

BOOKS AND AUTHORS

JOHN LOTZ

(1913-1973)

Professor John Lotz, the American linguist and the most outstanding Hungarian-language scholar outside the country, died at the age of 60.

The son of an emigrant worker's family, he was born in the United States, March 23, 1913, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He had completed the first and third grades (skipping the second) in an elementary school in Detroit, Michigan, when at the age of eight his parents took him back to Hungary and settled in their home village, Somogyvámos, in the south of the country, where his parents lived the remainder of their lives.

John Lotz then continued his education in the Lutheran grammar school of Bonyhád. He was admitted to the Budapest University in 1931 and graduated in 1935 specializing in philosophy, Hungarian language and literature, German language and literature, English language and literature. After graduation he was immediately granted a fellowship abroad and was thus unable to take out his teacher's diploma; it was presented to him three decades later when he was a guest professor at his old University. He concluded his regular university studies with a *sub auspiciis* doctorate: he defended his thesis on "The Concept of History—Man in Time" in 1937 at the University of Pécs.

Professor Lotz always spoke of his studies at the University with respect but the object

of his affection were his studies at the Eötvös College in Budapest. Its outstandingly productive atmosphere fostered his scientific creativity, and all his life he worked to recreate this college-method in the training of scientists.

At the Eötvös College he was a disciple of Zoltán Gombocz, the linguist, who has since grown to be an almost legendary figure and who has left an indelible mark on linguistic work in Hungary. It was Gombocz who was responsible for sending the young Lotz to Stockholm.

While still in Budapest, the young scholar had another intellectual experience which marked him for life. During his student years he served as private secretary to Dezső Kosztolányi, the poet and novelist. His work in this capacity certainly must have contributed to the development of his poetic sensitivity to verse and metrics and his keen sense of literary value. In later years—although a theoretician of linguistics—he always taught Hungarian literature and cultural history.

The Swedish period of his life began when upon the proposal of Gombocz, Lotz received a Swedish government fellowship at the University of Stockholm in Germanistic studies and philosophy for the years 1935-37. Béla Leffler, director of the Stockholm Hungarian Institute, engaged him as an instructor; in this capacity he taught Hun-

garian from 1935 to 1939. Between 1939 and 1947 he was docent in Hungarian language and literature at the University of Stockholm and from 1942 to 1947 he was Associate Professor at the same University. (These two degrees belong to two different levels in the Swedish university system.) As early as 1936, after Leffler's death, he became director of the Hungarian Institute at the Stockholm University. This was the first foundation institute of the comparatively young university of Sweden's capital city. Lotz remained in a directorship capacity there until 1957, and then became inspector until 1966. He had lived in the United States for many years when in 1962-63 he returned to his first place of employment as a Visiting Professor.

In Stockholm John Lotz organized the first major centre of Hungarology in Scandinavia, which excelled not only in the high-level teaching of language and linguistics but also in organization. The centre became widely known through its series of publications and seminars. During the Second World War it offered asylum to persecuted linguists such as Roman Jakobson and Wolfgang Steinitz.

During his years in Sweden Lotz learned Swedish and, apart from Hungarian and Finno-Ugric linguistic studies, he also published remarkable descriptive work of the Swedish linguistics.

In the relative calm of this neutral country during the war years he had the opportunity to acquire extensive knowledge in mathematical logics, a discipline in which Scandinavian scientists distinguished themselves, and he became adept at glossematics, the most severely logical linguistic theory of all times. He cooperated with and became a personal friend of Louis Hjelmslev, a Dane, and the originator of glossematic theory, who was also a Finno-Ugric linguist. Lotz is the author of the most consistent glossematic analysis of one of the grammatical phenomena of the Hungarian language.

In 1947 upon Roman Jakobson's proposal,

Lotz was invited to Columbia University in New York. First he was Visiting Associate Professor of Hungarian Studies (1947-49), later Associate Professor of General and Comparative Linguistics (1949-1956) and finally Professor of Linguistics (1956-1967). As his former student I witnessed his conscientiousness as a teacher. He prepared every lesson on the basis of a plan which was almost broken down according to the needs of individual students and served to pave the way for their scientific development step by step.

