.ferencvaros.hu/index0.php?name=hir\\_180411\\_Kolteszet\\_hete](http://www.ferencvaros.hu/index0.php?name=hir_180411_Kolteszet_hete).

<sup>110</sup> More about gamification is cultural heritage: Marinos Ioannides, *Mixed Reality and Gamification for Cultural Heritage* (New York: Springer International Publishing, 2017).

“Here we find in one room: past, future and present...”<sup>111</sup>

## Chapter 4 - Evaluation and Recommendations

### 1. Evaluation of the case studies

Based on the three previous case studies in this section I aim to analyze how the mission and vision of the Association of Hungarian Literary Memorial Houses is present in the work of the three museums. MIRE can only achieve its goals that have been previously detailed in Chapter 2 through the member institutions, therefore it is important to observe how many of their initiatives have filtered down to the level of local museums.

First and foremost, MIRE aims to modernize the facilities and the exhibitions of Hungarian writer's house museums. As it was mentioned before, the Petőfi House, the Babits House and the Attila József Memorial Site have all made efforts towards this goal, using financial aids from different sources. The general tendency was to move away from the original reconstructive type and to provide alternative ways for the visitors to explore the author's literary heritage. There is no space in this thesis to discuss in its entirety the possibilities of a literary exhibition in the twenty-first century; however, a few segments from the Petőfi Literary Museum's study on the topic can serve as guidelines. In the essay collection on the nature of the literary exhibition, employees of PIM wrote essays on their best practices in order to present the general features of a modern exhibition. Common elements included intermediality, the destruction of common stereotypes, the constructive involvement of the visitor, visitor

---

<sup>111</sup> “Itt van egy szobában mult, jövő és jelen”: Sándor Petőfi, “A Téli Esték (The Winter Nights),” ELTE Text Collection, accessed May 25, 2018, <http://magyar-irodalom.elte.hu/sulinet/igyjo/setup/portrek/petofi/ateliest.htm>.



friendliness, distance from the linear type of reading, and serving the needs of compulsory education. All of these methods of the Budapest institution have reached the museums of the case studies as well, partly through the training, network, and publications of MIRE.

All three museums are utilizing other media and art forms such paintings, audio recordings, and videos. Some of them, such as the Petőfi House, still present the stereotypical figure of the poet, but institutions like the Attila József Memorial Site actively try to alter the traditional image. The curatorial texts and guidance are used less and less in writer's house museums, or are completely eliminated as in Attila József's birthplace, inviting the visitor to construct his own image of the author based on the available objects, documents, and excerpts. All three museums build their work on the needs of elementary and high schools, aligning their work with the compulsory content of public education, but at the same time they are also aware of the fact that the style of acquiring information has changed considerably in recent decades. As Ágnes Kelevéz mentions in her essay, instead of linear reading the focus is now on presenting visitors with the possibility of jumping from one point to another, from pictures to short texts, and vice versa.<sup>112</sup> In this way curators are able to create "the joy of text"<sup>113</sup> for the visitor, and paradoxically, this join-the-dots reading method can successfully lead to the enjoyment of linear texts later on. Out of the three case studies the Attila József exhibition is the one that embraces this idea most comprehensively, but both the Petőfi House and the Babits House took steps in this direction. To summarize, all the examined writer's house museums have modernized their approach to their permanent exhibitions along the same mission and vision, taking into account the professional input from MIRE and the Petőfi Literary Museum.

<sup>112</sup> Gulyás, *Az Irodalmi Kiállítás Természetrája (The Nature of the Literary Exhibition)*, 54.

<sup>113</sup> Ágnes Kelevéz, "100 Éves a Nyugat (Nyugat Is 100 Years Old)," in *Az Irodalmi Kiállítás Természetrája (The Nature of the Literary Exhibition)* (Budapest: Petőfi Irodalmi Múzeum, 2013), 48–57. 54.



However, it is also worth noting that it is not among MIRE's aims to move all writer's house museums away from the reconstructive exhibition – the road from it to the metaphorical exhibition does not mean an evolution of presentation methods, simply different museology techniques that the members can choose from, depending on the available objects and the author's biography. Petőfi's life is connected so much to symbolical objects, such as his sword and his birth bed that there is a certain group of visitors who could not imagine an exhibition without them; at the same time, Attila József had very few possessions in his life, and he left even fewer of them to posterity. In his case a metaphorical exhibition is a more suitable choice. This variety also enables writer's house museums to attract a wider range of audience, as described in Chapter 2.

Among MIRE's aims we also find the idea of creating a professional network and providing opportunities for financial aids. The curators of the case studies have mentioned how much they have benefitted from the closer connection to PIM. Ilona Kispálné Lucza has praised the trainings offered by MIRE, claiming that they were great opportunity for creating a unified group. Through the work of MIRE PIM ceased to be the “big Budapest institution”, as their professional work and ideas are now attainable for smaller museums as well. However, even before the association, the Kiskőrös museum applied for funding on its own, and received money from the Kubinyi Program; independently from MIRE. As mentioned in the case study, this also shows the local government's dedicated involvement. Csilla Lovas in Szekszárd also appreciated the trainings and the meetings, but also highlighted that these are not frequent enough, and, regrettably, between these sessions there is no active contact between the member institutions. The Attila József Memorial has the closest relation to PIM, as the curatorial work in the museum was done by Ilona H. Bagó herself.

As discussed in Chapter 2, MIRE's vision for the future includes writer's house museums as community spaces for the locals, an institution that takes up an active role in provincial cultural life. In accordance with this idea all three examined museums try to engage with their respective communities. The Petőfi House has perhaps the longest tradition in this respect, but this is also facilitated by the dedication of the municipal government in Kiskőrös. The Babits House also offers events for local children and adults, and the Attila József Memorial Site plays an active part in the cultural life of Ferencváros. This work is not only crucial for the development of local community bonds, but also for the cultivation of the cult of the authors, which are widely seen as the way to legitimize the museums' operations in the future. During our interview, Ilona H. Bagó quoted from the *Eclipse of the Crescent Moon*, a historical novel by Géza Gárdonyi. Facing the Ottoman army, István Dobó, captain of the castle of Eger, says: "The strength of the walls is not in the stones, but in the heart of the defenders." This sentence highlights an important point in the management of writer's house museums—the upkeep of the buildings and the exhibitions alone will not justify the existence of these institutions without the permanent interest (or cult) in the author itself. The cultivation of this side of the equation is just as important as renovating the facilities and the exhibitions. All three museums examined in the case studies seem to understand this and try to involve people in literary events as much as possible.

Their task, however, is a tremendous one. Organizing literary exhibitions in the twenty-first century is not a pointless task, and this is quite clear from the aforementioned collection of essays by PIM's museum professionals. People read less but still look for experiences similar to reading, and these exhibitions with their pre-digested reading material offer exactly this. The efforts in PIM to present visitors with exciting new presentation methods have been warmly welcomed. Their ideas seem to be working. However, this does not necessarily mean that the

same concepts and same techniques will be suitable for writer's house museums across the country. First of all, their professional and financial means will be considerably more limited than that of a Budapest institution; and secondly, their aim is not only to offer exhibitions to the whole country, as PIM does, but they also have to focus on the local community surrounding them. The double task of being an extroverted and introverted museum at the same time requires a curator who has the skills and the passion to devise an individual plan for the development of the institution. No wonder that all curators and the government surveyor as well have stressed the importance of human resources—in many cases the successful present and future of a writer's house museum depends on one dedicated employee. Even though the main aim of this thesis was to provide a top-down analysis of MIRE's management, even with this methodology it became clear that despite all their efforts, the Budapest-based PIM and MIRE cannot take over the crucial role of local curators and museum workers. Therefore in the future agenda of the Association a central role should be given to the development and trainings of these employees, and also on creating strong bonds between the organization and its human resources. The possible methods for this will be discussed later in this chapter.

To conclude, the case studies presented successful writer's house museums that pursue the mission and vision of MIRE, and have successfully combatted the changes in information acquisition and reading styles of their audience. They also show that a deeper engagement with the local community benefits both the town and the museum, and that in the twenty-first century this is the role that fits best these institutions. The age when these sites were collective *lieux de mémoire* of entire nations has waned, and a new era, where they are more connected to the life of the local community, has begun. However, these case studies can be considered best practices: the situation cannot be considered this positive in many other museums. As Mirella Csiszár has

mentioned, the local communities often do not have the manpower and the group identity to be involved in the management of the writer's house museums. Therefore, even though the aims of MIRE work well in some cases, in others' there is still a long way to go until these sites fully settle in their new local role.

