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Kanadai Magyarstudományi Társaság

**“Memories and Memoirs of Hungary,  
Hungarians, and the HSAC: Reflecting on the  
Past, Imagining the Future”**

**HUNGARIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION OF CANADA  
40<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL CONFERENCE  
*Online***

**ABSTRACTS AND SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES**

**June 10-11, 2026**

**Keynote Address: MARLENE KADAR**, Emeritus Professor and Senior Scholar, York University, “Becoming Hungarian: Hungarian-ness and the Ironic and Unfulfilled Promise of the Gerund in Studies of Memory and Identities, or, Neither Here nor There”

This paper invokes the grammatical form of the gerund to find a way to communicate and complicate an approach to discourse as difficult knowledge (Deborah Britzman) through the theory and practice of life writing and its stand-ins. Experience can be viewed as a potentiality that may or may not come to pass.

Life writing enables a deeper negotiation of remembrance alongside a necessary “embrace of forgetting” (Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson; Leigh Gilmore; Eleanor Ty and Russell Kilbourn; Paul Ricoeur). It also helps us discover what is in between this and that, “true history” and our more legitimate fabrications, between the motherland or the memory of the motherland and the hybrid state of diaspora, the in-between space between Hungarian and Hungarian-ness. In other words, neither here nor there, and still we *long*, and we imagine a way to *belong* as we traverse a path to make a credible story, something between a “faithful remembrance and a judicious embrace of forgetting” (Paul Ricoeur). Can we talk about a Hungarian-ness that is a differently constructed identity of *adjacency*, something beside our chimeras of identity rather than full on in the centre, something *adjacent* to our bodies, our minds, our spirits, the *je ne sais quoi* of living, and also of dying?

Although Ricoeur viewed memory as crucial for identity, both personal and collective, he also acknowledged its inherent fragility. Memory is *a priori* intertwined with imagination, forgetting, and history—and in the case of Hungary, intertwined with the Kingdom, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and various annexations, and also with an impermanent geography. I will use my own example as the almost-Hungarian kid who relishes her in-betweenness and still longs to belong to Hungarian-ness. I rely on Maurice Blanchot’s adage: all life stories are unfinished. To my mind, this means there is still always more to do, more to remember, more to forget. To best represent this gerund philosophy, we experience an inclusive gerund, *inter alia*, as “a lure towards creative becoming” (Jay McDaniel, via Alfred North Whitehead) before it becomes *disparu*, like the Red Light District in Montreal where my father’s first Canadian home was—a disappeared block at 1611 rue de Bullion (Quartiers Disparus).

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“Cultivating Gullibility” will be read aloud to invoke the complications of Holocaust memory, to recall the brave women and men who organized an attempt to blow up the Auschwitz crematoria. Anna Weissblum Heilman was one of the women who passed gun powder to the men in the adjacent *lager*. Heilman’s older sister, Estusia, was hung “in front of the kitchen building in Auschwitz 1” for her part in the 7 October 1944 Sonderkommando uprising (Witness Statement by Marta Bindiger Cige born in Bardejov, Slovakia). The other women were Ala Gertner, Roza Robota and Regina Safirztajn—I speak their names only to speak their names. Heilman, born in Warsaw, settled in Ottawa in 1965 (*Unlikely Heroes* 2004, dir. Richard Trank).

Bio: Marlene Kadar is Professor Emerita at York University, Department of Humanities and the School of Gender, Sexuality and Women’s Studies. She is the Founding Editor of the Life Writing

