

Honoring Professor Mária Kurdi

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Professor Emerita Mária Kurdi, the internationally known scholar of Irish Studies, English-speaking drama and Reception Studies, author of numerous books and scholarly essays, editor in chief of *Focus: Papers in English Literary and Cultural Studies*, and Contributing Editor of *HJEAS*, celebrated her seventieth birthday in 2017. The publication of her new book, *Approaches to Irish Theatre through a Hungarian's Lens: Essays and Review Articles* (Pécs 2018) on the interface between Irish, British, and American drama, was soon to follow the event. Professor Kurdi is known for her dedication to, as well as perseverance, and unbounded energy invested in the broad field of literary studies. Throughout her teaching career, she made an essential contribution to graduate and postgraduate education at the University of Pécs, where, for several years, she also served as head of the Department of English Literatures and Cultures.

A notable feature of the volume honoring Mária Kurdi is the presentation of the multifaceted character of her academic oeuvre, divided into four broad themes (11). The authors of the first seven essays—Csaba Maczelka, Zoltán Abádi Nagy, Gabriella Hartvig, Gertrud Szamosi, Ágnes Surányi, Krisztina Kodó, and Gabriella Vöö—discuss works of Irish, Scottish, and English writers; in the second section, Andrew C. Rouse, Lóránt Kabdebó, and István Rácz write about poetry and folksong. The third section is devoted to linguistics with

studies by Dóra Pődör, József Andor, and Magdolna Lehmann, while the last section, with contributions by Edit Gilbert, Csilla Bertha, Aladár Sarbu, and Enikő Bollobás, pays tribute to Kurdi's academic career and achievements.

Edit Gilbert's "Emancipáció, Trauma, Identitás" [Emancipation, Trauma, and Identity] presents personal impressions about working with Mária Kurdi on academic projects. In more formal appraisements, Csilla Bertha, Enikő Bollobás, and Aladár Sarbu provide extracts from their assessments of Kurdi's dissertation submitted for the title of Doctor of the Academy of Sciences, which she was awarded in 2012. Csilla Bertha argues that Mária Kurdi's academic doctoral dissertation, *Representations of Gender and Female Subjectivity in Contemporary Irish Drama by Women* (2010), occupies a significant place in the line of the works focusing on this subject (221). Aladár Sarbu emphasizes the novelty of Mária Kurdi's primary material, praises the reader-friendly structure of the dissertation, pointing out that her research pursues a continuous dialogue with her fellow scholars (229), while Enikő Bollobás notes that Kurdi's understanding of character formations and narrative techniques in Irish feminist drama forms the most significant part of the work (241). Bollobás's prominent appraisal of Mária Kurdi's study frames and concludes the volume.

Csaba Maczelka's reading of Edmund Spenser's dialogue, *A View of the Present State of Ireland* (1596) in "Edmund Spenser: Írország dialógusa és a Tudor dialógus" ["Edmund Spenser: The Dialogue of Ireland and the Tudor Dialogue"] concentrates on the sophisticated way in which Spenser used the formal conventions of the dialogue and argues for the necessity of exploring the Irish context for a proper understanding of late sixteenth-century English literature (23). Zoltán Abádi-Nagy, in "Még egyszer a Jonathan Swift előtti és korabeli javaslatirodalomról—sokkal bővebben" ["Once Again about the Contemporary and the Pre-Jonathan Swift Project Literature—In More Detail"] focuses on the literary aspects of the "British projecting spirit" in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by scrutinizing the

presence of the satiric and ironic tone in the works of Swift's forerunners and contemporaries. He also suggests that this topic provides a further research opportunity for the younger generation of English Studies scholars (27). Gabriella Hartvig investigates Frances Sheridan's *The Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph* (1761), highlighting eighteenth-century advertising techniques, and arguing that brief notices of newly published books in newspapers provided a crucial part of the marketing strategy of publishers of the era (50). Gertrud Szamosi's "Felvilágosult eszmék és nemzetegyesítési politika Samuel Johnson és James Boswell Skótföldi útirajzainak tükrében" ["Enlightenment Ideas and National Unification Politics in Samuel Johnson and James Boswell's Travelogues about the Scottish Highlands"] concludes that the observations in Johnson's travel narrative *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* (1775) and in Boswell's *The Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* (1785) served to justify the empire's colonizing efforts and, at the same time, helped foster British national identity (76).