## 2. Recommendations

Based on the interviews with MIRE members and the government surveyor, I can conclude that the Association of Hungarian Literary Memorial Houses is indeed a much needed initiative in the field. However, in order to effectively reach the Association's aims, financial stability is required. One way to achieve this is by attracting more visitors to the museums using different outreach and marketing strategies. My recommendations mostly concern possible avenues of development on the level of the Association; as I mentioned in the previous sections that the development of individual writer's house museums should be treated separately.

### 2.1. Regional tourism

First of all, the Association needs to build closer relations with regional tourism industry. Several tourism reports, including the Hungarian tourism portal's ([www.itthon.hu](http://www.itthon.hu)) official bulletin have stated that local tourism has been witnessing a rapid development, which is predicted to continue, even if only on a smaller, more stable scale.<sup>114</sup> Consequently, one of the main strategic goals of the Hungarian Tourism Agency, the government agency specializing in matters of tourism, is the development of so-called "destinations"—regions that are more or less unified in

---

<sup>114</sup> Judit Polgár, "A Belföldi Turizmus Alakulása 1990-Től Napjainkig (The Development of National Tourism from 1990 to the Present)," *Turizmus Bulletin (Tourism Bulletin)* 10, no. 1 (2006): 3–16.

terms of built environment, geography, and cultural assets.<sup>115</sup> The basic strategy of the agency is to build a brand out of each destination, offering a multilayered experience to prospective customers. Currently they are focusing on the Balaton, the Sopron-Fertő, the Tokaj-Nyírség, the Debrecen-Hortobágy, and the Dunakanyar regions, but in the future other areas will receive support and funding as well. The effect of the promotion of local tourism is facilitating slow but significant changes in other regions as well, for example, Bács-Kiskun County, which has been previously off the tourism map, appeared again at the 2017 travel expo after a long hiatus, with eight exhibitors from the county, one of them being Kiskőrös.<sup>116</sup> Tolna County, where the Babits House is located, has also been considered outside of the circle of main tourism destinations, but in 2014 they commissioned a development program plan from Hétfa Research Institute which also indicates that there is an interest and need for a strategic and long-term plan for the industry.<sup>117</sup> MIRE could take part in these initiatives by contacting the relevant tourism agencies, offering an enjoyable cultural experience for visitors, including their member institutions or the already existing self-guided literary tours. However, in order to achieve this, writer's house museums need to be connected more to each other, and further integrated into the respective regions' cultural institutions and touristic destinations.

There have already been initiatives to form closer regional connections between MIRE members. An example of this are the above mentioned regional literary tours that are available on the website, but almost all of them are connected to Vas County and the available tours are

---

<sup>115</sup> "Desztinációfejlesztés (Destination Development)," Magyar Turisztikai Ügynökség (Hungarian Tourism Agency), accessed May 25, 2018, <https://mtu.gov.hu/cikkek/desztinacio-fejlesztes>.

<sup>116</sup> "Desztinációvá Fejlesztik Bács-Kiskun Megyét (Bács-Kiskun County Is Being Developed into a Destination)," Turizmus Online, March 3, 2017, <http://turizmusonline.hu/belfold/cikk/desztinaciova-fejlesztik-bacs-kiskun-megyert>.

<sup>117</sup> Balázs Szepesi, "Turizmus Tolna megyében (Tourism in Tolna County)" (Hétfa Kutatóintézet (Hétfa Research Institute), 2014), [http://hetfa.hu/wp-content/uploads/Turiz\\_CsT\\_honlap.pdf](http://hetfa.hu/wp-content/uploads/Turiz_CsT_honlap.pdf).

not presented in a user friendly way.<sup>118</sup> The maps are not detailed enough, and also they do not have a visually pleasing design. Furthermore they are only suitable for the computer screen, and are hard to use on a mobile phone or in print. The next step would be to extend the offered literary tours to other counties, based on the already available information and map on the MIRE website, and to create a more interactive site to present them; with downloadable maps which can also include recommendations for accommodation, dining, and other sights in the area. This would also mean a partnership with the mentioned institutions, which would result in more advertisement possibilities; for example, leaflets about MIRE and its members could also be placed in local hotels, museums, and tourism information points.

For a few years the Petőfi Literary Museum has been organizing literary walks in Budapest, moving beyond the museums walls. These organized tours can be used as a template by provincial museums, offering organized visits to the region's literary sites. This would be beneficial for several reasons: for example, since many of these sites are hardly accessible without a car, on the one hand, programs like this could reach out not only to tourists but also to locals living in the region; on the other hand offering organized bus tours to regional writer's house museums would bring more visitors to these towns and villages. At the same time, using the maps available on the website, visitors could also choose to explore the destinations themselves, either by car or by bicycle. These initiatives would provide access to MIRE member institutions for the widest possible audience.

In case regional tourism receives further funding—more likely than the same happening in the literary museum sector due to a higher appeal for commercial involvement—it would also be possible to develop audio tours and mobile phone applications to facilitate self-guided tours of

---

<sup>118</sup> "Literary Tours," Association of Hungarian Literary Memorial Places, accessed May 27, 2018, <http://www.mire.hu/en/routes>.

the destination's literary sites. For example, the Radzyń County Tourism Board in Poland has been utilizing this method, and made downloadable audio guide available on their website,<sup>119</sup> on all the attractions in the region, including literary sites. Radzyń used to be an area outside of usual tourism destinations, as it is relatively far and hard to access from the capital Warsaw, and other major Polish cities. These audio guides were part of the local government initiatives to attract more visitors and to present the multilayered heritage of the county.

However, a similar plan in Hungary presupposes that the regional writer's house museums indeed work together and present themselves as one unit, not as separate institutions. At this point this is not the case. As noted previously experience shows that many MIRE member institutions are reluctant to cooperate, even by as little as displaying the leaflets of their co-members. Therefore the first step in this matter would be to organize trainings and information sessions explaining the real benefits of co-organizing and co-management. It is critical to internalize that separately these museums are indeed small and underfinanced, but together they could become important touristic attraction of their regions. As usual, this is a matter of training and below the line marketing among members: communicating success stories, presenting opportunities and building an identity and sense of belonging, which is the subject of the next section.

## 2.2. Outreach within and outside the MIRE network

Another area where MIRE operations could be strengthened is its network building strategies. All interviewed curators have mentioned how useful MIRE trainings and the yearly meetings are, but their number is not sufficient. Based on their accounts it seems that there is

---

<sup>119</sup> "Radzyń, Land of Wamth," Website of Radzyń County Tourism, accessed May 25, 2018, <http://www.krainaserdecznosci.pl/en/audio-guide>. The audio guides are only available in Polish.

much need to enable frequent communication between the annual assemblies as well. This would also strengthen the inner bonds of the Association, which could result in the more dedicated work of curators in the provincial museums.

On the other hand, organizing further trainings and meetups require financial support that the Association does not have anymore. They can however seek and enlist inexpensive methods for communication between members during the year, that would also develop stronger community identity—albeit, admittedly, this requires the indirect cost of labour needed for planning and implementation. One of these would be a monthly, or at least quarterly newsletter, sent to subscribers by e-mail. This is a communication method that the Association of Regional Houses already uses effectively. The information included in the present newsletter covers the content of the annual assembly, introduces members of the Association, raises awareness of funding possibilities, and any news and details that are relevant to the operations. These newsletters are available for everyone online, just as the material covered in the Association’s trainings. On the one hand this keeps the information flowing between members, on the other hand anyone can look into the work of the Association, and learn more about regional houses. Ideally, museums themselves would offer their own news and information to the MIRE newsletter, in order to present what they find important about their work. This would make the newsletter less of a centralized communication approach.

Besides strengthening internal cooperation, MIRE has to reach outside of its own network as well. Mirella Csiszár has mentioned how important it would be for MIRE to work with teachers, especially with teachers who are located near member institutions. Teachers are the best people to convey information about local heritage to schoolchildren, and thus can develop community pride and community identity. Therefore it is essential that they know of the



possibilities a writer's house museum can provide in this regard. Teachers have been involved in MIRE trainings before, but these occasions need to be more frequent, and they also need to be organized in different regions of the country – for most teachers travelling to a far away city for museum trainings is unfeasible both timewise and financially. The Petőfi Literary Museum is experienced in organizing travelling exhibitions (such as their *Nyugat* Bus and the Arany Bus, a bus that housed exhibitions about the *Nyugat* periodical (1908-1941) and the poet János Arany, respectively), therefore organizing travelling trainings is not a far-fetched idea. Similar training sessions could be offered to local governments and museum directors who are in need of further guidance.

These further steps in building member relations, involving other people who can benefit from writer's house museums and developing new channels for communication would extend the already existing MIRE network and make the work and the exchange of ideas more effective. However, there is a further group of stakeholders that MIRE operations must reach – the visitors themselves. In order to strengthen this area the Association needs to present itself as a recognizable brand.