Series at Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1994, and the Literary Editor of *Canadian Woman Studies* at York University, 1995. Her publications are in the field of Life Writing and adjacent autobiographical genres, particularly autofiction. Kadar has focussed on the shifting impermanent ground of the truth-telling genres, and concepts of historical memory, be/longing, forgetting and loss. She has reclaimed traces and fragments of troubled archival lives that are missing from public discourse, such as Austrian *Aufseherin* Hermine Braunsteiner. Kadar has edited and published Holocaust memoirs mostly written late in life by Jewish survivors living in the diasporas—such as Ibolya Grossman, Elisabeth Raab, and other “wounded storytellers” (Arthur W. Frank) who left their homelands for the new world/s. Kadar aims to revive truncated texts that bespeak former absences, such as notes and postcards exchanged among wartime lovers; crisp prisoner lists from Dachau and Ravensbrück that identify Jewish arrivals by ethnicity, or perhaps AZR *Asozialer* (antisocial or asocial) if they were “other”; and, testimonies and protocols interpreted as (crude) biographical stand-ins for what we were not able to know—such as a Budapest ghetto map or a prisoner map of the women’s camp, Ravensbrück. This is, as Deborah Britzman says, the work of mourning, the product of difficult knowledge. Kadar uses the so-called “personal” genres such as letters, ballads, and autofictional stories to complicate colliding memories of events in the Holocaust and muted voices of European Roma and Sinti in the *Porajmos*. Her political and philosophical questions have to do with her own personal longings, and the absences and silences in our historical memory—and the consequent price they exact on our power to change, love and remember.

### Invited Panel: Roma, Migrants, and the Future of Hungary and Canada

**Gina Csanyi-Robah** is a human rights educator, advocate, and nonprofit leader. She is a teacher in the Vancouver School Board, as well as the co-founder and Executive Director of the Canadian Romani Alliance since 2014. Her commitment to social justice is deeply rooted in her family history—she is the granddaughter of Hungarian Roma Holocaust survivors and refugees of the Hungarian Revolution. Recognized for her leadership, Gina has received numerous awards and her work published in newspapers, journals, and anthologies. She has spoken at the United Nations, collaborated with Harvard University for an anti-discrimination research project concerning Canadian Roma, and recently worked in partnership with the Canadian Museum for Immigration at Pier 21 to coordinate “Resilience on the Move: Roma Migration to Canada.”

**Jázmin Gürbüz** comes from a Turkish-Hungarian bicultural background. She has a BA in *International Relations* and is presently conducting an MA program in *Modern Middle Eastern Studies* at Pázmány University (PPKE) in Budapest. Her BA thesis focused on *The Role of Sufism in the Politics of North Africa*. In addition to her academic studies, Jázmin also worked at international educational and cultural foundations, where she coordinated and interpreted at Turkish-Hungarian political and business events, organized intercultural programs as well as participated in diplomatic and state-level negotiations. Since 2022, she has been a project coordinator at POLIP, an independent student association with a goal to give a platform for students who are interested in public affairs and political dialogue.

**Michael Simmons** ([msimmons.org](https://msimmons.org)) has been a human rights activist for over 60 years, serving as an organizer for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (<https://snccdigital.org/people/michael-simmons/>), Director of European programs for the American Friends Service Committee, and internationally as an independent consultant and lecturer. He has worked with Roma across Europe, drawing on the experiences of the African American Civil Rights Movement and lessons from the struggles of marginalized people worldwide. With Linda Carranza, he co-founded the Ráday Salon, an independent human rights learning and discussion program in Budapest. Michael's activist history is retold, alongside that of Zoharah Simmons, his former spouse and comrade in struggle, in Dan Berger's 2023 book, *Stayed on Freedom* (<https://danberger.info>).

**James Peter** is President of Next Step NGO in Budapest. Will speak about the work of his NGO with refugees living in Hungary, as well as his own experience as a refugee from West Africa who arrived in Hungary in 2001.

**Linda Carranza** is a human rights and social justice advocate grounded in grassroots activism, advocacy that is representative and responsive to local communities, and non-violence as a key tactic in social change. She has worked for 25 years in the US and Europe with NGOs and grassroots organizations fighting discrimination, supporting refugee and migrant inclusion, and advancing legal reform. With Michael Simmons, Linda co-founded the Ráday Salon, an independent human rights learning and discussion program in Budapest, providing a venue for learning, exchange, and discussion of human rights issues in an informal context.