His administrative activity was closely related to his teaching work. Between 1953 and 1960 he was Chairman of the Department of Uralic and Altaic Languages. The work of this university teaching unit was augmented with a research department, the Uralic Language and Area Centre, of which he was director from 1959 to 1967. He was also appointed Director of Research of the Uralic and Altaic Programme of the American Council of Learned Societies (1959-1965). In the last two years of his New York life he was the chairman of an interdepartmental body in the Subcommittee on Uralic Studies at Columbia University.

His exceptional position as both general professor of linguistics and professor of Uralic studies enabled him to direct his students of general linguistics toward Hungarian studies; it is typical for linguists in New York to have some knowledge of Hungarian.

Columbia University had no special department of phonetics, but Professor Lotz filled this gap, too, particularly by means of joint research projects with the Haskins Laboratories. We owe to this collaboration the best scientific film on the Hungarian language: the *Hungarian X-ray Film* (X-ray sound motion picture in slow motion). (In collaboration with A. S. Abramson, F. S. Cooper of the Haskins Laboratories and W. B. Seaman of the Columbia Presbyterian Center, 1961.) This film is part of the curriculum in Hungarian higher educational

establishments. (He was also responsible for the production of several other linguistic films.)

On July 1, 1967 he became President and Director of the Center for Applied Linguistics, Washington, D.C. the most important establishment of applied linguistics in the United States. He performed this task from 1967 to 1971. Between 1971 and 1973 he held the position of independent scholar with the Center and headed its European branch dividing his time between Washington and Budapest.

At the Center he was a dynamic administrator and apart from the general management of the establishment's multi-lateral activity, he concentrated his research work and organizing abilities on two new fields: both remarkable projects in their own right.

Professor Lotz was involved with the contrastive analysis of languages. When he became director of the Center, the English-Serbo-Croatian Contrastive Linguistic Project was already under way, and projects for Polish and Rumanian were also begun. As a Hungarian linguist Professor Lotz was especially concerned with establishing the Hungarian-English project. On the basis of a contract concluded with the Linguistic Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences this project started in 1970 and is now the centre of English linguistic studies in Hungary: all English linguistic teachers of Hungarian higher educational establishments participate in this project. Apart from lively discussions and workshop sessions the project will publish its results in a series of approximately thirty publications. Two of Professor Lotz's own works appeared in these series: *Two Papers on English-Hungarian Contrastive Phonology and Script, Grammar and the Hungarian Writing System*. Both appeared in Budapest, in 1972, in the series of "The Hungarian-English Contrastive Linguistic Project, Working Papers."

The other principal project Professor Lotz was involved in at the time of his death

was the Description of the Languages of the World. This ambitious venture launched in 1970 has benefited from the support of many institutes in many countries, including the Academy of Sciences of the USSR. Leading linguists from all over the world took part in the elaboration of the plans. The International Congress of Linguists in its 1972 session in Bologna devoted a separate plenary session to this plan, one of the largest international collective ventures of linguistics in the twentieth century with its goal of describing all languages existing now and to save hundreds of rapidly disappearing languages from total oblivion. Now that Professor Lotz, who was the driving force behind this work, has passed away probably many more decades will pass until a linguist of this stature will take up the cause again, and meanwhile the unprotected minor languages, which are intellectually and culturally as interesting and valuable as the major ones, will continue to perish.

During his stay in America Lotz tried to maintain his relations with linguists in Hungary. He first came to this country in 1963, and from that time on he frequently divided his time between his two homelands. In 1964 he became a member of the Ford Foundation's Selection Committee to Establish Cultural Exchange with Hungary. Owing to his action many Hungarian linguists had the opportunity of making study tours in the United States. In 1966 Lotz was a Fulbright-Hays Research Fellow to Hungary as both a guest of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and as Guest Professor of Linguistics and Hungarian at the University of Budapest. In 1972 he was again visiting Professor in Hungarian at the University of Budapest. In the last eight years he visited many conferences in Hungary and was a full participant in linguistic work in Budapest. When in Budapest, the Institute of Linguistics of the Academy of Sciences was his regular place of work; he had particularly close relations with the Working



Group of Young Linguists, several members of which were indebted to him from his lectures at the Budapest University. On March 23 he celebrated his 60th and last birthday in their midst.