## 2.3. Building a brand

To introduce possible ways of brand building for writer's house museums, I will first turn to the Association of Regional Houses. During their trainings in 2009, Márta Hegedűsné Majnár gave a workshop on marketing for regional houses.<sup>120</sup> In this she claimed that one step towards financial stability was a deliberate marketing strategy, focusing on possible buyer personas. However, it is clear that even a more significant raise in visitors numbers will not solve financial

---

<sup>120</sup> Márta Hegedűsné Majnár, "PR és marketing a tájházakban (PR and Marketing in Regional Houses)" (Association of Regional Houses, 2009), [http://www.tajhazszovetseg.hu/sites/default/files/tajhazi\\_akademia/18\\_hegedusne\\_majnár\\_marta\\_-\\_pr\\_es\\_marketing\\_a\\_tajhazakban.pdf](http://www.tajhazszovetseg.hu/sites/default/files/tajhazi_akademia/18_hegedusne_majnár_marta_-_pr_es_marketing_a_tajhazakban.pdf).

issues alone. According to Noémi Népešsy's research, as of 2006 only 13,37% of Hungarian museums revenue came from the institutions' own activities, and only half of this was due to ticket sales. The rest of the money came from the museums' maintainer – at the time from the Hungarian state.<sup>121</sup> The situation is similar in the United States as well; for example, only 2% of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's revenue comes from ticket sales. However, in the US museums turn to other forms of financing as well – they generate money from their membership schemes, museums cafes, museums shops, and also from renting their premises for private and corporate events.<sup>122</sup> Due to the limitations of space that is the general characteristic of writer's house museums, among these ideas the introduction of a membership scheme seems the most suitable for MIRE's purposes. Members of the Association could take part in unique events, visit all member museums at a discount price, receive newsletter. Márta Hegedűsné Majnár is right in the first step towards financial stability is to increase visitors numbers by marketing, but once this happens it worth taking the next step in visitor involvement, and introduce a membership scheme.<sup>123</sup>

The first step, however, is definitely marketing. One of the main elements of marketing is presenting a unified image of the association. This image has a content part and a design part– the content includes the everyday work of the association, and the different events it organizes; the design part is connected to visual elements, such as the logo or a recognizable color scheme..<sup>124</sup>

---

<sup>121</sup> Noémi Népešsy, "A Magyarországi Múzeumok Finanszírozása És Gazdálkodása (The Finances and Economics of Hungarian Museums)," *Tudományos Közlemények - ÁVF*, no. 14–15 (2006): 291–307.

<sup>122</sup> "The Business Model of the Nonprofit Museum," Sotheby's Institute of Art, accessed May 27, 2018, <http://www.sothebysinstitute.com/?news=b094ca8e6a299f2bdfd172b689f27fd9>.

<sup>123</sup> More on membership schemes in Alix Slater's article - Alix Slater, "Developing a Typology of Membership Schemes in the UK," *International Review on Public and Nonprofit Marketing* 2, no. 1 (2005): 23–39.

<sup>124</sup> For more on museum marketing see Neil G. Kotler, Philip Kotler, and Wendy I. Kotler, *Museum Marketing and Strategy: Designing Missions, Building Audiences, Generating Revenue and Resources* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008).

MIRE already has a characteristic logo and a recognizable color that it uses for most of its publications. What is lacking, however, are highly publicized events organized directly under the aegis of the Association, where these could be put to use. The Association of Regional Houses may provide an example in this matter too—since 2013 they have been organizing the annual Day of Regional Houses, during which member houses offer well-attended unique programs for visitors—for example bicycle tours, special guided tours, concerts, introduction of traditional trades and crafts. The concept is similar to the Night of the Museums, as it raises awareness of hidden or little known heritage values, and with the additional media attention more visitors can be drawn to the exhibitions with the hope of creating an audience of returning visitors. A similar event could be organized by MIRE, strengthening its brand identity both among members and museum-goers.

In addition, every year the Association of Regional Houses presents one of its members with the “Regional House of the Year” award. This again is an event that comes with a certain amount of media attention, and would work for writer’s house museums as well. The respect and attention that the individual house and its curator would receive in this way, is an efficient means of creating more sustainable bonds between the brand and the people who are involved in the Association’s work.

Besides organizing similar events, MIRE also needs a more pronounced presence in the museums themselves. As previously mentioned, their leaflets, which already have a unified image, should be displayed in every member institution, drawing attention to the brand and to the work of the co-members. To further symbolize connectivity between the museums MIRE could consider gamifying the museum network experience—visitors could collect stamps at each

location for a prize, for example, a T-shirt with the MIRE logo, a book by one of the authors, sponsored merchandise, and so on. These well-tried, simple methods would again raise awareness of the MIRE brand, of other museums, and visitors would be more inclined to visit further similar destinations. The very well-known and perennially popular stamp system of the Blue Trail<sup>125</sup>, a hiking trail network across Hungary, works with the same concept and a group of Hungarian castles have also initiated a similar game.<sup>126</sup>

Using the terminology of Michael M. Kaiser, chairman of the Devos Institute of Arts Management, once the MIRE brand is strengthened, and customers can connect the logo to cultural experiences of a high quality, a *family* can be created around writer's house museums. According to his theory on the success development of cultural institution, called the Cycle, once Great Art is available, the next step is to build a family (returning ticket buyers, students, donors, volunteers, board members, etc.) who are dedicated to the institution's programs, and know from previous experience that they are worth attending. This family will provide financial income for the institution, which can then be put forward to provide even better cultural experience<sup>127</sup>

MIRE already possesses Great Art – the immense amount of literary heritage located in its member institution. At this point only a deliberate and consistent marketing strategy separates the Association from its potential “family.”

Museums in Hungary have entertained suspicion towards brand marketing for a long time, and this situation is only starting to change now. And rightly so, because as Robert Jones, a strategist for the brand consultancy agency Wolff Olins, wrote in an article,

<sup>125</sup> “Országos Kéktúra (National Blue Trail),” Website of the National Blue Trail, accessed May 25, 2018, <http://www.kektura.hu/cimlap.html>.

<sup>126</sup> “Vártúrák (Castle Tours),” Website of the Castle Game, accessed May 25, 2018, <https://www.varturak.hu/magyar/oldal/hvt/>.

<sup>127</sup> Michael M. Kaiser and Brett Egan, *The Cycle - Planning for Success in the Arts* (Washington: The John F. Kennedy Center of Performing Arts, 2013). 4.

If you see branding as superficial, as something for the marketing people, as just a commercial gadget, you'd be right to oppose it. But branding taken seriously is a good thing. In the end, the fundamental role of brand in museums is not to dumb down, but to help scholarship reach more people. Few curators are against this.<sup>128</sup>

Naturally, all the aforementioned recommendations require one crucial change in MIRE's operation – at least one employee who is assigned solely to the task of coordinating, developing, and marketing the Association and its members. This is a necessity that all interviewed curators have also strongly underlined. Based on previous operational history this person should be working with the Petőfi Literary Museum, but would visit provincial writer's house museums frequently.

This does not necessarily mean that MIRE needs to operate with a centralized approach, where PIM serves as the headquarters. It is indispensable that one of the museums functions as an administrative center, and PIM is ideal for this role as it is in the capital, and it was the institution that was originally given the task of reforming the world of writer's house museums. They also have the biggest manpower available. However, even today PIM is not the only source of successful ideas and best practices; for example, the curators of the case study museums are reinventing the concept of literary exhibition through their events and individual actions. The Board of MIRE consists of professionals from all over the country as well. Currently it is unavoidable that most of the initiatives and trainings derive from PIM, as they have more opportunities in terms of networks and finances. In the future, as more museums get involved in Association, the operations could gradually decentralize, and MIRE can truly become what it originally intended to be – a network where curators and museum employees can share their experience and ideas, and mutually help each other. However, this gradual

---

<sup>128</sup> Robert Jones, "Curators May Be Sceptical but Branding Is Vital for Museums," *The Guardian*, May 1, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/culture-professionals-network/culture-professionals-blog/2014/may/01/curators-branding-tate-british-museum>.

change presupposes that MIRE first strengthens its brand and its internal and external network, and for this the Petőfi Literary Museum's central role is crucial.

Lastly, it is worth noting that the present thesis chose to work from the perspective that all writer's house museums need to be provided with a sustainable future. However, given the amount of financing and professional workforce this task would require it also worth considering that perhaps not all houses and exhibitions can be revived. Some authors, such as Bulcsu Bertha, are not part of the literary canon anymore, and not taught in schools either. MIRE cannot change this on its own, but it can evaluate whether the upkeep of certain memorial places is part of a sustainable plan or just the postponement of an inevitable closedown. This issue is part of the global twenty-first-century phenomena that Rodney Harrison calls the "developing crisis of accumulation of heritage."<sup>129</sup> While current heritage management is focusing on saving everything for posterity, resources are few, and it is possible that in the near future a more selective approach will be required. Whether such a selection can be achieved without imposing problematic power-relations on the field is questionable; nevertheless, the topic is worth discussing in MIRE's board meetings.

