

The Funeral Speeches of György Verestói. An Overview of the Research History¹

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Abstract: In the process of determining the place and importance of György Verestói (1698–1765; orator and reformed bishop of Transylvania) this study aims to formulate certainties by using the results of research history. The figure of the orator – despite his contemporary popularity – has nowadays faded. Most encyclopaedias contain mistaken information about Verestói and in the public consciousness of literary history there are lots of controversial facts about the topic. Moreover, his works are not separated; most databases, libraries merge his oeuvre with the younger Verestói's one. The most important result of this research is that – having found the original Latin manuscript of the author's autobiography² – it can reassuringly clear up the questions related to the biography.

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The researcher who wants to survey the oeuvre of György Verestói has to face a paradox phenomenon, right in the early phase of the research. It is mainly the same fact as the one mentioned in Katalin Németh S.'s detailed study³ in 1984: despite the reputation and popularity of the orations in the 18th century, now one cannot find a presentation based on all of the funeral speeches of Verestói.⁴ György Verestói, college teacher, later reformed bishop of Transylvania in Cluj (Kolozsvár), was a key-figure of the contemporary cultural life; his worldly funeral speeches were collected after his death and re-published in a collection entitled *Friendship with the dead*⁵. Although by this time his image has become more particular on the one hand precisely by Katalin

¹ This study was written during the programme of POSDRU *Invest in people* – project co-financed by the European Social Fund through the Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2007–2013.

² *Genealogia et vita Georgii Verestói*. The Verestói-manuscript can be found in the manuscript archives of the Reformed College's library in Cluj; the library is presently managed by the Academic Library of Cluj-Napoca. Its identifier: MS R 1436.

³ Katalin Németh S., "Magyar orátor a 18. században: Verestói György" (Hungarian orator in the 18th century) *Irodalomtörténet* 4 (1984): 855–888.

⁴ Németh S., "Magyar orátor a 18. században: Verestói György," 855.

⁵ György Verestói, *Holtakkal való barátság*, I–II. darab. (Friendship with the dead, I–II.). (Cluj: Reformed College, 1783).

Németh S.'s research, on the other hand by the publications of Áron Kibédi Varga – a detailed presentation of the orations has not happened yet. The “processing” of the orations is therefore incomplete, and the figure of the author becomes more and more uncertain as we compare different sources.

Attempts for reconstruction – Verestói's life and the history of effect of his works – in the mirror of the bibliography

I. Interminglings of the life-history and works

In different handbooks and literary history works we can find several pieces of – diverse – information; but referring to the primary works the contingency is even more definite. The review is more difficult because the orator's son (the younger György Verestói) created his works in the same genre, and in most libraries, catalogues, references the authors and titles are mixed.

I would mention some examples to illustrate the disorder of information in the general bibliography. In József Szinnyei's presentation¹ György Verestói and his son are separated by the attributes: from Csér, the elder and from Csér, the younger. According to this, the elder Verestói studied in Bahnea (Bonyha), Odorhei (Székelyudvarhely), then Cluj (Kolozsvár) and Franeker. The section dealing with his works mentions several funeral speeches and the collection – without the claim of completeness –, but refers to Zoltán Köblös who knows about 56 orations. This is why it seems to be important to examine that list.

Zoltán Köblös, when reviewing the funeral speeches in the libraries of the Transylvanian National Museum and the Reformed College of Cluj², in the name-list of the authors orders the works of the father and son to the name of György Verestói (from Csér). So we can state that József Szinnyei's reference is mistaken about the 56 funeral speeches. Among the 56 references one can find the same oration repeatedly (in different editions), and one of them (327.) cannot be connected to either of the Verestóis. However, in the detailed enumeration, Köblös marks separately the works of the two Verestóis. Unfortunately, this tendency is not consistent.

The “separation” of the two oeuvres was relatively simple, because the father died in 1765 (March), and according to his *Autobiography*, his son arrived home from Franeker – finishing his studies – on the 7th of October, 1764. As a consequence, the younger Verestói's works in the “industry of funeral speeches” could start in the best case in 1765 (before this date only his university dissertation can be mentioned). Naturally, in all cases we have to analyze the time of the delivery of the oration, not of the edition. (The differences of the formal characteristics in the orations make also clear the authors' identity.) Zoltán Köblös's list refers this way to 44 speeches below the name

¹ József Szinnyei, *Magyar írók élete és munkái*. 1–14. (The life and works of Hungarian writers 1–14.) (Budapest, 1891–1914): 1126–1129.

