

POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES IN SLOVAKIA AND HUNGARY

JAROSLAV KUŠNIR¹
(Uniwersytet Preszowski w Preszowie)

Słowa kluczowe: studia postkolonialne na Słowacji, studia postkolonialne na Węgrzech, studia literaturoznawcze, studia postkolonialne, Europa Centralna i Wschodnia

Key words: postcolonial studies in Slovakia, postcolonial studies in Hungary, postcolonialism, literary studies, postcolonial theories, Central and East Europe

Abstrakt: Jaroslav Kušnir. STUDIA POSTKOLONIALNE NA SŁOWACJI I WĘGRZECH. „PORÓWNANIA” 17, 2015. T. XVII. S. 245-252. ISSN 1733-165X. Przeglądowy artykuł analizuje badania na polu studiów postkolonialnych na Słowacji i Węgrzech oraz ich instytucjonalne reprezentacje w tych krajach. Autor artykułu argumentuje, że w obu krajach postkolonialne teorie zostały zastosowane głównie do badań nad literaturą oraz kulturą irlandzką, kanadyjską, australijską i afrykańską, przede wszystkim przez badaczy działających w uniwersyteckich instytutach anglistyki. Aplikowanie postkolonialnych teorii do badań nad literaturą słowacką i węgierską jest działaniem raczej marginalnym i dokonuje się poza sferą anglistyki.

Abstract: Jaroslav Kušnir. POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES IN SLOVAKIA AND HUNGARY. “PORÓWNANIA” 17, 2015. Vol. XVII. P. 245-252. ISSN 1733-165X. This overview article analyses the research in the field of postcolonial studies in Slovakia and Hungary and its institutional representation in both countries. The author of this article argues that in both countries the postcolonial theories have been mostly applied to the study of Irish, Canadian, Australian, and African literatures and cultures and mostly by scholars based at the universities’ English Departments; that the application of postcolonial theories in the study of both Slovak and Hungarian literatures and cultures have been rather marginal; and that a research in this field has rather been based outside English departments.

¹ Correspondence Address: jaroslav.kusnir@unipo.sk

Since 1990s, there has been a growing interest in postcolonial studies in Slovakia, although there has been much less interest in the application of postcolonial theories in Slovak, Czechoslovak, Central or East European literary and cultural contexts. It should be mentioned, however, that due to a previous authoritarian regimes in Central and East European countries before 1989, the access of scholars from Central and East European countries to an expanding field of postcolonial studies was radically limited. That is why only mostly after 1989 literary and cultural studies scholars in ex-Czechoslovakia (which Slovakia was a part of), Central and East European countries started to pursue research in this field although the situation varied in particular countries. Quite naturally, a growing interest in this field of study could mostly be seen at the English, French, Spanish, and German studies departments based at Slovak universities but also at the Institute of World Literature of Slovak Academy of Sciences in Bratislava. Concerning the application of postcolonial theories in the study of Slovak, Central or East European cultures, there has been only marginal interest in the application of these theories in Slovak, Central or East European literary and cultural contexts but more recently the major work in this field was done especially by Dobrota Pucherová and Róbert Gáfrik from Institute of World Literature of Slovak Academy of Sciences. In addition to her research on contemporary African literatures published in international scholarly journals, along with Róbert Gáfrik from the same institution Dobrota Pucherová has edited in the Slovak context a groundbreaking collection of essays entitled *Postcolonial Europe? Essays on Post-Communist Literatures and Cultures* (Leiden: Boston: Brill Rodopi, 2014). Dobrota Pucherová herself has contributed to the volume with her two fine studies, one being the introductory essay entitled "Introduction: Which Postcolonial Europe?" (Pucherová, D., Gáfrik, R, ed. *Postcolonial Europe? Essays on Post-Communist Literatures and Cultures*. Leiden: Boston: Brill Rodopi, 2014. 11-24) and the other essay being the study of Slovak post-communist literature from postcolonial and trauma studies perspective "Trauma and Memory of Soviet Occupation in Slovak(Post-) Communist Literature." Pucherová, Dobrota, Gáfrik, Róbert, ed. *Postcolonial Europe? Essays on Post-Communist Literatures and Cultures*. Leiden: Boston: Brill Rodopi, 2014. 139-159. The same volume includes Róbert Gáfrik's essay on "Representation of India in Slovak Travel Writing during the Communist Regime (1948-1989)", pp. 283-298. Pucherová has further developed her research into the study of the connection between postcolonial and comparative literary studies, especially in her overview article "Postkolonializmus a literárna komparatistika" [Postcolonialism and Comparative Literary Studies] (*Slavica Litteraria* 1 (2015), pp. 139-150. The same volume includes Róbert Gáfrik's essay on "Representation of India in Slovak Travel Writing during the Communist Regime (1948-1989)", pp. 283-298. Dobrota Pucherová has also widely published on race, gender and desire in southern African writing between 1960-2005. She has not only significantly and systematically contributed to the application of post-