To conclude, there is ample potential in the Association of Hungarian Literary Memorial Houses and in writer's house museums in general, in terms of community engagement, regional cultural tourism, and heritage representation; and it deserves to be fully exploited, with bearing a critical perspective in mind at the same – the issue of too much heritage described by Harrison.

---

<sup>129</sup> Rodney Harrison, "Heritage and the 'Problem' of Memory.," in *Heritage. Critical Approaches* (London: Routledge, 2013), 166–203. 182.

“I have no life outside my poems – I am the poems.”<sup>130</sup>

## Conclusion

The aim of the thesis was to analyze the management of the Association of Hungarian Literary Memorial Places through case studies and organizational history. For this purpose I have presented a top-down organizational study, focusing on how MIRE’s aims are shown in the work of the member institutions through the narratives of professionals directly associated with MIRE, case studies of MIRE success stories, reports and media response. Based on these evaluations I also formulated recommendations in the areas of human resources, network and brand building and national outreach.

The leaders of the Association knew even at the time of their foundation in 2008 that the role of writer’s house museums have changed considerably. Even though at the beginning they were treated as nearly sacred sites throughout the decades they were also national memorial places or symbols of political agendas. In the twenty-first century they best function as heritage spaces reaching out both to countrywide visitors and to the local community. Realizing the important tradition of Hungarian writer’s house museums, MIRE was created to help individual members with professional input and financial aid, and to help the museums to accomplish the Association’s mission of modernization and its vision of local engagement. The case studies on the Petőfi House, the Babits House and the Attila József Memorial Site are all portraits of museums that thrive with the help of the MIRE network, and their curators all find the

---

<sup>130</sup> “A versen kívül nincsen életem: / a vers vagyok.”: György Petri, “Vagyok, Mit Érdekelne (I Exist, Who Cares),” Collected Poems of György Petri, accessed May 25, 2018, [http://dia.pool.pim.hu/xhtml/petri\\_gyorgy/Petri\\_Gyorgy-Osszegyujtott\\_versek.xhtml](http://dia.pool.pim.hu/xhtml/petri_gyorgy/Petri_Gyorgy-Osszegyujtott_versek.xhtml).

Association's work highly beneficial. All three museums have become an important part of the local cultural life, and try to involve the community as much as possible. After the 2012 resolution that placed writer's house museums under the jurisdiction of the local government, community support and involvement has become an especially crucial premise of the institutions' survival, considering the dire financial situation.

To summarize, MIRE is a warmly welcomed and successful initiative in the world of literary heritage management. Their aims are achievable and consciously planned, and their organizational structure, which centers on the Petőfi Literary Museum, is also a reasonable strategy. However, at the same time the Association faces severe issues when it comes to financing and human resources.

There are a few areas of operations that could be improved in order to solve the aforementioned problems. The Association could form partnerships with other local destinations, helping the museums integrate more into regional tourism. Furthermore, facilitating more consistent communication between MIRE members, and reaching out to teachers and to the local governments would also prove beneficial. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the Association needs to reconsider its approach to its own branding and marketing, as a well-developed strategy would raise awareness of writer's house museums in wider circles, bringing the institutions closer to financial stability. All of this, however, cannot be realized without a dedicated employee at the Petőfi Literary Museum, whose work would only focus on the management of the Association; or without hiring at least a professional marketing specialist.

As shown above, the deeper integration of writer's house museums into local life would ensure their future, and the necessary first steps have already been taken. Rightly so, as the



museums help the visitor to become better acquainted with the literary works. “Mother left me with a world, not a house,” writes Attila József in an early version of his poem, *Inventory Closed*.<sup>131</sup> Regardless, sometimes it is the house that leads to a fuller understanding of the world – through the poetic world that we ultimately need to protect.

---

<sup>131</sup> Bókay Antal, “Körök és szétfutó világ-vonalak. Egy József Attila-kiállítás margójára (Circles and Straggling Lifelines. On the Margin of an Attila József Exhibition),” Magyar Múzeumok (Hungarian Museums), accessed May 25, 2018, [http://archiv.magyar-muzeumok.hu/kiallitas/3154\\_korok\\_es\\_szetfuto\\_vilag-vonalak\\_egy\\_jozsef\\_attila-kiallitas\\_margojara.b](http://archiv.magyar-muzeumok.hu/kiallitas/3154_korok_es_szetfuto_vilag-vonalak_egy_jozsef_attila-kiallitas_margojara.b)

# Bibliography

- A. Denton, Kirk. *Exhibiting the Past: Historical Memory and the Politics of Museums in Postsocialist China*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2014.
- "About Us." Bronte Parsonage Museum. Accessed May 25, 2018. <https://www.bronte.org.uk/about-us>.
- "Alapszabály (Constitution)." Association of Hungarian Literary Memorial Places. Accessed May 25, 2018. <http://www.mire.hu/hu/about/statutes>.
- "Az Év Múzeuma-Díj (List of the Museum of the Year Recipients)." Pulszky Társaság (Pulszky Society). Accessed May 25, 2018. <http://pulszky.hu/diak/az-ev-muzeuma-dij/>.
- Babits, Mihály. "Ady Endrének (To Endre Ady)." Babits Mihály összegyűjtött versei, 1911. <http://mek.oszk.hu/00600/00602/html/vers0501.htm#04>.
- Bárkay Tamás. "A ház, amelyben élt és alkotott... (The House Where He Lived and Created...)." NOL.hu, May 11, 2011. [http://nol.hu/kultura/20110511-a\\_haz\\_\\_amelyben\\_elt\\_es\\_alkotott-1065691](http://nol.hu/kultura/20110511-a_haz__amelyben_elt_es_alkotott-1065691).
- Barthes, Roland. "The Death of the Author." In *Image Music Text*, edited by Stephen Heath, 142–49. London: Fontana Press, 1977.
- Bereczki Ibolya. "Mitől jó egy tájház? (What makes a good regional house?)." Magyar Múzeumok (Hungarian Museums). Accessed May 25, 2018. [http://archiv.magyarmuzeumok.hu/tema/168\\_mitol\\_jo\\_egy\\_tajhaz](http://archiv.magyarmuzeumok.hu/tema/168_mitol_jo_egy_tajhaz).
- Berényi, Marianna. "Az Irodalmi Emlékházak Ki- És Megalakulása (The Establishing of Writer's House Museums)." *Múzeumcafé* 10, no. 5–6 (2016): 80–99.
- "Birthplace of Sándor Petőfi." Association of Hungarian Literary Memorial Places. Accessed May 25, 2018. <http://www.mire.hu/hu/museums/32/description>.
- Bókay Antal. "Körök és szétfutó világ-vonalak. Egy József Attila-kiállítás margójára (Circles and Straggling Lifelines. On the Margin of an Attila József Exhibition)." Magyar Múzeumok (Hungarian Museums). Accessed May 25, 2018. [http://archiv.magyarmuzeumok.hu/kiallitas/3154\\_korok\\_es\\_szetfuto\\_vilag-vonalak\\_egy\\_jozsef\\_attila-kiallitas\\_margojara](http://archiv.magyarmuzeumok.hu/kiallitas/3154_korok_es_szetfuto_vilag-vonalak_egy_jozsef_attila-kiallitas_margojara).
- Brida, Juan Gabriel. "The Visitors' Perception of Authenticity at the Museums: Archaeology versus Modern Art." *Current Issues in Tourism* 17, no. 6 (2014): 518–38.
- Channer, Nick. *Writers' Houses: Where Great Books Began*. London: Robert Hale Ltd, 2015.