In the late spring of 1973 he returned to America in bad health. Here in Budapest he had to interrupt his work with the Gondolat Publishing House which was editing a selection of his essays under the title *Language — Verse — Time*. At the last moment he also had to renounce his interview on Hungarian television. He promised to come back in July and finish both commitments. His heart, however, failed him. After his release from the hospital he returned to his home in Chevy Chase from where he phoned Budapest and promised to be back by October. He sent a message of greeting to the Second Hungarian Native Language Conference of which he was a sponsor. Then came the final attack which this time took his life.

For him and for us it is most tragic that he passed away in the most productive period of his life, at a time when his work in Budapest indicated that he desired to settle in Hungary and finish his life here.

His work is not only limited to paper, though the quantity and particularly the quality of his publications is remarkable. With his extraordinary ability of organization John Lotz also shaped the future of linguistics. He formulated ideas and successfully implemented their investigation. He recognized the need of scientific conferences and organized them rapidly and efficiently. He founded fellowships, initiated publication series, encouraged dissertations on missing themes. He was an active man with a flair for sensing future needs and directions.

A selection of his papers will soon appear in Hungarian. The selection was made personally by him, and it can also serve as the basis for division in presenting his fields of work.

The first chapter is on Time. Professor Lotz wished to head the volume with a philosophical section of his doctoral dissertation on the Concept of Time in History. The topic has always concerned him, and although not a historical linguist, he had a lively interest in history. This concern also entailed an interest in the future as seen in a discussion on the future of linguistics in "Speech—man's natural communication" (Panel discussion) in *IEEE Spectrum*, Vol. 4, No. 6 (1967) pp. 75-86.

His second topic for the volume was Language and Signal Systems. Lotz, like other great linguists such as Roman Jakobson, Emile Benveniste and Gyula Laziczius, studied language as a primary form of any possible signal system. All these scientists were also semioticians. Lotz had special merits in this field: in the early fifties he was first to point out the importance of von Frisch's work on communication and signal systems among bees; this led to the development of zoo-semiotics in the second half of the sixties (on of the best scholars in this field, Thomas A. Sebeok, is another Hungarian American). Professor Lotz also wrote remarkable articles on the role of language as a symbolic system and as a cultural index. His special theme—about fifteen years before it became so fashionable in linguistics—was the relationship between natural languages and mathematical calculi.

The main part of this forthcoming volume consists of his articles on The Phonetic Structure of the Hungarian Language. He wanted to publish these, along with his essays on other aspects of grammatical structure, in a modern manual, the Hungarian Reference Grammar, which was to be edited and written mainly by himself. Fortunately many of these themes have already appeared in different collected volumes and reviews. Some even exist in Hungarian and have thus already been incorporated in Hungarian research. Lotz's studies, solidly based on up-to-date experimental techniques in phonetics and

phonology, have opened a new era in the study of Hungarian phonetic structure, especially of the consonant system. His work has been a considerable contribution also to the general theory of phonology. Roman Jakobson originally worked out his phonologic theory with Lotz; this stage of phonological development can be considered to be the first step toward the most recent phonology of Noam Chomsky and Morris Halle. The "Note on the French Phonemic Pattern", in *Word*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (1949) pp. 151-158, by Jakobson and Lotz, is a classic in the history of phonology. He extended his phonetic investigations to Turkish languages: he studied Osmanli and Dungan (the latter is a Turkish language spoken in China). His work on metrics and script is closely connected with phonetic studies.

In addition to his phonetic studies, the articles of Professor Lotz include some remarkable structural analyses of various sub-sections of Hungarian grammar. He expressed the desire to have this section of the volume begin with the introductory chapter of his scientific grammar, *Das ungarische Sprachsystem* (Stockholm, 1939). It is almost unbelievable that he wrote this structural Hungarian grammar at the age of 26; no better work of this type could be produced to this day. It is extremely unfortunate that the book which was published abroad just before the war was not reviewed by anyone in Hungary and another twenty years passed before it exerted any influence on research here. His short articles are characterized by a severe internal structure and an incredibly elliptic style, and most often are accompanied by exact rules and remarkably well-constructed geometrical figures which clearly illustrate their consistent logical structure. The up-to-date scientific explanation of certain sub-systems in Hungarian grammar is entirely his work, including, among others, the morphology of the imperative along with the entire system of tenses, the suffix *-é* (which provoked more debates than any dialect question), and

the problems of the nominal bases in Hungarian.