### **CONFERENCE PRESENTERS (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)**

#### **Aniko Zsuzsanna Antal, "Plural Belonging in Female Hungarian–Canadian Writings: From Archiving and Documentating to Transnational Identity"**

This paper provides an overview of Hungarian-Canadian diaspora literature, examining its evolution, its current realities in the 21st century, and the key challenges of shaping its future. Central to this analysis is the pivotal role of female authors, whose works serve as a unique nexus between cultural preservation and modern transformation. Through the poetry and prose of women authors—such as Ilona Király or Ágnes Simándi and others—the paper examines how the "domestic archive" of memory is translated into a transnational identity. Beside the different themes and forms of writing, it includes the facts of linguistic erosion, the process of cultural preservation—with losing and refinding it at the same time—and also embraces the connection between memory and maintenance of identity in the Canadian multicultural landscape. With all this rich and diverse heritage behind us, it is a crucial question: how could the Hungarian-Canadian diaspora literature survive in the role of the new media and digital world and by what literary canon could it be classified in the universe of world literature? We cannot predict the

future, but it is unequivocal that the influence of our diaspora literature will persist with complex narratives of memory, refinding and belonging in our modern world.

Bio: Anikó Zsuzsanna Antal was born in Hungary and graduated at the University of Nyíregyháza, majoring in Hungarian – French Language and Literature. She continued her studies at the University of Miskolc, specialized in Hungarian Language and Literature. After earning her Master’s degree, she became a PhD student at the Doctoral School of Literary Studies at the University of Debrecen. Anikó’s research publications, book reviews, poems and short stories have been published in several periodicals. Besides teaching literature and French, music plays an important part of her life. She plays viola in many orchestras in Toronto.

### **Terence A. Check Jr., LL.M., “Why Was There No Hungarian Inquisition?”**

Of all the Roman Catholic kingdoms in Europe, only Portugal, Spain, and Hungary saw a period of occupation by non-Christian powers. Following the Reconquista, Portugal and Spain established their own national Inquisitions, pre-dating the formation of the Church’s Universal Inquisition in 1542. Created for the purpose of addressing heresy and other religious offenses, the Spanish Inquisition also enabled the investigation of violent crimes and the promotion of external security across various jurisdictions. The geopolitical conditions that made the Inquisitions essential to consolidating power in the Iberian peninsula also existed in the Kingdom of Hungary, which regained large amounts of territory following more than 150 years of Ottoman occupation. But despite Habsburg rule, growing Protestant insurgencies, and Ottoman cultural influence, no major Inquisitorial movement took hold in Hungary. Habsburg infighting, religious toleration, demographic differences could explain why. The lack of a Hungarian Inquisition may have had significant implications for Hungary’s long-term development, such as the prominence of Hungarian Jews and the re-integration of Protestant-heavy Transylvania.

Bio: Professor Check practices law and researches, writes, and teaches in the field of national security and international law. Professor Check currently works for the U.S. government and teaches at the Ohio State University and Cleveland State University, focusing on legal responses to nation-state security competition. Professor Check grew up in Ohio among its vibrant Hungarian diaspora community where his family hosted the long-running *Souvenirs of Hungary* radio program. Between 2009 and 2023, Professor Check also authored *Tibor’s Take*, a monthly Hungarian arts and culture column for the William Penn Association’s monthly magazine. He currently lives in Miami with his family, where he hopes a Hungarian restaurant will open up one day.

**Angela Chong, “Generational Divides: Refugee Parents, Children, and Their Musics: A Case Study of Los Angeles Hungarian Community Music in Second and Third Diasporic Generations after 1956”**

This project came about because I was looking for community music among Hungarian Americans in the L.A. area. I wanted in particular to find a group that offered *táncház*, because this Hungarian form of musical expression reflects the inclusive spirit of community music as defined by researchers and practitioners in the field. Instead, I found a diasporic community music that piqued my curiosity about the gap between what is considered Hungarian music in L.A. versus Hungary. I found parallels between the generation gap among Hungarians in diaspora and my own experience as a Taiwanese American searching for a heritage music in Taiwan that my parents never taught me. This common experience of a generational divide between first- and subsequent-generation immigrant and refugee diaspora groups is important for those in community music to consider, especially if the goal of community music is to foster inclusion and belonging by subverting traditional power dynamics in music teaching and learning. The pedagogical suggestions in this paper, rooted in critical history and dialogue, have implications for not only community music, but also for music pedagogy more broadly, as well as musical parenting, and facilitating dialogue across diasporic, generational, political, and Cold War divides.