² Zoltán Köblös, *Halotti beszédek az Erdélyi Országos Múzeum és a Kolozsvári Ref. Kollegium Könyvtárában* (Funeral speeches in the Transylvanian National Museum and the library of the Reformed College) (Cluj, offprint from: *Geneológiai Füzetek* 1904 and 1905, the typography of Gámán János's Heir, 1905).

of György Verestói. 34 of these can be ordered to the elder and 10 to the younger György Verestói.

Katalin Németh S.'s above mentioned – and so far the most comprehensive – study also marks some imprecisions: the error of Géza Petrik's bibliography,¹ the mixings in the catalogues of the OSZK² and the British Museum, the fact that the Database of János Herepei³ does not separate the two authors, and that Domokos Kosáry attributes to the elder Verestói a work that belongs to Sámuel Verestói⁴.

In *Smirnai Szent Polikárpus* (an anthology of bishops, written by Verestói's contemporary, Péter Bod, which appeared one year after his death) the second place of the bishop's studies is Târgu Mureş (Marosvásárhely). Later, in lots of cases – as we could see for example at Szinnye – this place changes to Odorhei. The duality stands in a stubborn way in the bibliography – Katalin Németh S. being the only one who was interested in the solution of this literary history mystery. According to her, the name of the town was transmitted erroneously in the speeches given on Verestói's funeral. This way, those researchers who gained their information from the funeral speeches, are all mistaken. She bases her arguments on the *translation* of György Verestói's Latin autobiography⁵ in which the bishop writes about his life in an objective – yet movingly sensible – way. The translation was made by István Török, and appeared in the *Protestáns Közlöny*.⁶ One of the most important results of the present research is that – having found the original Latin manuscript – it can clear up the questions referring to the life history.

István Török, when writing the history of the College, bases the chapter about Verestói on this autobiography (translated and published by himself). He marks the facts that are quoted from this text, and separates them from the results of his own research. He completes the biography with some important events, the data and summary of Verestói's dissertation written in Franeker, the names of his mates, who wrote congratulating poems in connection with this. He publishes Ferencz Csepregi's laudatory poem after the biography and enumerates the people to whom Verestói dedicated his dissertation entitled *De Palma ardente*.

¹ Géza Petrik, *Magyarország bibliográfiája 1712–1860* (The bibliography of Hungary 1712–1860). III. I (Budapest, 1891), 762–763.

² National Széchényi Library, Budapest.

³ Bálint Keszérű, ed., *Adattár XVII. századi szellemi mozgalmaink történetéhez III. Művelődési törekvések a század második felében*. HERPEI János cikkei. (Database to the history of our spiritual movements III. Aspirations of civilization in the second part of the seventeenth century. The articles of János HERPEI) (Budapest–Szeged: József Attila Tudományegyetem, 1971).

¹¹ György Verestói's son, physician.

⁵ Németh S., "Magyar orátor a 18. században: Verestói György," 858.

⁶ István Török, "A kolozsvári collegium XVIII. századi tanárainak életrajza. (Verestói György 1728–1764 tanár s később püspök.)" (The biographies of the college of Kolozsvár from the 18th century), *Protestáns Közlöny* 13 (1886): 122–123; 14 (1886): 128–130. Later Zsigmond Nagy wrote some completion to these: Zsigmond NAGY, "Függelék Verestói György életrajzához" (Appendix to György Verestói's biography), *Protestáns Közlöny* 15 (1886): 138–139.

Jakab Ferenczy's biography-collection writes about Verestói almost in catchwords,¹ however, his statements are correct. The *Hungarian Literary Encyclopaedia* edited by Ferenc Ványi, only mentions Cluj as a place of his studies, speaks about his poems and the collection of his funeral speeches (1783) – but the basic mistake is that it contains the dates of birth and death incorrectly, which are in fact the data of the younger orator.



