

The last lecture of the symposium was given by Robert Austerlitz, New York, and dealt with the activities of John Lotz in the United States during the period from 1947 to his death in 1973, first in New York and then in Washington, D. C. In those days Lotz had more or less intimate contacts with most of the prominent linguists in America, and Austerlitz's lecture gave an interesting survey of the various trends in American linguistics of that time.

These lectures have been published as a volume 4, (entitled as *Symposium in memoriam János Lotz (1913—1973)*, edited by Bo Wickman) in the series *Studia Hungarica Stockholmiensia*. The symposium was held in Swedish, but some of the authors have sent in their manuscripts in English, and the lectures in Swedish have been provided with English summaries.

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### TO THE MEMORY OF LÁSZLÓ ORSZÁGH

Professor László Országh who died on Jan. 27th, 1984, in his seventy-seventh year (born in Szombathely 1907) will be remembered by most people as the editor of a number of English–Hungarian and Hungarian–English dictionaries. Meeting a constant demand, these volumes have become useful, and for a great number of people simply indispensable tools always to be kept within hand-reach. Their well-deserved, spectacular success, easily measurable by the number of copies sold, is nevertheless somewhat harmful to László Országh's reputation, as it brings into focus only one, and not necessarily the most important, of his scholarly activities, overshadowing his manifold achievements in other fields, or even in the field of lexicography. While his bilingual dictionaries are duly appreciated, less than adequate attention is given to the unilingual *A Magyar Nyelv Értelmező Szótára* (Explanatory Dictionary of the Hungarian Language, 7 volumes, Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1959—1962) a great feat of lexicography, bearing the hall-mark of the erudition and managerial genius he displayed in his capacity as general editor. In addition to his practical work in this field, he also wrote a series of longer and shorter important articles on theoretical, historical, methodological and technical questions related to dictionaries and dictionary-making.

But his contribution to lexicography can claim no priority over the rest of his oeuvre. Not even chronological priority. Long before his first English–Hungarian dictionary appeared in 1948, he had made his name as a research scholar, critic, teacher and writer of textbooks, never restricting his activity to a single field. The very first items on his list of publications,\* five book reviews dating from 1929, a time when he was still an

\*("The Publications of L. Országh (1929—1977)" in *Angol Filológiai Tanulmányok — Hungarian Studies in English* vol. XI. (1977), pp. 231—239. So far the most complete.)

undergraduate, are a testimony to his exceptional professional versatility and competence. A review of a book on contemporary American poetry (1931) deserves special mention, as it was not just an excursion into a field he had not explored before, but the first fruit of what turned out to be a lifelong interest in American studies. His first critical essay published in 1934, was written on an American author, Sinclair Lewis, and still more important was the choice of subject for his PhD thesis, *Az amerikai irodalomtörténetírás fejlődése* (The Development of American Literary History Writing) (1935), a pioneer work. That American studies have come into their own in Hungary is largely due to his contribution both in writing and in the form of professional guidance and encouragement given to a number of scholars.

His American orientation did not mean that he turned away from British English studies; on the contrary, his writings dating from the 30s and 40s show that his interest in that field was constant, and that its range was actually becoming wider. Articles and essays on contemporary English lyrical poetry, Aldous Huxley, Charles Morgan, etc. would seem to suggest a predilection for modern literature, but it was precisely during these pre-war and war years that he brought out *Az angol regény eredete* (The Rise of the English Novel), compiled a handy *Bevezetés az angol nyelv- és irodalomtudomány bibliográfiájába* (Introduction to the Bibliography of English Linguistics and Literary History), and wrote a miniature monograph on Shakespeare, a prodigy of conciseness, containing a mass of information and highly original critical comment quite amazing for a slender, pocket-size book.

He was as absolutely reliable where factual knowledge was needed, as he was absolutely personal, almost idiosyncratic where values had to be judged, and he combined these qualities in such a happy mixture that he could avoid both the excesses of a sterile kind of positivism still practised at the time, and the uncontrollable flights of an equally or even more fashionable aesthetic subjectivism. It should be also noted that he did not borrow concepts and methods from the then everywhere popular German *Geistesgeschichte* school, but viewed literature sociologically and socio-historically, in a larger context of taste or culture, or, more generally speaking, civilization. This is evident from titles like *A gentleman alkonya* (The Decline of the Gentleman Ideal) (1937), *Negyven millió olvasó* (Forty Million Readers) (1938), *A társadalmi osztályok és eszményeik hatása az angol regény kialakulására* (Some Notes on the Influence of Social Classes and their Ideals on the Rise of the English Novel) (1944), or that of one of his first post-war publications *Irodalom a rókalyukban. Mit olvastak az amerikai katonák* (Literature in the Foxhole: What the G.I's read) (1946).