colonial perspectives in the study of Southern African and other African writing, but has also translated various works by African authors published in *Revue svetovej literatúry* journal, a literary quarterly publishing translations from world literatures. She has also edited a special issue of this journal devoted to African literatures in 2010 (issue 3).

In addition to the above contributions to postcolonial studies of Central and East Europe, it is especially Dagmar Roberts from the Bratislava Comenius University's Department of Slovak Literature and Literary Studies who has contributed to the study of Slovak literature and history, although not necessarily from the postcolonial perspective. Roberts has written several chapters for *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe: Junctures and Disjunctures* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2004), especially the chapters on censorship, Slovak drama, folklore and literature.

Postcolonial studies in Slovakia have been mostly connected with the study of Australian and Canadian literatures and cultures, more recently with the study of African literatures mentioned above. Canadian Studies have been mostly connected with the Department of British and American Studies, Comenius University at Bratislava which has become an unofficial centre for Canadian Studies in Slovakia, especially when this department organized the first meeting of Central European Canadianists in Budmerice, Slovakia in 1995. This event stimulated an interest in Canadian Studies in Slovakia, and, later, Central European Association for Canadian Studies was established in 2003. It is especially Marián Gazdík from this department who has been dealing with Canadian short fiction of the 1950-1960's, with Barry Callaghan's, Margaret Laurence and Leon Rooke's fiction. He has also become one of the most prolific translators from Canadian literature into Slovak (Rooke, Atwood, Callaghan). He has dealt with theoretical aspects of translation of these works into Slovak and with critical reception of Canadian literature in Slovakia. In addition, Marián Gazdík has edited and has become the main translator of the first anthology of Canadian short stories in Slovakia entitled *Tichá hudba: antológia anglicko-kanadských poviedok* [Silent Music: An Anthology of Anglo-Canadian short stories] Bratislava: Jaga, 2000. Representing the same institution, they are especially Alojz Keníž (translation), Mária Huttová (Canadian literature), and Lucia Otrisalová (Black Literatures and Cultures in Canada) who have promoted Canadian Studies in Slovakia through a translation of Canadian literature into Slovak and through teaching the courses related to various aspects of Canadian culture at Comenius University.

Canadian literature, and especially the work of Margaret Atwood, has been most systematically researched by Katarína Labudová from the Catholic University of Ružomberok, and Jana Javorčíková has written one the most comprehensive study of critical reception of Canadian literature in Slovakia entitled "Kanadská literatúra v slovenskom preklade na začiatku nového milénia" [Canadian Literature in Slovak Translation at the Beginning of the New Millennium]

ture in Slovak Translations at the Beginning of New Millennium], in *Preklad a tlmočenie* 8. Banská Bystrica: UMB, 2009. 54-59. Both Jana Javorčíková and Katarína Labudová have been regularly teaching the courses related to Canadian literature and culture at their universities.

It was especially Australian literature which has become another major field of study in the context of postcolonial studies. Jaroslav Kušnír from the University of Prešov has been pursuing research especially on Australian postmodern and contemporary authors such as Peter Carey, Murray Bail, and Richard Flanagan the result of which is his book-length study of Australian literature entitled *Australian Literature in Contexts* (Banská Bystrica: Trian, 2003). Jaroslav Kušnír has also dealt with postcolonial theories and a representation of cultural identity in Australian literature and with a critical reception of Australian literature in Slovakia. He has also regularly taught the courses on Australian literature and film at the University of Prešov.