- Csender, Levente. "Megéledő Irodalmi Emlékházak (Reviving Writer's House Museums)." Magyar Nemzet, July 25, 2008. [https://mno.hu/migr\\_1834/megeledo\\_irodalmi\\_emlekhazak-363708](https://mno.hu/migr_1834/megeledo_irodalmi_emlekhazak-363708).
- Csiszér, Dóra. "Az önkormányzati múzeumok modernizációja – a múzeumi stratégia egyik eleme (The Modernization of Local Museums - An Element of Museum Strategy)." *Múzeumi Közlemények (Museum Bulletin)*, no. 2 (2005): 6–12.
- Csordás Lajos. "A Gát utcában is kísért a Várkert Bazár szelleme (The Ghost of Várkert Bazár Haunts Gát Street)." NOL.hu, April 14, 2015. <http://nol.hu/kultura/harmincket-ev-egy-teremben-1527873>.
- . "József Attila szülőháza: Törölték az emeletet (The Birthplace of Attila József: They Demolished the Upper Floor)." NOL.hu, March 2, 2014. [http://nol.hu/kultura/20140301-toroltek\\_az\\_emeletet-1447993](http://nol.hu/kultura/20140301-toroltek_az_emeletet-1447993).
- Dávidházi, Péter. "Isten másodszülöttje" - *A magyar Shakespeare kultusz természetrajza* ("The second child of God" - *The Nature of the Hungarian Shakespeare Cult*). Budapest: Gondolat Könyvkiadó, 1989.
- . *The Romantic Cult of Shakespeare - Literary Reception in Anthropological Perspective*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998.
- "Desztinációfejlesztés (Destination Development)." Magyar Turisztikai Ügynökség (Hungarian Tourism Agency). Accessed May 25, 2018. <https://mtu.gov.hu/cikkek/desztinacio-fejlesztas>.
- "Desztinációvá Fejlesztik Bács-Kiskun Megyét (Bács-Kiskun County Is Being Developed into a Destination)." Turizmus Online, March 3, 2017. [http://turizmusonline.hu/belfold/cikk/desztinaciova\\_fejlesztik\\_bacs\\_kiskun\\_megyert](http://turizmusonline.hu/belfold/cikk/desztinaciova_fejlesztik_bacs_kiskun_megyert).
- Emery, Elizabeth. *Photojournalism and the Origins of the French Writer House Museum*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2012.
- "Erotika a szekszárdi Babits-házban (Eroticism in the Babits House of Szekszárd)." Kultúra.hu, June 22, 2011. <https://www.kultura.hu/irodalom-archivum/erotika-szekszardi>.
- Földő, Tamás. "Gát Utca: Itt Született József Attila (Gát Street: The Birthplace of Attila József)." National Geographic Hungary, April 11, 2018. <http://www.ng.hu/Civilizacio/2018/04/11/Gat-utca-itt-szuletett-Jozsef-Attila>.
- G. Kotler, Neil, Philip Kotler, and Wendy I. Kotler. *Museum Marketing and Strategy: Designing Missions, Building Audiences, Generating Revenue and Resources*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008.
- Gulyás, Gabriella. *Az Irodalmi Kiállítás Természetrája (The Nature of the Literary Exhibition)*. Budapest: Petőfi Irodalmi Múzeum, 2013.

- Gulyás, Gabriella, and Ilona H. Bagó, eds. *A Kezdet Az Egésznek a Fele (The Beginning Is the Half of the Whole)*. Budapest: Petőfi Irodalmi Múzeum, 2010.
- Gulyás, Gabriella, and Csaba Horváth. *Jelen Időben (In Present Time)*. Budapest: Petőfi Irodalmi Múzeum, 2010.
- György, Péter. "Múzeumkritika - Wosinszky Mór Megyei Múzeum (Museum Criticism - Mór Wosinszky County Museum)." *Élet És Irodalom* 50, no. 29 (2006). <http://regi.sofar.hu/hu/node/59656>.
- H. Bagó, Ilona, and Gabriella Gulyás. "Lépkedek Haza... - A Magyar Irodalmi Emlékházak Megújulása (Walking Home... The Renewal of Hungarian Writer's House Museums)." *MúzeumCafé* 10, no. 5–6 (2016): 101–37.
- Hampp, Constanze. "The Role of Authentic Objects in Museums of the History of Science and Technology: Findings from a Visitor Study." *International Journal of Science Education* 5, no. 2 (2015): 161–81.
- Harrison, Rodney. "Heritage and the 'Problem' of Memory." In *Heritage. Critical Approaches*, 166–203. London: Routledge, 2013.
- Hede, Anne-Marie. "A Journey to the Authentic: Museum Visitors and Their Negotiation of the Inauthentic." *Journal of Marketing Management* 26, no. 7–8 (2010): 686–705.
- Hegedűsné Majnár, Márta. "PR és marketing a tájházakban (PR and Marketing in Regional Houses)." Association of Regional Houses, 2009. [http://www.tajhazszovetseg.hu/sites/default/files/tajhazi\\_akademia/18\\_hegedusne\\_majnar\\_marta\\_-\\_pr\\_es\\_marketing\\_a\\_tajhazakban.pdf](http://www.tajhazszovetseg.hu/sites/default/files/tajhazi_akademia/18_hegedusne_majnar_marta_-_pr_es_marketing_a_tajhazakban.pdf).
- Heilmann Anna. "Élő hálózatba fogva (In a Living Network)." Magyar Múzeumok (Hungarian Museums), May 12, 2011. [http://archiv.magyar-muzeumok.hu/latogato/209\\_elo\\_halozatba\\_fogva](http://archiv.magyar-muzeumok.hu/latogato/209_elo_halozatba_fogva).
- Hendrix, Harald. "From Early Modern to Romantic Literary Tourism: A Diachronical Perspective." In *Literary Tourism and Nineteenth-Century Culture*, edited by Nicola J. Watson, 13–24. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.
- . "His Master's House. Pilgrimages to the Homes and Haunts of Great Italian Authors (2017)." In *'Tu Se' Lo Mio Maestro e 'l Mio Autore'. Dieci Studi Su "authorship" e Intertestualità Culturale*, edited by Matteo Brera and Susanna Grazzini, 23–33. Florence: Cesati, 2017. [http://www.academia.edu/35731011/His\\_Master\\_s\\_House.\\_Pilgrimages\\_to\\_the\\_Homes\\_and\\_Haunts\\_of\\_Great\\_Italian\\_Authors\\_2017\\_](http://www.academia.edu/35731011/His_Master_s_House._Pilgrimages_to_the_Homes_and_Haunts_of_Great_Italian_Authors_2017_).
- "Hivatalos iratok (Official Documents)." Association of Regional Houses. Accessed May 25, 2018. /hivatalos-iratok.

- Horváth, Márton. "A Kommunista József Attila (The Communist Attila József)." In *Lobogónk: Petőfi. Irodalmi Cikkek És Tanulmányok (Our Flag: Petőfi. Articles and Essays on Literature)*, 70–73. Budapest: Szikra Könyvkiadó, 1950.
- . *Lobogónk: Petőfi. Irodalmi Cikkek És Tanulmányok (Our Flag: Petőfi. Articles and Essays on Literature)*. Budapest: Szikra Könyvkiadó, 1950.
- Ioannides, Marinos. *Mixed Reality and Gamification for Cultural Heritage*. New York: Springer Internaional Publishing, 2017.
- J. Watson, Nicola. "Introduction." In *Literary Tourism and Nineteenth-Century Culture*, edited by Nicola J. Watson, 1–13. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.
- Jankó, Judit. "Szekszárdi Emlékszobák Születése (The Birth of the Memorial Rooms of Szekszárd)." *Múzeumcafé* 5, no. 26 (2011): 68–73.
- Jones, Robert. "Curators May Be Sceptical but Branding Is Vital for Museums." *The Guardian*, May 1, 2014. <https://www.theguardian.com/culture-professionals-network/culture-professionals-blog/2014/may/01/curators-branding-tate-british-museum>.
- József, Attila. "Ime, Hát Megleltem Hazámat (There, I Have Found My Home)." *Collected Poems of Attila József*. Accessed May 25, 2018. <http://mek.oszk.hu/11800/11864/html/index.html>.
- Kalla Zsuzsa. "Az év kiállítása 2015: Eszmélet. A József Attila Emlékhely kiállítása (Exhibition of the Year 2015: Consciousness. The Exhibition of the Attila József Memorial Site)," May 21, 2016. [http://archiv.magyarmuzeumok.hu/kiallitas/3296\\_az\\_ev\\_kiallitasa\\_2015\\_eszmelet\\_a\\_jozsef\\_attila\\_emlekhely\\_kiallitasal](http://archiv.magyarmuzeumok.hu/kiallitas/3296_az_ev_kiallitasa_2015_eszmelet_a_jozsef_attila_emlekhely_kiallitasal).
- . "Irodalmi relikviák, világi ereklyék (Literary Relics, Secular Relics)." In *Tények és legendák, tárgyak és ereklyék (Facts and Legends, Objects and Relics)*, 67–90. Budapest: Petőfi Irodalmi Múzeum, 1994.
- Kelevéz, Ágnes. "100 Éves a Nyugat (Nyugat Is 100 Years Old)." In *Az Irodalmi Kiállítás Természetrájza (The Nature of the Literary Exhibition)*, 48–57. Budapest: Petőfi Irodalmi Múzeum, 2013.
- "Költészet Hete (Week of Poetry)." Website of Ferencváros, April 11, 2018. [http://www.ferencvaros.hu/index0.php?name=hir\\_180411\\_Kolteszet\\_hete](http://www.ferencvaros.hu/index0.php?name=hir_180411_Kolteszet_hete).
- Lee, Vernon. *The Tower of the Mirrors and Other Essays on the Spirit of Places*. London: J. Lane, 1914.
- "Literary Tours." Association of Hungarian Literary Memorial Places. Accessed May 27, 2018. <http://www.mire.hu/en/routes>.

