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***Potatoes are not food, Slovaks are not people.
Stupid Slovaks!***
Dirt, Poverty and Stigmatic Language in Hungary

John BRAIDWOOD, *University of Oulu, Finland*

john.braidwood@oulu.fi

Abstract

Benedict Anderson (1983) acknowledged that museums are vital to those essential modes of representation by which what are called imagined national communities achieve their accepted, recognised, questioned or tolerated temporal and spatial existences. In much the same way, dictionaries act as museums, with words and phrases their exhibits, they collaborate with their visitors—the readers—in the creation of responses to relevant cultural meanings which occupy the liminal spaces between the metadiscourses of assumed national memory, history and identity. Dictionaries are therefore museums of discourse, albeit shifting, floating and transient ones. Seen as such, they not only provide information on meaning, but also reveal the contemporaneous cultural consciousness from which those particular meanings arise. By studying historical Hungarian dictionaries from the mid-nineteenth century into the twentieth for their entries concerning Slovaks, we find that the constantly used Hungarian designation *tót* is a stigmatic expression. For almost a millennium Hungary's most intimate and untroubled Carpathian relationship was with the Slovaks of northern Hungary, until Herder's romantic ideas penetrated the region and this relationship turned into an intuitive victimisation of the Slovaks. This paper looks into the stigmatising properties of the term *tót* by exploring the history of its day-to-day use, using examples from literary works, as well as definitions and assigned meanings in a range of dictionaries.

Keywords: *Slovak, Hungarian, dictionary, stigma, cultural consciousness*