Script is a separate chapter, a subject Lotz studied as thoroughly as speech, producing descriptions of its specific features with as much accuracy and detail. He considered script very important in teaching Hungarian to foreign students. (See the reference above to his booklet on script.)

Verse also forms a separate chapter in the book. Lotz studied all aspects of versification together with language. In the early forties he and Roman Jakobson wrote the basic work of exact modern metrics in the English version of "Axioms of a Versification System, Exemplified by the Mordvinian Folksong", in: *Linguistica I* (1941-1945) 1952, pp. 5-13, Acta Instituti Hungarici Universitatis Stockholmiensis, Series B, Linguistica I. A volume of his writings entitled *Verse and Hungarian Verse* is in print now, edited by the Literary Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences; the volume contains ten general and special articles on metrics (not only Hungarian and Finno-Ugric, but also Greek and German metrics). A classic work most often referred to in universal verse theory is Lotz's "Metric Typology", in *Style in Language*, Ed. T. A. Sebeok, New York, 1960. pp. 135-148. And he was the author of the monumental analysis of Hungarian poetry: "The Structure of the Sonetti a Corona of Attila József"—Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis—*Studia Hungarica Stockholmiensia*, Vol. I, 1965, pp. 22.

The last chapter of his selected writings is entitled *Languages and Structural Problems* and consists of articles in which he solved Swedish, Russian, Eskimo, English and Turkish language problems by means of the structural method. This part also contains essays on contractive linguistics, and a short, brilliantly written paper on "Etymological Connections of magyar 'Hungarian'", in: *For Roman Jakobson*, The Hague, 1956, pp. 677-81. For Professor Lotz structure was not the obligatory lip-service

linguistic introductions paid to theory: it was the essential frame of his studies.

What has been omitted from this representative sampling? One or two themes maybe, such as the *Hungarian Reader (Folklore and Literature) with Notes*, Blomington, 1962., and one of his favourite topics, the Jókai Codex closely connected with his name through his editing and thorough analysis of it. He also produced many essays, reviews and reports on research. Apart from linguistics he wrote about other aspects of Hungarian studies in the United States and closely followed their development.

Professor Lotz had many private interests and hobbies. He was greatly interested in politics: he was a voracious reader of newspapers and a keen observer of events in both his countries and in world politics. He loved music as well as poetry and was an amateur singer (mostly of Hungarian folksongs) and reciter. He did not look down on sport fans either: he enjoyed soccer, football, and even baseball and considered the description of their strategies as both a semiotic and structural problem. With native fluency in three other languages, it was Hungarian he loved to converse in; he considered informal talk as one of the obligatory

preliminary forms of scientific creation. He was sociable and probably had more friends in Budapest than anywhere else in the world.

Apart from his scientific research Professor Lotz was constantly involved in the development of American-Hungarian scientific and cultural relations. This activity was appreciated from both sides, and in 1966 he was awarded the PEN Medal in Hungarian literature by the PEN Club in Hungary. In 1969 he received the George Washington Award of the American-Hungarian Studies Foundation.

In 1968 the Hungarian Linguistic Society, in appreciation of his scientific work, elected him honorary member. In 1973 he was awarded the highest distinction to a Hungarian scientist residing abroad when the Hungarian Academy of Sciences elected him one of its Honorary Members. So in the final year of his life he was officially considered a Hungarian not only as a former Eötvös fellow but also as a Hungarian academician.

Although John Lotz was both born in the United States and died there, he is a member of the large family of Hungarian scientists, and above all, he belongs to that part of the family, which lives in Hungary.

GYÖRGY SZÉPE

THE METAMORPHOSES OF A WRITER

ISTVÁN ÖRKÉNY: *Időrendben* (In Chronological Order). Vols. I-IV. Magvető, Budapest, 1971-73. 651, 269, 338 and 407 pp.

To pick and chose from someone's life-work and then publish the selection is as much as passing a verdict. The proportion of works published and omitted, and even a chronological or literary classification of

the writings, all go on the writer's record. As is only to be expected such work is usually done by critics when the writer is dead and no longer in a position to protest. And yet, István Örkény, at sixty, put his own writings in the balance, collecting enough material for four volumes under the title *In Chronological Order* from over thirty years of literary activity. In addition to the novels, short stories and sketches, he also

Lotr János

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