- M. Kaiser, Michael, and Brett Egan. *The Cycle - Planning for Success in the Arts*. Washington: The John F. Kennedy Center of Performing Arts, 2013.
- Matthews, Samantha. "Making Their Mark: Writing the Poet's Grave." In *Literary Tourism and Nineteenth-Century Culture*, edited by Nicola J. Watson, 25–36. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.
- "Mihály Babits House in Szekszárd." Association of Hungarian Literary Memorial Places. Accessed May 25, 2018. <http://www.mire.hu/en/museums/50/description>.
- "National Cultural Fund of Hungary." Accessed May 27, 2018. <http://www.nka.hu/english/nka>.
- NEFMI. "Irodalmi Emlékház Program (Writer's House Museums Program)," June 11, 2010. <http://www.nefmi.gov.hu/kultura/muzeumi-szakmai/irodalmi-emlekhaz>.
- . "Reneszánsz Év (Renaissance Year)." Text. Website of the Ministry of National Capacities, April 2, 2008. <http://www.nefmi.gov.hu/kultura/reneszansz-ev-2008/oktatasi-kulturalis-090803-1>.
- Népešsy, Noémi. "A Magyarországi Múzeumok Finanszírozása És Gazdálkodása (The Finances and Economics of Hungarian Museums)." *Tudományos Közlemények - ÁVF*, no. 14–15 (2006): 291–307.
- Nora, Pierre. "Preface to the English-Language Edition." In *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, XV–XXIV. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.
- "Norway Grants - EEA Grants." Accessed May 27, 2018. <https://eeagrants.org/Who-we-are/Norway-Grants>.
- Önkormányzata, Budapest Főváros IX. Kerület Ferencváros. "József Attila mindenkiNET." Website of the Attila József Video Competition. Accessed May 25, 2018. <http://www.jozsefattilamindenkinet.hu/index.html>.
- "Országos Kéktúra (National Blue Trail)." Website of the National Blue Trail. Accessed May 25, 2018. <http://www.kektura.hu/cimlap.html>.
- Petőfi, Sándor. "1848." Collected Poems of Sándor Petőfi. Accessed May 25, 2018. <http://mek.oszk.hu/01000/01006/html/vs184801.htm#23>.
- . "A Téli Esték (The Winter Nights)." ELTE Text Collection. Accessed May 25, 2018. <http://magyar-irodalom.elte.hu/sulinet/igyjo/setup/portrek/petofi/ateliest.htm>.
- Petri, György. "Vagyok, Mit Érdekelne (I Exist, Who Cares)." Collected Poems of György Petri. Accessed May 25, 2018. [http://dia.pool.pim.hu/xhtml/petri\\_gyorgy/Petri\\_Gyorgy-Osszegyujtott\\_versek.xhtml](http://dia.pool.pim.hu/xhtml/petri_gyorgy/Petri_Gyorgy-Osszegyujtott_versek.xhtml).

- Polgár, Judit. "A Belföldi Turizmus Alakulása 1990-Től Napjainkig (The Development of National Tourism from 1990 to the Present)." *Turizmus Bulletin (Tourism Bulletin)* 10, no. 1 (2006): 3–16.
- Praznovszky, Mihály. "Az Irodalmi Emlékhely, Mint a Kultusz Egyik Intézménye (The Literary Memorial Site as the Institution of the Cult)." In *Tények És Legendák, Tárgyak És Ereklék (Facts and Legends, Objects and Relics)*, 11–21. Budapest: Petőfi Irodalmi Múzeum, 1994.
- . "Irodalmi emlékházak térben és időben (Writer's house museums in space and time)." *Irodalomismeret*, no. 1 (2012): 19–26.
- "Radzyń, Land of Wamth." Website of Radzyń County Tourism. Accessed May 25, 2018. <http://www.krainaserdecznosci.pl/en/audio-guide>.
- Rentschler, Ruth, and Anne-Marie Hede. *Museum Marketing: Competing in the Global Marketplace*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2007.
- Serf András. "József Attila államosítása: amikor először ültük meg a költészet napját (The Nationalization of Attila József: When We First Celebrated the Day of Poetry)." Qubit, April 11, 2018. <https://qubit.hu/2018/04/11/jozsef-attila-allamositasa-amikor-eloszor-ultuk-meg-a-kolteszet-napjat>.
- Sipos, Lajos. "„Mindig Lesz Benne Felfedeznivaló” - A Babits-Recepcióról ('We Will Always Have Something to Discover in Him' - On the Babits Reception)." *Forrás* 41, no. 6 (2009): 63–82.
- Slater, Alix. "Developing a Typology of Membership Schemes in the UK." *International Review on Public and Nonprofit Marketing* 2, no. 1 (2005): 23–39.
- Szabó, Lőrinc. "Csavargók (Vagabonds)." Collected Poems of Lőrinc Szabó. Accessed May 25, 2018. [http://dia.pool.pim.hu/html/muvek/SZABOL/szabol00154\\_kv.html](http://dia.pool.pim.hu/html/muvek/SZABOL/szabol00154_kv.html).
- Szepesi, Balázs. "Turizmus Tolna megyében (Tourism in Tolna County)." Hétfa Kutatóintézet (Hétfa Research Institute), 2014. [http://hetfa.hu/wp-content/uploads/Turiz\\_CsT\\_honlap.pdf](http://hetfa.hu/wp-content/uploads/Turiz_CsT_honlap.pdf).
- "Szociális Városrehabilitáció: Megújult József Attila Szülőháza (Social City Rehabilitation: Attila József's Birthplace Has Been Renewed)." Website of Ferencváros, October 9, 2014. [http://www.ferencvaros.hu/index0.php?name=hir\\_141009\\_gu35](http://www.ferencvaros.hu/index0.php?name=hir_141009_gu35).
- "The Business Model of the Nonprofit Museum." Sotheby's Institute of Art. Accessed May 27, 2018. <http://www.sothebysinstitute.com/?news=b094ca8e6a299f2bdfd172b689f27fd9>.
- Tölgyesi, Gábor. "Múzeumi reform: visszatérés a nyugat-európai modellhez (Museum Reform: Return to the Western-European Example)." MNO.hu, October 10, 2012. <https://mno.hu/grund/muzeumi-reform-visszateres-a-nyugat-europiai-modellhez-1110406>.

Trubek, Anne. *A Skeptic's Guide to Writers' Houses*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010.

V. Nagy, Viktória. “‘Hol Lakott Itt Vörösmarty Mihály’ |('Where Did Mihály Vörösmarty Live?)." Válasz.hu, September 30, 2009. <http://valasz.hu/itthon/hol-lakott-itt-vorosmarty-mihaly-24421>.

“Vártúrák (Castle Tours).” Website of the Castle Game. Accessed May 25, 2018. <https://www.varturak.hu/magyar/oldalak/hvt/>.

Website of the Attila József Memorial. Accessed May 25, 2018. <http://jaemlekhely.hu/>.



## Appendix 1 – List of interviews

**1. Interview with Gabriella Gulyás**, Director of Operations of the Petőfi Literary Museum, Budapest. One of the founders of the Association of Hungarian Literary Memorial Places.

Date: October 3, 2017.

Location: Petőfi Literary Museum, Budapest

**2. Interview with Csilla Lovas**, curator of the Babits House in Szekszárd. Secretary of the Association of Hungarian Literary Memorial Places.

Date: October 30, 2017.

Location: Babits House, Szekszárd

**3. Interview with Ilona Kispálné Lucza**, curator of the Petőfi House in Kiskőrös.

Date: January 19, 2018.

Location: Petőfi House, Kiskőrös

**4. Interview with Mirella Csiszár**, government surveyor working for the Ministry of Human Capacities. Head of Collections Department at the Hungarian Theater Museum and Institute.

Date: February 15, 2018.

Location: Hungarian Theater Museum and Institute, Budapest

**5. Interview with Ilona H. Bagó**, Head of Exhibition Department at the Petőfi Literary Museum. One of the founders of the Association of Hungarian Literary Memorial Places.

Date: February 20, 2018.

Location: Petőfi Literary Museum, Budapest.