Teodora Cosman, *The Last New Years' Eve*, from the series „Jeux de Mémoire”, 70 x 90 cm, acrylic on synthetic tissue, 2010

The encyclopaedia edited by Marcell Benedek² and the *New Hungarian Literary Encyclopaedia*³ refer to the biography and works using the results of Katalin Németh S. and Áron Kibédi Varga. (We have to mention that the *György Verestói* dictionary entry in the latter encyclopaedia is written by Katalin Németh S.)

It seemed to be necessary to re-examine the facts connected to the biography, to create the most complete and authentic image of Verestói. The printed source material resulted in some confusion during the research, because the speeches given in the funeral ceremonies of the bishop and the autobiography translated by Török were

¹ Jakab Ferenczy, *Magyar Írók. Életrajz-Gyűjtemény* (Hungarian Writers. Collection of biographies) (Pest: Szent István-Association, Gusztáv Emich's typography, 1856), 372–373.

² Marcell Benedek, ed., *Magyar irodalmi lexikon*. (Hungarian literary encyclopaedia), vol. 3 (S–Z) (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1965), 515.

³ László Péter, ed., *Új magyar irodalmi lexikon* (New Hungarian literary encyclopaedia), second, corrected ed. (Budapest: Akadémiai, 2000), 2417–2418.

different in lots of respects. Two, maybe the most uncertain facts: the exact time of Verestói's birth and the second station of his studies. Every source had its own opinion and "truth" – so the investigation seemed to be quite difficult. Furthermore, Katalin Németh S.'s arguments seemingly clarified the misunderstandings (using the translation of the *Autobiography*), so the data originating from her functioned as evidence: according to this György Verestói was born in Bahnea, on January 25, started his studies also there, then continued them in Odorhei. However, it was worrying that the funeral speeches about Verestói – which can be treated as the closest reception – all mark the second place of studies as Târgu Mureş, and Péter Bod in *Smirnai Szent Polikárpus* also refers to this town name. It seemed unimaginable that the contemporaries, some of them friends, colleagues and the family all knew and transmitted this thing incorrectly. Because – according to Németh S. – "In the indication of the next school the contemporaries are all wrong."¹ Then: "Although we read at Verestói: 'In 1710, on 21st of May, when I was studying in the grammar class, I was taken to the school of Udvarhely [Odorhei], which was not called college yet.'"

The 31st footnote of Németh S.'s above mentioned study refers to Jenő Zoványi's *Encyclopaedia of Protestant Church History in Hungary*, where the birth date of György Verestói is June 25: "Verestói's birth date is June 25, 1698. – evidently misprint."² She compares this with the oration written by Bodoki³, which was declaimed on Verestói's funeral and later appeared in a composite volume which contained the texts of the ceremony.⁴ The 34th footnote – referring again to the data of the encyclopaedia – notices that: "It is interesting that Zoványi, who marks as his source Török's college-history, knows about the improper location of Marosvásárhely [Târgu-Mureş]."

It is visible how many complications these two questions have caused in the research history. It was the *actual* primary source that helped us in the solution of the uncertainties: the original Latin manuscript.⁵

On the second (unnumbered) page of the document, Verestói enumerates his siblings, and writes about himself, too, as the sixth one in the row: "*Georgium Verestói, me videlicet, qui haec scribo, natum anno 1698 Die 25 Junii in Bonyha.*" The name of the month can be read very clearly. It is interesting that in the translation of Török we can find January as the equivalent of *Junii* at another place, too (when mentioning the eighth sibling, József Verestói, very close to György's name) – but, when he writes about the fact that Verestói became the teacher of the rhetoric class in *June* of the year 1718, and that on the 28th of *June* 1764 a synod was kept, the translation is correct. It must be mentioned that in all cases the handwriting is the same.

¹ Németh S., "Magyar orátor a 18. században: Verestói György," 862.

² Ibid., 862.

³ József Bodoki, *Halotti oratio... Verestói György... utolsó tisztességére... 1765.* (Kolozsvár [Cluj]: nyomt. Páldi István által, 1767).