In Slovakia, Constantine the Philosopher University's Department of British and American Studies has become a center of a study and promotion of postcolonial studies, and especially its theoretical aspects applied to the study of literary works of Black-British, Afro-American and Asian-American authors. Simona Hevešiová, Mária Kiššová and Alena Smiešková from this department have been the most active promoters of postcolonial studies through the research in the field. Along with Anton Pokrivčák, they have initiated a journal *Ars Aeterna* (2009) which has become a critical platform for promoting research in postcolonial studies. Their activities include organization of regular conferences, teaching the courses in postcolonial theory, literature, film and translation. The research in this field has been published in significant publications by these authors such as Hevešiová, Simona, Kiššová, Mária. *Cultural Encounters in Contemporary Literature*. Nitra: UKF, 2008; Smiešková, Alena, Hevešiová, Simona, Kiššová, Mária. *Multicultural Awareness: Reading Ethnic Writing*. Nitra: UKF, 2008.

Postcolonial studies in Hungary are concentrated especially at the University of Debrecen and Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest, and are traditionally based at the British and American Studies Departments. Within postcolonial studies, it is especially Australian literature and culture which have been systematically researched and promoted. Along with Budapest, University of Debrecen became a venue of an inaugural conference of the European Association for Studies of Australia (EASA) in 1992, a venue of the European Association for Studies of Australia conference in 2005, the University of Veszprém was hosting another EASA conference in 2015, and the University of Debrecen was the first Hungarian university launching post-colonial literary and cultural studies in the region. Moreover, the members of the University of Debrecen's Institute of English and American Studies, especially Gabriela Espák, Péter Szaffkó, and Ágnes Tóth have initiated the idea of the establishment of the Australian Studies Regional Network

which has successfully promoted Australian Studies in Central Europe. Australian Studies not only at this university, but also in Hungary and Central Europe are promoted by the Australian Studies Centre established at this university in 2007, by the courses on Australian literature and culture and by regular visits of the Australian scholars and authors at this university. Gabriela Espák is mostly dealing with federal multicultural policies and the politics of Indigeneity in Canada and Australia between 1988-1992, with Australian, Canadian and US social history since 1998, with special interest in issues of multiculturalism, minority rights and Indigeneity. Péter Szaffkó's main research interest is postcolonial drama, and Ágnes Tóth has been dealing with literature. A considerable support and promotion of Australian Studies is also represented by Eotvos Lóránd University in Budapest, especially Dorka Holló who has been doing research on language pedagogy, intercultural communication and the educational aspects of teaching Australian studies as area studies, and as part of tolerance/diversity education.

In 1989, Debrecen University became the venue of international conference of the International Association for the Study of Irish Literatures organized by István Pálffy, Péter Szaffkó, Donald Morse, and Csilla Bertha. Csilla Bertha and Donald Morse continued to support Irish Studies in the context of post-colonial theories, especially through organizing the 2003 international IASIL conference in Debrecen. There were especially Csilla Bertha and Marianna Gula from the same university who have been dealing with Irish studies (and Northern Irish studies) from the postcolonial perspective. Csilla Bertha has been regularly contributing to post-colonial drama and theatre studies, and Marianna Gula to postcolonial fiction studies. Csilla Bertha has developed a postcolonial studies applied to Hungarian (Transylvanian) drama and literature. The systematic research by these and other scholars involved in Irish Studies at the Debrecen University resulted in the publication of four issues of the *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies* (HJEAS University of Debrecen) devoted to Irish Studies so far. Moreover, Donald Morse, Csilla Bertha and Mária Kurdi edited *The Work Has Value: Brian Friel's Dramatic Artistry*. Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2006; and the other publications include Morse, D., Bertha, C., ed. *More Real than Reality: The Fantastic in Irish Literature and the Arts*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1991. In addition, Gula, István Rácz and Mária Kurdi edited *The Binding Strength of Irish Studies: Festschrift in Honour of Csilla Bertha and Donald E. Morse*. Debrecen: Debrecen UP, 2011. Postcolonial studies perspective applied to Irish studies were further supported by the publication of Kurdi, Mária, Morse, Donald., Pálffy, István, ed. *A Small Nation's Contribution to the World. Essays on Anglo-Irish Literature and Language*. Debrecen: Kossuth University Press- Garrards Cross: Colin Smythe-New York: Barnes and Noble, 1993 (Irish Literary Studies, 45); Bertha, C., Morse, D., ed. *Worlds Visible and Invisible: Essays on Irish Literature*. Debrecen: Lajos Kossuth University, 1994.