## Appendix 2 – List of MIRE members

Name of the member	Address
<b>Ady Memorial Apartment - Petőfi Literary Museum</b>	1053 Budapest, Károlyi u. 16.
<b>János Arany Association for Culture</b>	Nagyszalonta, 415500, Piata Libertatii 4
<b>Mihály Babits House –Bálint Balassa Museum</b>	2500 Esztergom Babits M. u. 11.
<b>Mihály Babits House- Wosinszky Mór County Museum</b>	7100 Szekszárd, Szent István tér 26.
<b>Gizi Bajor Museum - Petőfi Literary Museum</b>	1053 Budapest, Károlyi u. 16.
<b>Dániel Berzsenyi Múzeum – Government of Nikla</b>	8706 - Nikla, Berzsenyi Dániel utca 96.
<b>György Bessenyei Museum – Government of Bakonszeg</b>	4164 Bakonszeg, Hunyadi u. 24.
<b>Csokonai House of Culture</b>	Dunaalmás, Vadvirág utca 27.
<b>Debrecen House of Literature – Déri Museum</b>	4027 Debrecen, Borsos József tér 1.
<b>Ministry of Human Capacities, Department of Public Collections</b>	1051 Budapest, Akadémia u. 3.

<b>János Esperits House – Attila József Museum</b>	6900 Makó, Kazinczy u. 6.
<b>István Fekete Museum – Imre Bodó, private collector</b>	7200 Dombóvár, Hóvirág u. 25.
<b>Erzsébet Galgóczy Room - Ménfőcsanak-Gyirmót House of Culture</b>	9012 Győr-Ménfőcsanak, Bezerédj-kastély, Győri u. 90.
<b>Géza Gárdonyi House – Government of Gárdony</b>	2484 Agárd, Sigray tér 3.
<b>Géza Gárdonyi Museum – István Dobó Castle Museum</b>	3300 Eger Gárdonyi Géza u. 28./3300 Eger, Vár 1.
<b>Jókai House – Government of Tardona</b>	Tardona, Jókai Mór u. 1.
<b>Mór Jókai- Balatonfüred Cultural Nonprofit Kft.</b>	8230 Balatonfüred, Honvéd u. 1.
<b>Mór Jókai Room – Petőfi Literary Museum</b>	1053 Budapest, Károlyi u. 16.
<b>András Jóna Museum</b>	4400 Nyíregyháza, Benczúr Gyula tér 21.
<b>Attila József Memorial Site - Government of Ferencváros, Budapest</b>	Bp. IX. kerület Gát utca 3.
<b>Attila József Museum, Government of Makó</b>	6900 Makó Megyeház u. 4.
<b>József Katona House - Contemporary Art Workshops Nonprofit Kft.</b>	6000 Kecskemét, Katona József u.5.

<b>Sándor Kisfaludy House – Government of Sümeg</b>	8330 Sümeg, Béke tér 7.
<b>Ferenc Kölcsey House – Government of Álmósd</b>	4285 Álmósd, Kölcsey utca 25.
<b>Kölcsey House</b>	Sződemeter
<b>Krúdy Room – Museum of Trade and Tourism</b>	1036 Budapest, Korona tér 1.
<b>Dezső Laczkó Museum</b>	8200 Veszprém, Török Ignác u. 7.
<b>Local History and Literary History Exhibition Space of Leányfalu</b>	2016 Leányfalu, Mórícz Zsigmond u. 153.
<b>Imre Madách House – Government of Csesztve</b>	Csesztve Kossuth út 76.
<b>Madách Castle – Slovakian National Museum – Museum of Hungarian Culture</b>	Alsósztrégova, Madách Imre u. 1./SK-99102 Dolná Strehová, ul. Madácha 1.
<b>Museum of Hungarian Language – Petőfi Literary Museum</b>	3988 Sátorajáújhely-Széphalom, Kazinczy u. 275.
<b>Kálmán Mikszáth House – Government of Horpács</b>	2658 Horpács, Kossuth út 12.
<b>Kálmán Mikszáth House - Slovakian National Museum – Museum of Hungarian Culture</b>	99105 Szklabonya (Sklabina)
<b>Ferenc Móra Museum</b>	6720 Szeged, Roosevelt tér 1-3.
<b>Zsigmond Mórícz House – Government of Prügy</b>	3925 Prügy, Mórícz Zs. U. 12.

<b>Zsigmond Móricz House – Government of Tiszacsécse</b>	4947 Tiszacsécse, Kossuth Lajos utca 29.
<b>Gáspár Nagy House – Gáspár Nagy Foundation</b>	2092 Budakeszi, Felkeszi u. 17.
<b>László Nagy House – László Nagy Heritage Foundation</b>	8493 Iszkáz, Ady Endre u. 1.
<b>Petőfi Memorial Site- Government of Ostffyasszonyfa</b>	Ostffyasszonyfa, Petőfi Sándor u. 2.
<b>Petőfi Literary Museum</b>	1053 Budapest, Károlyi u. 16.
<b>Sándor Petőfi House - Government of Sárszentlőrinc</b>	7047 Sárszentlőrinc, Petőfi Sándor u. 22.
<b>Sándor Petőfi Exhibition – Government of Szalkszentmárton</b>	6068 Szalkszentmárton, Petőfi tér 14.
<b>Petőfi Birthplace and Museum – Government of Kiskőrös</b>	6200 Kiskőrös, Petőfi tér 5.
<b>Ráday Castle - Forster Center</b>	2119 Pécel, Kálvin tér 1.
<b>Pál Szabó House – Government of Biharugra</b>	5538 Biharugra, Erzsébet u. 25.
<b>Júlia Szendrey Room - Pannon University Georgicon</b>	8359 Keszthely, Szendrey telep, 8360 Keszthely Deák Ferenc u. 16.
<b>Slovakian National Museum – Museum of Hungarian Culture</b>	810 06, Pozsony Zizkova 18
<b>Gyula Takács House – Dániel Berzsenyi Association</b>	Kaposvár dr.Kovács Sebestyén u.9.

<b>János Vajda House – Government of Vál</b>	2473 Vál, Antali erdő
<b>Péter Veres Exhibition – Péter Veres Cultural Center</b>	4060 Balmazújváros, Kadarcs u.
<b>Mihály Vörösmarty Exhibition – Government Office of Kápolnásnyék</b>	7475 Kápolnásnyék, Vörösmarty u. 31.
<b>Sándor Weöres and Amy Károly House – Government of Csönge</b>	9513 Csönge, Rába u. 10.
<b>Ottó Herman Museum</b>	3529 Miskolc, Görgey Artúr u. 28.
<b>József Darrvas House – Government of Orosháza</b>	5900 Orosháza, Dózsa György utca 74.
<b>István Sinka House – István Sinka Center for Culture and Library</b>	5530 Vésztő, Kossuth u. 39
<b>Bulcsú Bertha Room – Government of Nemeskeresztúr</b>	Nemeskeresztúr Kossuth u. 71.

# Appendix 3 - List of refurbished writer's house museums

## 1. Refurbishment of facilities and premises

- Mihály Babits House, Esztergom
- Mihály Babits House, Szekszárd
- László Nagy House, Iszkáz
- Zsigmond Móricz House, Prügy
- Petőfi Apiary, Borjád
- József Katona Museum, Kecskemét
- Sándor Petőfi Exhibition, Szalkszentmárton

## 2. New exhibitions

- Sándor Petőfi House, Sárszentlőrinc
- László Nagy House, Iszkáz
- Petőfi Apiary, Borjád
- Géza Gárdonyi House, Agárd
- Jókai Museum, Balatonfüred
- Sándor Petőfi Exhibition, Szalkszentmárton

## 3. Exhibition update

- Zsigmond Móricz Museum, Tiszacsécse
- Zsigmond Móricz House, Prügy

- Géza Gárdonyi Museum, Eger
- József Katona Museum, Kecskemét
- Sándor Petőfi Birthplace, Kiskőrös
- Miklós Mészöly Exhibition, Szekszárd
- Valéria Dienes Exhibition, Szekszárd
- Ady Memorial Apartment, Budapest

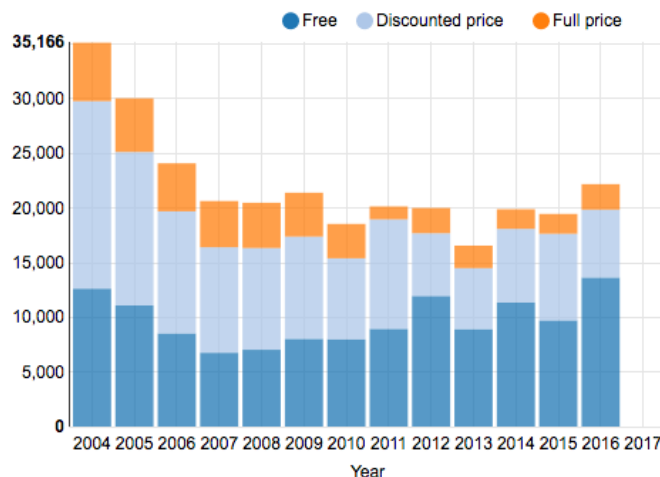
#### **4. New spaces for museum education**