⁴ ISTEN JOBB KEZE' FÉRJFIÁNAK ÖRÖK EMLÉKEZETE...Néhai TISZTELETES Tudós VERESTÓI GYÖRGY URAMNAK... mindenek előtt nagy becsben forgó jó Hirét, Nevét; a' meg-nevezett Halotti Tanításoknak ... Világ eleiben lett ki botsáttatásokban, a' feledékenységűl meg-óltalmazni kívánta... VESSELÉNYI FERENTZ UR... Ő EXTZELLENTZIÁJA. KOLO'SV. Nyomt. PÁLDI ISTVÁN által. 1767. Eszt.

⁵ *Genealogia et vita Georgii Verestói.*

Even more questions arise in the case of the second station of studies. It's worth quoting the affirmation of the manuscript word by word: "*Deinde Anno 1710 Die 21 Maji, dum iam Grammaticae studerem, ductus sum in Scholam Agropolitanam, quae nondum Collegii titulo gaudebat.*" The *Agropolis* town name in Transylvania marked only Târgu-Mureş (Marosvásárhely) in the 18th century.¹ (The situation would have been more problematic if Verestói had written *Areopolis* which name – in the course of times – was used for both Székelyudvarhely [Odorhei] and Marosvásárhely [Târgu-Mureş]). Comparing this with Verestói's funeral speeches consistently referring to Târgu-Mureş, we can state that the second place of the bishop's studies was Târgu-Mureş.

From István Török's translation one can deduce that it rests on a profound, prudent workflow, he translates the very meticulous genealogy in a precise and conscientious way. As he notices in the introduction, he publishes the *Autobiography* in "accurate translation" – only some points are different in the two texts. (It is true, however, that these are of importance.)

Although the manuscript is well legible, seems to be a clear copy, we can conclude from the additions that Verestói did not mean his text for printing or he would have rewritten it if he had had the possibility. (According to Török he composed this document "with his own hand in his latest days", so it is conceivable that the final version – meant to be the typographical copy – was not made at all.)

In addition, the two (Latin and Hungarian) readings hide some more points of interest, too. For example, when talking about the subjects of the professor Wierus Guilielmus Muys from Franecker, the *Mathesis* is translated as *Mathematics*². At Muys again, when enumerating the disciplines attended, the translation ignores Mathesis, it just mentions Philosophy, Anatomy and Chemistry. (This is peculiar because Verestói later taught Mathesis for 30 years – it would be quite surprising if he had not learned it during his university years.)

The title of the dissertation written in Franecker is also erroneous in the translation with the words *De Galina Ardente*, because the topic of the thesis is the *burning palm-tree*³. The closest equivalent of *galina* in Latin would be *gallina* which means hen.) On the bottom of the fourth (unnumbered) page of the Latin manuscript this is also unambiguous: "*In Academia Franequerana Annos exegi quattuor, ubi Dissertationem de Palma Ardente elaborari*". When talking about the first-born daughter, Erzsébet Verestói, the original manuscript (seventh page) mentions the name of her aborted child as "*Susanna Pataki*" – the translation does not contain the information. The last paragraph – about Erzsébet's death – is missing, too. The last sentence in the original text also contains the exact time besides the fact that the younger György Verestói arrived home, and notes that the son came home in good health.

¹ Balázs Orbán, *A Székelyföld leírása. Történelmi, régészeti, természetrajzi s népismeii szempontból.* (The description of the land of the Seklers. From historical, archaeological, natural, and popular points of view) (Budapest: Panda and Frohna, 1868) <http://mek.oszk.hu/04800/04804/html/166.html>

² Török, "A kolozsvári collegium XVIII. századi tanárainak életrajza. (Verestói György 1728–1764 tanár s később püspök)," 123.

³ *Dissertatio filologico-theologica de PALMA ARDENTE ad Exod. Cap. III. vs. 1–5.* (MTAK 525. 010.)

A part of the differences may not be the responsibility of the translator: it can easily happen that they are print errors. Anyway, the mistaken data of the translation – as the facts gained from the most reliable and accessible source – have set our knowledge about Verestói's life history.

II. The history of effect of the funeral speeches

As to the “processing”, reviewing of works, the situation of the research is misleading for two reasons. On the one hand, because – despite his contemporary popularity – Verestói has been excluded from the literary public consciousness by now, on the other hand, there are also several studies that definitely deal with him. The fact that he is ignored can originate from the interaction of the two circumstances. So it seems that the gradual fading of his figure and influence derives from the fact recognized by Katalin Németh S. in 1984, namely that those who wrote about his works, chose only one or two orations, and – unfortunately – the same ones each time. This overview is interested in the survey of the publications determining the Verestói-image, more precisely the enumeration, review of the most important texts from the bibliography referring to the orations.