The University of Debrecen has also become a centre for Canadian Studies and has established Canadian Studies Centre supporting this field of study. The Canadian Studies Centre has organized the 4th International Conference of Central European Canadianists in 2006. Judit Molnár has become one of the most active supporters of Canadian Studies not only her research interests, especially through her participation in the activities of Central European Association for Canadian Studies. Her research includes multicultural Canadian literature and English-language writing in Québec, and her work has been published in such books as, for example Molnár, Judit. *Narrating the Homeland: The Importance of Space and Place in Canadian Multicultural English- Language Fiction*. Debrecen: Debrecen UP, 2013. Another important contribution to Canadian Studies has been made by Judit Nagy from Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Budapest who has mostly published on Canadian fiction.

Diversity and focus of post-colonial studies at the Debrecen University, Hungary, has been further developed through a systematic application of post-colonial theories to the study of British fiction by Professor Nóra Séllei who has translated Jean Rhys's autobiography and published an essay on Rhys in a thematic post-colonial issue of the Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies edited by John Stotesbury and Tamás Bényi (Séllei, Nóra. "Borders and Representation: Jean Rhys's *Smile Please* as (Post)colonial Autobiography". *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies*. 8.1 (2002): 115–150). In 2011, Nóra Séllei has also published postcolonial essays on Bruce Chatwin's and Paul Scott's fiction, and she has also been teaching courses on postcolonial and diaspora studies.

University of Pécs has become a major centre for Irish Studies, especially when the Irish Studies Research Centre was established in 2007. Such well-known researchers in the field as Professor Mária Kurdi, Dr. Gabriella Hartvig, Dr. Gabriella Vöö, and Dr. Irén Hegedüs have become important promoters of Irish Studies in Hungary. Some of the most important publications include Kurdi, Mária. *Representations of Gender and Female Subjectivity in Contemporary Irish Drama by Women*. Lewiston, Queenston, Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2010; Kurdi, Mária. *Codes and Masks: Aspects of Identity in Contemporary Irish Plays in an Intercultural Context*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Verlag, 2000; Vöö, Gabriella. *From the East Looking West: British and Irish Culture and National Self-Definition in Interwar Hungary*. Pécs: Institute of English Studies, University of Pécs, 2010. In addition to these Irish Studies scholars, Péter Dolmányos from Eszterházy Károly College in Eger is another important contributor to the research on contemporary Irish poetry, and Győző Ferencz from E. Lóránd University in Budapest has been also contributing to the research on Irish Studies.

Postcolonial Studies has played a significant role at the School of English and American Studies at Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE), Budapest as well. They are especially Éva Federmayer who has been dealing with postcolonial theories in the

context of African American literature. Vera Benczik, János Kenyeres and others focus mostly on Canadian Studies. At Loránd University in Budapest, they are especially Australian Studies which represent a strong field within postcolonial studies. Dorottya Holló is dealing with language pedagogy, intercultural communication and educational aspects of teaching Australian studies as area studies, and Cecilia Gáll's primary focus is on Australian literature.

Concerning the application of postcolonial perspective to the study of Hungarian literary, cultural and historical context, in comparison with Slovakia the situation there is slightly better but, like in Slovakia, there are mostly the experts based outside foreign literature, language and culture departments who are dealing with this field of study. Tamás Scheibner from Eotvos Loránd's Comparative Literary Studies Department has been systematically dealing with the cultural and intellectual history of the Cold War, with the history of literatures of Eastern and Central Europe, but also with the Sovietization of Hungarian literature and culture. He has published his research work especially in his book *A magyar irodalomtudomány szovjetizálása. A szocialista realista kritika és intézményei, 1945–1953* [The Sovietization of Hungarian Literary Studies: Socialist Realist Criticism and Its Institutions, 1945–1953]. Budapest: Ráció, 2014, and in numerous scholarly articles. Also Mihály Szegedy-Maszák, formerly associated with Eotvos Loránd University, has been systematically contributing not only to literary, but also to cultural studies, comparative literary studies, and to the study of nationalism, which manifests itself in such books as *Nemzeti művelődések az egységesülő világban* [National Cultures in a World of Globalization]. Budapest: Ráció, 2007; *National Heritage - National Canon*. Budapest: Collegium Budapest, 2001; and *Literary Canons: National and International*. Budapest: Akadémiai, 2001.

As can be seen from the above, both in Slovakia and Hungary postcolonial studies are mostly represented by the studies of specific literatures within which the study of Canadian, Australian and Irish literature dominate, although British and American literary works are occasionally studied through the application of various postcolonial theories by different scholars in both countries. The application of postcolonial theories in the study of Slovak and Hungarian literatures and cultures are rather rare and remain on the margins of scholarly interest in both countries.

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