The section on contemporary Irish literature begins with Ágnes Surányi's discussion of "Virginia Woolf on the Irish Question and Irish Writers." Surányi explores Woolf's criticism of Irish literature, especially of James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1918-1920), by focusing on her novel *The Years* (1937) and her relevant diaries, which underscore Woolf's ambivalent view of Joyce (79). Krisztina Kodó's "Perceptions of History Bridging the Past, Present, and Future in Sebastian Barry's Plays and Novels" points to the lack of apparent difference between our view of history and memory (97). The section ends with Gabriella Vöö's paper, "Holding the Hand of (Grand)mother Ireland: The Shape-Shifting Goddess in *Angela's Ashes*." Vöö observes that land goddesses, also referred to as sovereignty goddesses, were dominant female figures representing Ireland in Celtic mythology and early medieval Irish tales. She argues that in Frank McCourt's *Angela's Ashes* (1996) Grandma Sheehan assumes the role of a goddess, helper, and maker of heroes. Here, Vöö refers to Mária Kurdi's

discussion of this specific aspect of contemporary Irish drama in a chapter of her book on the “updating” of Celtic myths by women playwrights (100).

Andrew C. Rouse, in “‘The Burial of Sir John Moore after Corunna’—From History to Literature to Folksong, or, across the Seas from Scotland, to Spain, to Ireland, to England...to Hungary, to Spain...” tracks the poem’s venturesome passage across continents. The article describes how the heroic death, in Spain, of the British general John Moore inspired the Irish poet Charles Woolf to write the commemorative poem “The Burial of Sir John Moore after Corunna” (1817). Woolf’s poem became popular, even appearing in America before becoming a fashionable folksong in England (131). Lóránt Kabdebó in “A létezés kétféle értelmezése Yeats két szonettjében” [“Two Kinds of Interpreting Existence in Yeats’s two Sonnets”] juxtaposes two different histories of humankind through the analysis of Yeats’s two poems “Leda and the Swan” (1928) and “The Mother of God” (1933). One represents violence, while the other presents the hard duty of unconditional love through the acceptance of free will (133). The last paper in the poetry section, “Hogyan válhat a gay poetry meleg költészetté” [“How Can Gay Poetry Become Homosexual Poetry?”] by István Rácz, is an exploration of the poetry of the Anglo-American gay poet Thom Gunn.

The group of essays that follows focuses on the perspectives of linguistics applied to the study of literature, and to Mária Kurdi’s scholarship. Dóra Pődör in “The Voice of the Western World: John Millington Synge’s Presence in *The Oxford English Dictionary*” investigates the quotations from Synge in the *Dictionary*’s online version as illustrations of Irish English usage (157). József Andor’s “Interpreting two Post-Impressionistic Strokes in Prose and Art by Virginia Woolf” discusses two masterpieces of Woolf’s short fiction, “Kew Gardens” (1919) and “Blue & Green” (1921), aiming at “identifying the impressionistic features of their representation, concerning both the textural realization of artistic reflection and its underlying, conceptually and linguistically based technique” (178). Finally, Magdolna

Lehmann's "Corpora in Literature: a corpus-based study of literary texts on Irish Drama" pays special attention to Kurdi's monograph, *Representations of Gender and Female Subjectivity in Contemporary Irish Drama by Women* (2010), applying the methodology of corpus linguistics to explore the lexical features of the academic register the texts display, with an eye on recurring themes in scholarly discourse (190-91).

Critical Essays in Honour of Mária Kurdi. Tanulmányok Kurdi Mária tiszteletére celebrates the professional life of Mária Kurdi and highlights the diversity of her research and its impact on literary studies. Importantly, these contributions echo how Mária Kurdi, as a colleague, scholar, teacher, and mentor, reached out to and inspired so many other scholars. The volume thus becomes both a gift of scholarship and a noteworthy appreciation of Mária Kurdi's oeuvre.

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Note

As a scholar in American Studies, I was regrettably unable to contribute to the *festschrift* so this review is a token of my gratitude to Mária Kurdi for her significant contributions to research in modern American drama.