Some references get a more stressed attention here because they have had more accentuated influence on Verestói's situation in the research history and/or their presence is also more confinable. Other works are mentioned only as references – despite their importance one way or another – in order to avoid the disruption of the review. (The dissertation dealing with the topic contains their detailing.)

Several pieces of the theoretic materials deal with Verestói's poems (for example Zsolt Alszegehy's study: *A disciple of Gyöngyösi*, which contains lots of quotations, too), so the bibliography referring to the orations becomes even shorter.

The interest towards the funeral orations was aroused by a publication of Lajos Dézsi in the *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények* periodical¹, and it also fixed the character of further examinations, too. He analyzes the “fairy” oration during the examination of folk tales – as Verestói's “indisputably most interesting work”. Dézsi's study otherwise informs us about the orator's contemporary popularity, furthermore, he gives an explanation of the phenomenon: “But they loved first of all his funeral orations; his fame was so great that people went even from the third county to listen to him, especially if there was a bigger occasion, a funeral. His erudition was wide-ranging, and he always used many quotations, included interesting stories not just from the saints' or classical, but also from newer German and French history, sometimes from the Hungarian one, too – while his contemporaries remained at the two previous ones. Maybe the source of his great popularity was hidden in this fact.”² His argument unfortunately does not lean upon marked sources, beside the emphasized “fairy” oration he only names one (declaimed on 'Susanna Vesselényi's funeral). He quotes from the latter to support his critical notice: “He overran even his contemporaries in loquacious jesting”.³ He also remembers Verestói's translator skills and poems, which “were considered good in his

¹ Lajos Dézsi, “Népmeséink történetéhez” (To the history of our folk tales) *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények* (1896): 345–350.

² *Ibid.*, 346.

³ *Ibid.*, 347.

age”. Dézsi publishes a considerable part of the oration about Kristina Alvintzi to illustrate the oppression and persecution of popular poetry by the church.¹

József Gulyás's writing in *Ethnographia* in 1925² does not aim at a tendentious classification, but also enhances the popular respect. Because of its determining character, it is worth examining the introduction of the article: “In György Verestói's book of orations *Friendship with the dead* (1783) there are lots of notes deserving to be mentioned about the Hungarian folk tale. For example, in the speech declaimed on Kristina Alvinczy's funeral where “the country of fairies” was narrated (1733)”. So his selection is introduced objectively, moreover, one can notice some acknowledgement from the introductory sentence. Gulyás presents elements of tales in the further parts, however, his references are in connection with this oration (he writes page numbers beside his quotes, among these only one refers to the speech about Anna Lázár,³ but without noticing the title of it).

Within the framework of a treatise researching traces of tales, József Turóczi-Trostler⁴ speaks – relatively shortly – about Verestói; two years after the appearance of Gulyás's text. It is visible that the context has not changed much, the conclusions also have only tinged: “Having this world- and point of view, it is only natural that Verestói has problems with one or another of the diabolic phantoms, a form of the irrational. When talking about *Country of fairs, fairies*, he always thinks of allegories, he describes the transitoriness or the changing form of the reality. But behind the allegory the concrete, demonic fairy-idea of the tales is lurking, the living symbol of the wonder. Verestói feels this, fights this, so the conflict of rational and irrational is taking place in front of our eyes, in open stage.” The longest reference this way is about the speech about Kristina Alvintzi again; and in the following parts the text does not even mark its sources among the examples.

Zoltán Trócsányi's study published in *Magyar Könyvszemle* with the title “The persecution of belles-lettres”⁵ is also based on a concrete speech, also the “fairy” one, declaimed on the funeral of Kristina Alvintzi. Trócsányi has a special point of view, which seems to be important: “On the basis of several data from the eighteenth century I could state that in the so-called “unnational” age, before 1772 the works of belles-lettres could not appear because in the eighteenth century, mainly in its first part the typographies were maintained by the church. And the latter's position against literature, flower songs, gallant poetry, the older points of view of Sylvester, Pázmány (“nasty flower songs”) has not changed at all. The private typographies also wanted to avoid every conflict or opposition with the church.”⁶ The author of the study publishes some additions from Verestói's collection of orations, *Friendship with the dead*. After a short,

¹ Dézsi, “Népmeséink történetéhez,” 347.