- Zsigmond Móricz Museum, Tiszacsécse
- Sándor Weöres and Amy Károly Museum, Csönge
- Petőfi Literary Museum
- Zsigmond Móricz House, Prügy
- Géza Gárdonyi House, Agárd
- János Vajda House, Vál
- Mihály Babits House, Szekszárd
- József Katona Museum, Kecskemét



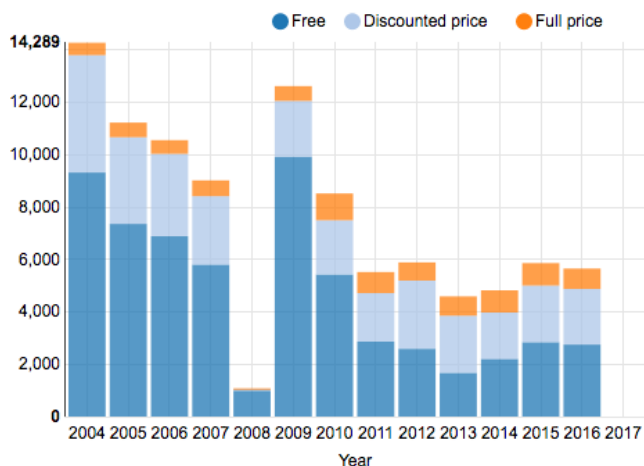
## Appendix 4 – Visitors' numbers in the museums of the case studies<sup>132</sup>

Visitors



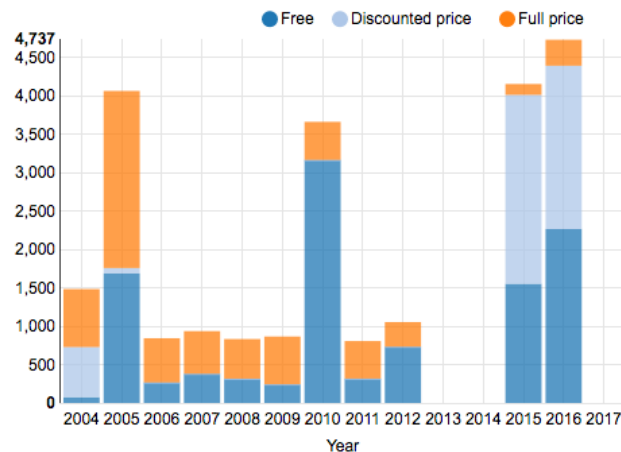
Petőfi House, Kiskőrös

Visitors



Babits House, Szekszárd

Visitors

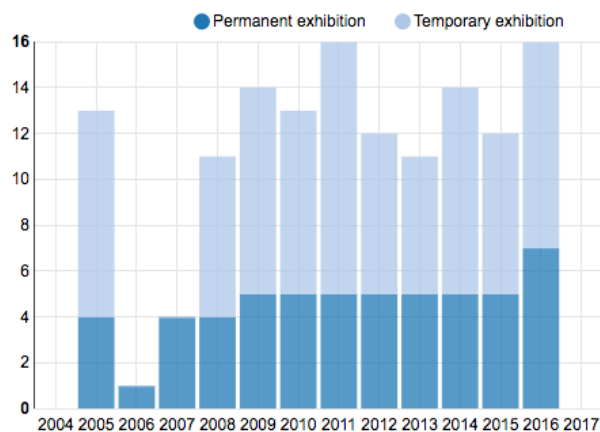


Attila József Memorial Site, Budapest

<sup>132</sup> All statistics courtesy of [www.muzeumstat.hu](http://www.muzeumstat.hu)

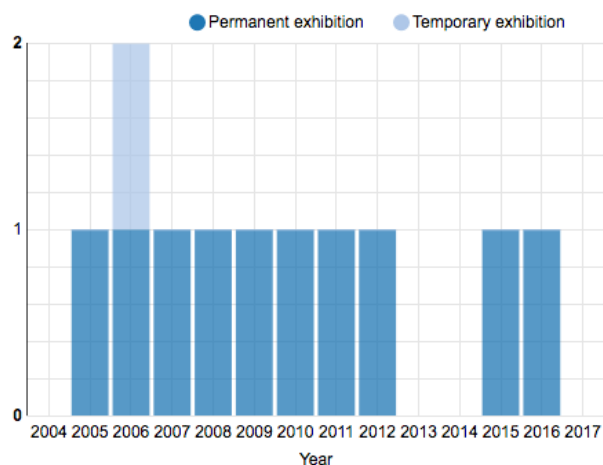
## Appendix 5 – Number of permanent and temporary exhibitions in the museums of the case studies

Exhibitions



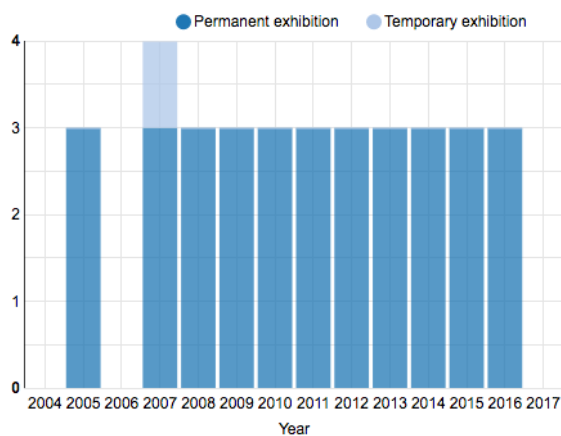
Petőfi House, Kiskőrös

Exhibitions



Babits House, Szekszárd

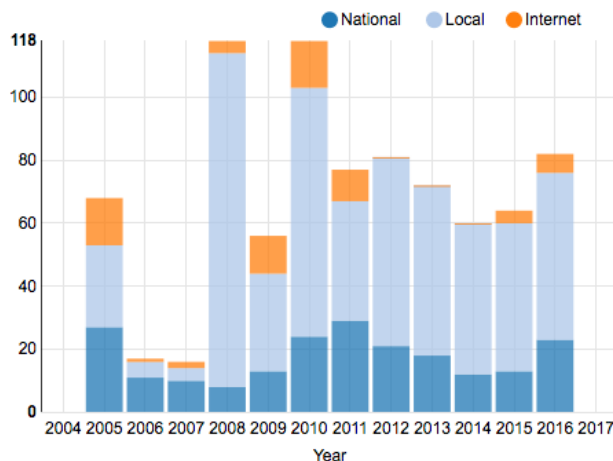
Exhibitions



Attila József Memorial Site, Budapest

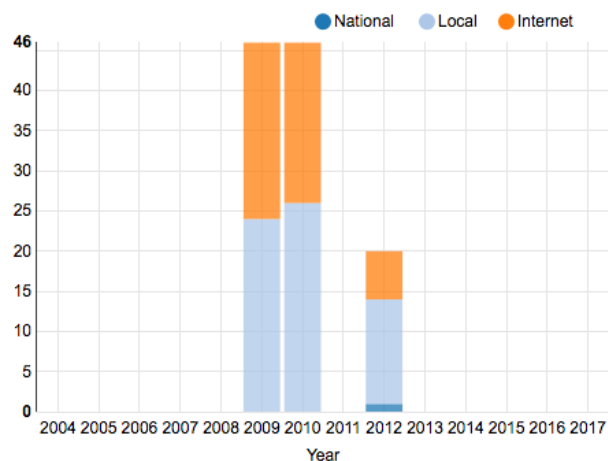
## Appendix 6 – Number of media appearances of the case study museums

Occurrence in Media by Scope



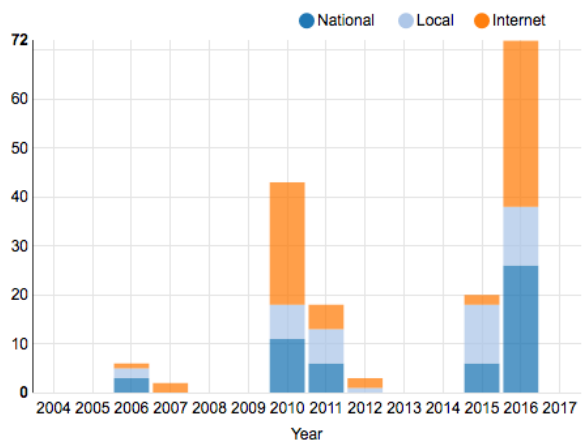
Petőfi House, Kiskőrös

Occurrence in Media by Scope



Babits House, Szekszárd

Occurrence in Media by Scope



Attila József Memorial Site, Budapest