An overall survey of his works shows that he was keenly sensitive to what was modern in the way of topics and methods in his branch of learning, and at the same time knew well that there were traditions worth upholding. One such tradition, handed down by some of his pioneering Hungarian forerunners was the study of contacts between Hungary and the English-speaking world; and he was aware that though all

parties concerned could profit from the results, the task of doing the actual work fell to Hungarian scholars. His own contribution, including such essays as one on James Bogdani (Jakab Bogdány), court painter to King William III and Queen Anne, and another on some 19th century Hungarian travellers in England shows that also when looking for contacts he explored cultural spheres beyond those of the respective languages and literatures.

The written work he left behind, impressive in quality and quantity, is a worthy memorial to his scholarly abilities and erudition, but it constitutes only one part of his achievement. What the printed page cannot preserve, or at the very best preserves in a distorted and fragmentary form, is the impact of the personality, something not to be ignored in the case of a man who spent practically all his life in the teaching profession, a profession calling for a charismatic personality. Beginning his teaching career at a Budapest grammar school, he was soon invited to lecture at the English Department of Budapest University, became a resident tutor at Eötvös College, and finally, in 1947, was appointed professor and head of the English Department in the University of Debrecen.

His tutorship at Eötvös College, a place where he himself had been trained, should be regarded as particularly significant, arguably the most significant of his teaching posts, not only for the subjective reason that it meant to him something like a homecoming, but chiefly because the College provided an inspiring, congenial environment and conditions ideally suited to his character and turn of mind. The number of those he taught there, during a period shorter than his term of professorship in Debrecen, was, no doubt, very small, almost negligible in comparison with that of the students who attended his various lectures and classes at the two universities mentioned. The groups he had for tutorials at Eötvös College generally consisted of no more than three or four persons each, and it happened once that for a whole academic year he had a "group" of only one freshman. A tutorial class as he conducted it under such circumstances, had the intimate atmosphere of a small workshop, with all participants, teacher and pupils, working in a spirit of co-operation, and mutual confidence, moreover, mutual respect, without feeling it necessary to reconcile conflicting opinions and to reach a consensus. He himself never forced his view on others, but by stating and arguing his point with utmost clarity, and patiently listening to other people's opinions, he set an example. As a truly great teacher, he transmitted a great deal of useful knowledge not only within the sphere of what could be defined, strictly and professionally speaking, as his "subject".

There was something paradoxical in the irresistible influence he exerted in or outside the classroom. He was by no means a fraternizing type of teacher courting popularity. In fact, he was reserved, almost aloof, yet never indifferent to other people's concerns, and on occasion he could and did interfere in their affairs, but thanks to his rare ability to do things tactfully and unostentatiously, what he gave in the way of help, advice, or

even criticism, never offended the human dignity of anyone. By nature he was solitary rather than gregarious; nevertheless, he mixed in society with the ease of a perfectly civil and civilized person, a species regrettably decreasing in number nowadays. Without doing or saying anything particular, he made his presence inevitably felt, simply by being there. He appeared seldom in public after retiring from his chair in Debrecen, but it was reassuring to know that, though not visibly present, he was in a way still *there*, working hard in his “pensive citadel” with unflagging interest and energy, even in the last few years when he was mortally ill, stoically facing the approach of death.

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### LÁSZLÓ ORSZÁGH: A PERSONAL MEMOIR

I had known László Országh for more than half a century. He had been my teacher though I never learned anything from him. His first job was to teach English in my high-school—the *Érseki Katolikus Reálgimnázium*, known also as the *Rákócziánium*—where that language was a compulsory subject in the last four years of an eight-year curriculum. It so happened that I never attended classes. By a special arrangement (*magántanuló*) I had to present myself once a year for a comprehensive, thus rather difficult, examination, but I was dispensed from school attendance. In the last year of high school, with the dreaded final examination, the *érettségi*, approaching, Országh sent me word to the effect that if I continued with my former practice, I might be faced with difficulties. I ignored the warning with its ominous undertones. Yet in the course of the examination there was no resentment in Országh’s attitude towards me. He examined and judged me with perfect objectivity and gave me the grade “2” which at that time—translated—meant “good”. I do not think I deserved any better.

Following our graduation banquet, a nice black-tie affair, Országh (who was but nine years our senior) joined some of us in eating the traditional bean soup served in the small-hours in some restaurants of Budapest. We happened to sit side by side and he asked what I intended to do now, with my secondary education behind me. I told him that I wanted to become an orientalist. “Ah”—said he—“in the Eötvös Kollégium I had known one man with the same ambition. First he went nuts, then he killed himself. An interesting case.” We gazed at each other over the bean soup in the dusky dawn, Országh erect, as always somewhat aloof. “I hope you’ll make it: Lajos Ligeti seems to have succeeded” he concluded. This was the first time I heard mentioned the name of the young professor who, a few months later, started on the thankless task of teaching me at the university.