

T. Espák, G. & Forintos, É. (2012). Introduction. Insights from outside: Pragmatic ideals in teaching and researching Australia in Hungary. *Topos 1*(1), 57-59.

AUSTRALIAN STUDIES IN HUNGARY

INTRODUCTION INSIGHTS FROM OUTSIDE: PRAGMATIC IDEALS IN TEACHING AND RESEARCHING AUSTRALIA IN HUNGARY

GABRIELLA T. ESPÁK AND ÉVA FORINTOS

The collection of essays in this issue of *TOPOS* has been inspired in many ways by the Australian Studies Symposium held at ELTE, Budapest in April 2012. Dorottya Holló and Cecília Gall's informal circular in January caused a moment of pause:

2012 is the 20th/21st anniversary of Australian Studies in Hungary (depending on whether we count in academic years or calendar years). We thought that this would be a good occasion to get together with you all to celebrate, and to share our latest work. We are therefore inviting you to this 'intellectual picnic' where we would all give a 20-25-minute presentation about issues connected to Australia and Australian Studies. The presentations could centre around topics that we are involved in in our teaching or research. [. . .] While the focal point of the day will be for us to share and discuss our work, both events will have a small audience made up of our students as they would certainly benefit a lot from this.

Curiously enough, having to account for 20 years of personal academic activity, for most of those present at the symposium, also meant having to survey 20

T. Espák, G. & Forintos, É. (2012). Introduction. Insights from outside: Pragmatic ideals in teaching and researching Australia in Hungary. *Topos* 1(1), 57-59.

years of Australian Studies in Hungary and, in fact, in Europe. It means that Hungarian researchers have been at the forefront of the discipline and helped define its position in Europe, 'institutionalise' it into associations and informal networks, thus contributing to gaining a newer generation of those interested in Australia and the Asia-Pacific region.

1992, when the first courses started in Budapest and Debrecen, was a seminal year in Australia. At the time of the joint "travelling conference," the Land Down Under virtually turned her history upside down. Not only did the High Court's decision in *Mabo v. Queensland (No.2)* reinterpret the past, but it also predicated an egalitarian future in terms of race relations. Yet, to what extent has the overtly successful multicultural policy of the country succeeded in all walks of socioethnic relations is only one of the crucial, past- as well as future-oriented questions to investigate. Australia provides plenty of subject matter to study, for which, since 1992, we have accumulated the infrastructure of students, lecturers, programs and libraries.

Finding the space for Australian Studies in the Hungarian academic system has been an inherently difficult task. The traditional philological approach to English as a language in its diverse cultural formations has been competing, throughout the past decades, with more pragmatic area studies and postcolonial/ethnic/minority studies approaches. Special attention is devoted to Indigenous literature and culture through courses which close-read filmic, literary and documentary presentations.

The articles in this issue of *TOPOS*, in a manner of self-justification, demonstrate many of the ideas outlined above. The Australian Studies Centre at the University of Pannonia, Veszprém, has developed into a stronghold of Australian Studies in the recent years, and has offered to host and publish these writings through *TOPOS*. They have been produced by members of the Australian Studies community in Hungary, academics and senior students, on diverse topics, with insightful approaches, yet from the outside. In her paper, Dorottya Holló examines how the role of education is perceived at the School of English and American Studies at ELTE, and its Australian Studies Programme focusing on the general aim of teaching, i.e., contributing to the students' capability of coping with cultural differences. Andrew C. Rouse discusses folk songs and shares with the reader the story of "Waltzing Matilda." Ildikó Rendes argues in her article that the gothic elements used in Kim Scott's *Benang: From the Heart* are manifestations regaining Aboriginal identity. In her paper Zsuzsanna Lénárt-Muszka supports the idea that Kim Scott's *Benang: From the Heart* can be considered a metaphor for the fate of the Aboriginal peoples of Australia. Gabriella T. Espák sheds light on the decades of apologies and suggests that a newer preamble should be accepted in Australia

T. Espák, G. & Forintos, É. (2012). Introduction. Insights from outside: Pragmatic ideals in teaching and researching Australia in Hungary. *Topos 1*(1), 57-59.

with the goal to reach a better-run, more ethical state. Éva Forintos argues in her paper that a course on language ecology can be a viable option in the Australian studies curriculum. In the focus of the course devoted to this field is the ecology of language evolution where special attention is paid to the sociolinguistic environment in which a language has evolved.

Concluding from the experience of the decades behind us, a future-oriented approach would dictate that, besides scholarly comprehension, we also need to be attentive to current affairs in their context and to put knowledge to pragmatic use. Australia is a unique brewery of creative and practical people(s) and ideas, who have created their own space beyond the British vs. American binary. Sensitive global issues may be tackled differently there, and with the benefit and insight of the outsider we can produce mutually rewarding dialogues if – via academic and public outreach – we keep on running programs and training future generations.

Gabriella T. Espák, University of Debrecen, Debrecen
Éva Forintos, University of Pannonia, Veszprém