

MÁRIA BARTA

IN MEMORIAM LÁSZLÓ ORSZÁGH

Vadon, Lehel, ed. *Emlékkönyv Országh László tiszteletére*. Eger, Hungary: Eszterházy Károly Tanárképző Főiskola Nyomdája, 1993.  
405 pp.

In 1994 honoring the 10th anniversary of László Országh's death the Department of American Studies of the Károly Eszterházy Teachers' Training College issued a special memorial volume edited by Lehel Vadon.

Primarily known as a lexicographer Országh was born in Szombathely on October 25, 1907. Having completed his primary and secondary education in his home town he began his studies as a Hungarian and German major at the Péter Pázmány University of Budapest and in the fall of 1926 he took on an additional specialization, English language and literature.

His desire to become familiar with all aspects of Anglo-Saxon culture resulted in a scholarship enabling him to spend the 1930–31 school year at Rollins College, Florida. The results of his research were summed up in a 1931–32 paper titled: "The Evolution of American Literary Historiography".

Although he started his career as a secondary school teacher, in 1937 he joined the famed Eötvös College and in 1942 he became a private-docent of the Péter Pázmány University. After military service and subsequent years of captivity as a prisoner of war in American occupied Bavaria Országh returned to Hungary where he was asked to organize and run an English department at the University of Debrecen. While the department was eliminated in the fall of 1950, seven years later Országh was

commissioned in the same capacity again. During his tenure he had established a departmental library which became the most significant research library dedicated to English and American Studies in Hungary. He ran the Department of English at the Lajos Kossuth University of Debrecen until his retirement in 1968.

Országh's lexicographic career began in 1948 with the publication of his Concise English–Hungarian Dictionary. In 1953 the famous comprehensive Hungarian–English and in 1960 its English–Hungarian counterpart appeared. From 1950 to 1957 he headed the Linguistic Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences where he organized and guided the publication of the Dictionary of the Hungarian Language. Országh continuously revised his dictionaries and he summed up his lexicographic experiences in his 1962 treatise titled: "Application of Lexicographic Theory and Practice during the Compilation of the Dictionary of the Hungarian Language" and in his "Lexicographic Studies". (1966)

Országh's scholastic versatility is vividly demonstrated by such seminal works as "The Origins of the English Novel"(1941) "Shakespeare" (1944). "The History of American Literature" (1967) and the "Introduction to American Studies" (1972). He was also a devoted researcher of English loan words adopted by the Hungarian language and wrote about the development of Hungarian–English and Hungarian–American cultural connections as well. (E.g.: English Travelers in Szombathely 200 Years Ago")

While according to Gyula Kodolányi Országh's academic activity was only "tolerated at best in his homeland", as an internationally renowned scholar Országh was awarded the Diamond Anniversary Medal of the London Institute of Linguistics in 1970 and nine years later his lifetime achievement was honored by Parliament's bestowal of the title: "Commander of the Order of the British Empire". After his death on January 27, 1984 László Országh was laid to rest in Szombathely according to his will.

The memorial edition is a tribute to Professor Országh's tremendous academic achievement. Despite its primary focus on literary history and analysis, the volume contains articles on linguistics (Csaba Czeglédy: "Indirect Questions in the English, Hungarian and Russian Languages",

József Csapó: "On Synthetic Compounds" and Béla Korponay: "A Few Thoughts on the Causative") and lexicography. (Tamás Magay: "László Országh, the Lexicographer" and Miklós Kontra: "The Use of "Hello" as a Form of Greeting in Hungary")

Two articles are dedicated to Hungary's image in the world, a subject so dear to Országh as well. Géza Jeszenszky's essay concentrates on the historic development of Hungary's image and warns of the dangers of a nation's unfavorable reputation. Tamás Magyarits analyzes New York Times articles on Hungary in an attempt to recapture Hungary's image in America in the 1920's.

Országh's interest in the English Renaissance is reflected in István Pálffy's piece on the "psychological drama" of the somewhat obscure playwright, John Ford.

Two articles are devoted to Irish literature, another integral element of Anglo-Saxon culture. Mária Kurdi briefly retraces the development of the Irish drama and analyzes two nationalism inspired contemporary plays offering peaceful solutions to that nation's centuries old crisis. Csilla Bertha distinguishes and defines mythic elements in 20th century Irish plays.

The memorial edition contains numerous articles on the subject of American Studies. In his essay titled: "Hungarian Reception of the Literary Achievements of the Colonial Period of the United States" Lehel Vadon analyzes Hungary's response to the works of the legendary adventurer Captain John Smith and retraces his footsteps in early 17th century Transylvania. Furthermore the author focuses on the achievements of the religious reformer and founder of the state of Rhode Island, Roger Williams (1603-1683) and probes the domestic reception of Increase Mather's (1639-1723) "Occidental Indies" as well.

István Géher's examination of Faulkner's Snopes trilogy reveals the Southern author's peculiar views concerning novels and the family saga. László Dányi also draws on the literature of the American South as his analysis of the thought processes of William Styron's two protagonists probe the "question of survival in this world."

Zoltán Abádi-Nagy's Walker Percy interview reveals the author's views on changes in American society and searches for the roots of Percy's

catholic existentialism through an analysis of his works.

Sarolta Kretzoi contrasts the romantic image and the sobering reality of the Westward Movement and examines the influence of the disappearance of the frontier and other social and economic developments of turn of the 20th century America on the evolution of literary realism and naturalism.

The book contains two essays devoted to literary theory. Enikő Bollobás and Donald Wesling retrace the development of the free verse and highlight its principal characteristics. Zsolt Virágos analyzes readers' reactions to myths and symbols arguing that the mere presence of such elements is no guarantee of lasting artistic value.

While the memorial Országh edition is a comprehensive publication meeting the highest professional requirements, thematic grouping of the articles would be a welcome help for the interested reader.

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