² József Gulyás, “Idősb V. Gy. a nép meséiről” (Gy. V. the elder about the folk tales) *Ethnographia* 36 (1925): 168.

³ Verestói, *Holtakkal való barátság*, 169–210.

⁴ József Turóczi-Trostler, “Mesenyomok a XVIII. század magyar irodalmában. A racionalizmus és irracionálizmus küzdelméhez” (Traces of tales in the Hungarian literature of the eighteenth century. On the fight of the rational and irrational), *Magyar Nyelvőr* 56 (1927): 6–12.

⁵ Zoltán Trócsányi, “A szépirodalom üldözése” (The persecution of belles-lettres), *Magyar Könyvszemle* 3 (1943): 433–435.

⁶ Trócsányi, “A szépirodalom üldözése,” 433.

generalizing summary (I would risk to state that without the real reading of all the speeches) he turns to quoting and commenting the oration about the fairy country¹. Trócsányi in fact explains by these quotations that it is not surprising that the writings of literature were not published – if the reformed bishop influenced by the Enlightenment speaks in a reproving manner about folk tales and love poems.²

It became clear how some quotations picked out by chance can draw around themselves different interpretations of literary history and create debates. General consequences are formulated about Verestói's work while the author speaks about one single oration in an authentic way.

This text (about fairies) has been attached to György Verestói's name, and its re-interpretation in the 21st century would be necessary mainly for other reasons. The oration is fortunately available now for the wider public, too: it is included in the collection of sermons edited and introduced by László Szelestei N.³

This is how Zoltán Jékely is apologizing because his presenting-rehabilitating study⁴ chooses only a few speeches: "You can see with your eyes, that I would not have the strength and ability and you would not have the time and patience; how could I enumerate now all the 26 Orations when each of them makes us think at least half a day? My honour of orator has to content itself with the passing over of the Material in a very quick way."⁵ Jékely in his "Verestói-oration" mainly keeps the formal characteristics of the bishop's style – he even gives a genealogy in the last part of the speech, and there is a final poem and the closing word, ELMONDÁM – the Hungarian translation of the Latin DIXI (and used by Verestói in almost all his pieces).

Jékely, writing a style parody, does not give up the means of humour, as Verestói, too, frequently used it – not characteristically to his age. The fact that the orations are quite long and substantial is dubious for Jékely, mainly because sometimes the time between the obituary and funeral is very short. "Furthermore, I cannot really hide my hard suspicion, my Sad Audience, that sometimes when the courier arrived, he brought out a completely ready Oration, it did not even need any corrections, there was only one task: to put the genealogy part to the end of it..."⁶

The genre which he uses to talk about Verestói makes possible for him to leave out or just mention some of the important data about the funeral speeches. It is a pity, because there is not much help for the one who wants to get informed about the topic, and Jékely was one of the very few philologists – the only one, according to Katalin Németh S.⁷ – who read the almost 1000 pages long collection.

When talking about the humour mentioned above and its contemporary reception, it is necessary to bring up Tibor Klaniczay's study with the title *The unknown*

¹ Verestói, *Holtakkal való barátság*, 96–127, (about *Kristina ALVINTZI*).

³⁴ Trócsányi, "A szépirodalom üldözése," 435.

³ László Szelestei N., ed., *Régi magyar prédikációk 16-18. század.* (Old Hungarian Sermons 16–18 centuries) (Budapest: Apostoli Szentszék, 2005).

⁴ Zoltán Jékely, *A Bárány Vére* (The blood of the lamb) (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1981), 85–97.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 94.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 89.

⁷ Németh S., "Magyar orátor a 18. században: Verestói György," 857.

work of Dienes József Hermányi.¹ Klaniczay publishes a poem by him from 1731 which takes the side “of reality, and is against the untruth” – and Hermányi “meant to use it as a preface for the characterization of the bishops.”² And – although the object of the irony was fundamentally coaxing, hypocrisy towards the nobility – the passion of his poem mocking at Verestói’s early oration³ can be traced back to the contemporary-professional competition, too. Hermányi’s “revolt” against Verestói is not the only one: in his collection of anecdotes he trifles long on the grounds of the humour of the above mentioned speech.

