

Laudation for Csilla Bertha

Csilla Bertha graduated from Kossuth Lajos University Debrecen, where one of her teachers, the most distinguished one, was Professor László Országh. She received her PhD degree from the same university, her dissertation focused on the modernist drama of W. B. Yeats, and was soon published by Akadémiai Kiadó and has been used by hundreds of Hungarian academics and students ever since. After graduation Csilla Bertha worked as a secondary school teacher for two years, then she was invited to the English Department of the Teacher Training College of Eger. In 1990 she became lecturer then associate professor at Kossuth Lajos University, today University of Debrecen, and retired from this institution a few years ago, but it did not mean the end of her professional activities, far from it.

As early as in the 1980s Csilla Bertha started to teach courses on Irish literature in English, first to undergraduate students later on all levels of university education, including the PhD programme. Her name became associated with Irish Studies in Hungary; she embodied an inspiring model to follow for other institutions and colleagues in this area.

The main field of Csilla Bertha's research is Irish drama. She was one of the handful scholars invited from behind the Iron Curtain to the 1984 Conference of IASIL, The International Association for the Study of Irish Literatures, hosted in Graz. In 1987 she became member of the annual bibliography board of IASIL, responsible for collecting the details of critical works on Irish literature in Hungary. Between 2000 and 2006 she worked in the steering board of IASIL as an elected representative of the European countries. Since 2003 she has been member of the advisory board for *Irish University Review* and she was asked to co-edit the spring 2015 issue of this journal to honour a distinguished scholar, Christopher Murray, former editor of the journal and president of IASIL for two terms.

Csilla Bertha's own publications number well over a hundred items: books, edited volumes and articles which often use a comparative focus. Many of these came out abroad, in Ireland, the United Kingdom, the United States, Brazil, Australia, Canada, Austria, Germany, the Czech Republic, etc. She became an internationally known scholar of Irish drama, whose works have been widely cited. To give examples of her excellent contribution to the field suffice it to mention that she was invited to write respective essays for *The Cambridge Companion to Brian Friel* (2006), *The Reception of W. B. Yeats in Europe* (2006), *The Enduring Drama of Tom Murphy* (2010), *The Theatre of Brian Friel: Tradition and*

Modernity (2014), and several Festschrifts edited in Ireland, in other English-speaking countries and Germany.

On the home front, she took part in the organization of the annual IASIL Conference in Debrecen in 1989, then she was the main organizer of the 2003 IASIL Conference hosted by Debrecen. She has been member of HUSSE since its foundation in 1993 and since 1996 has worked on the editorial board of the *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies* (*HJEAS*). In 2014 the just founded Hungarian Yeats Society asked her to become its honorary president. In this capacity, she took the job of chairing and co-ordinating the evaluation process of Hungarian contributions to an international project of translating Yeats's works to honour the 150th anniversary of the Irish poet's birth in 2015. As a result of this international co-operation a polyglot collection of translations was published by the Irish Centre in Leuven, with several Hungarian translations in it.

Beside Irish Studies Csilla Bertha has also been concerned with the translation of Hungarian literature into English; with Donald Morse she translated plays by Transylvanian Hungarian authors, András Sütő among them. In 2016, to mark the 60th anniversary of the 1956 revolution and war of independence, Csilla Bertha was commissioned to edit a collection of Hungarian literary responses to the revolution and its fate translated into English. It was a huge enterprise, which she undertook with great enthusiasm and patience.

In sum, Csilla Bertha has outstanding achievements to her name in fields that László Országh was interested in. She is a teacher and scholar notable for her dedication to cultivate the traditions that László Országh established in our profession, therefore she well deserves to be one of the recipients of the award named after Országh. Personally, I am most happy that fellow scholar in Irish Studies and always helpful colleague and friend, Csilla Bertha receives the prestigious award today. This occasion can also remind us of the time when we were students of Professor Országh and, to say with Joyce, "a very good time it was."

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