In 1993 Sándor Lukácsy publishes some parts of funeral speeches in the review *Kortárs*,⁴ but – maybe because of the section’s character – there remains only little place for comments. In other references, for example in his study entitled “The disinherited literature”⁵ in the volume *God’s little candles*, he mentions the oeuvre in an appreciative way.

Áron Kibédi Varga is trying to explain why literary history suppresses Verestói (as we could see, Jékely wanted to rehabilitate him), with the tendency of the 19th century literary history writing: “to eliminate the literature inspired by religion from the handbooks of literary history.”⁶ He warns that one should not dismiss the original context, emphasizes the multimedial character and devotes a short part for the rhetoric examination. He deals with the ethical problems arisen around the ceremony, from rhetorical and psychological points of view. He raises structural questions, and he is preoccupied by the originality-problem of the speeches. It is regrettable that – apart from two entirely valorous and exciting texts – Kibédi has not continued his research in the topic of Verestói.

The most recent surprise of the research history is that in 2007 Katalin Németh S., after “almost a quarter of a century” turns back to the topic⁷, contributing important and interesting supplements to the Verestói-image. Building on Gábor Kecskeméti’s latest theoretical basis, she debates the differences of sermon and oration. She completes the assumptions about the ignorance of orators: the phenomenon can be explained by the greater number of the speeches. The contemporary popularity also gains a wider context: “We have got good reasons to suppose that the funeral speeches of Verestói could become marketable in the last part of the eighteenth century in Transylvania because of their literary value and/or scientific and/or educational function.”⁸ When surveying the themes, she supports somehow Jékely’s idea – talking about the incoherencies between

¹ Tibor Klaniczay, *Reneszánsz és barokk. Tanulmányok a régi magyar irodalomról* (Renaissance and baroque. Studies about the old Hungarian literature) (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1961), 558–566.

² Tibor Klaniczay, *Reneszánsz és barokk. Tanulmányok a régi magyar irodalomról*, 563.

³ Verestói, *Holtakkal való barátság*, 1–25, (about ’Sigmund Váradi; the first piece of the collection).

⁴ Sándor Lukácsy, Szép magyar írásoknak mindeneket gyönyörködtető kertecskéje. Verestói György (1698–1765). *Kortárs* 5 (1993): 108–111.

⁵ Sándor Lukácsy, *Isten gyertyácskái* (God’s little candles) (Pécs: Jelenkor, 1994).

⁶ Áron Kibédi Varga, *Szavak, világok* (Words, worlds) (Pécs: Jelenkor, 1998), 197–205.

⁷ Katalin Németh S.: Verestóirol – másként. (About Verestói – in a different way) *Kolligátum. Tanulmányok a hetvenéves Bíró Ferenc tiszteletére*. (Composite volume. Studies in honour of the 70 years old Ferenc Bíró) (Budapest: Ráció, 2007), 314–322.

⁸ Németh S.: Verestóirol – másként, 317–318.

the people and speeches. She contradicts him at the same time, demonstrating that in some cases there really are relations between the chosen topic and the dead person's life or character (mainly for men).

The wider research has at its basis Verestói's posthumous collection entitled *Friendship with the dead* (1783), with an outlook to the other editions of the texts and to Verestói's other publications, too – as far as it is possible. It cannot offer to present all of the editions connected to Verestói – this demand would slow down the course of the research.

Having surveyed roughly the results of the research history, the examination seems to be necessary in several traces. On the one hand it would be useful to review the whole structure of the oeuvre – the collection containing 26 orations and other works, too.

In some keywords I would summarize the further interests of the research: the relation between author and public, the originality questions of the works, the physical-theological respects (using the results of the literature), the international sources of Verestói's ideas.

Naturally, these problems offer further directions for the research. Furthermore, the results can also formulate their own questions. It is very possible that some answers will narrow the possibilities of the examination – but others (seemingly insignificant ones) will open new perspectives for the survey.