Bio: Angela Chong is a doctoral student at the University of Southern California in Music Teaching and Learning, with minors in History, Musicology, and Piano Performance. She is a 2001-2 Fulbright Scholar and 2024 Boren Fellow to Hungary, based at the Kodály Institute and many musicology archives. She has an A.B. and J.D. from Harvard. In her first career as a lawyer, she worked on Roma rights in Budapest, practiced legal aid in Lorain County/Cleveland, and taught arts-based law pedagogy at Oberlin College. Her current research focuses on musical parenting among racial and ethnic minorities in Hungary, the U.S., and Taiwan.

**Sonya Di Sclafani, “News of the 56ers in Montreal, Canada”**

This paper traces news of the Hungarian Revolution, from its beginning on October 23rd, 1956 through six months as it was reported in Canadian newspapers, particularly those in Montreal, Quebec. As Nandor A. F. Dreisziger wrote in his comprehensive 1982 *Struggle and Hope: The Hungarian-Canadian Experience*, conditions in the country, including a post WWII economic boom, an upcoming federal election, and the Cold War, helped inspire an outcry from the general population to the federal government. As Dreisziger wrote, “Several Canadian churches, the opposition parties, and part of the press, including the influential Toronto *Globe and Mail*, called for decisive government action” (204). As news reached Canada, and specifically Montreal, about the Hungarian Revolution and the ensuing refugee crisis, evolving politics and attitudes towards immigration can be traced in the newspapers of the day. By reviewing and comparing the national *Globe and Mail* with Montreal’s leading French language newspaper *La Presse* and English language *Montreal Gazette*, we can better understand how the crisis was conveyed and

subsequently affected both federal refugee policy and local community mobilization. An overview of news articles covering one year can help trace the initial news of the Hungarian Revolution, the Soviet response, the refugee crisis and the reception of those in Canada and, specifically, Montreal. By including both English and French language newspapers, we can discover any distinctions between those communities as they experienced their own economic, political, and cultural challenges which in turn informed their perspectives on international issues.

Bio: In her second year of a Masters degree in History at Concordia University in Montreal, Sonya Di Sclafani previously completed an undergraduate degree in History (honors) with a minor in English Literature. Earlier in her career, Sonya completed an undergraduate degree at Concordia in Photography and Art History and a diploma in Interior Design at Dawson College. She is interested in the immigration experience, cross-cultural experiences, East European history, food history, women studies, and the Jewish experience, especially as learned through oral history and community engagement. Sonya's planned MA thesis will be centered on the Montreal Hungarian diaspora and women's experiences of cultural identity through foodways. She will be interviewing first and second-generation women of Hungarian background along with key members of the community with a focus on food as a means of both cultural continuity and disruption.

**Fatih Ekim, “Memorial Culture in Hungary about the Muslim and Jewish Existence (1526–1699): The Case of Budapest; An Analysis of the Political, Cultural, and Geopolitical Layers of Urban Identity”**

This paper investigates the multi-layered memorial culture surrounding the Muslim and Jewish presence in Budapest during the early modern era (1526–1699). Utilizing Pierre Nora's concept of *Sites of Memory* and Jan Assmann's *Cultural Memory*, the study analyzes how the physical and social traces of these communities have been preserved, erased, or reinterpreted within Hungarian national identity. The research focuses on the 1686 Habsburg Reconquest of Buda as a pivotal moment that triggered a process of "memory reduction," often overshadowing the city's previous pluralistic fabric in favor of a unified Christian-European narrative. By examining specific urban sites and historical debates including the post-siege massacres and the fate of Ottoman architectural heritage the presentation explores the political and geopolitical layers of urban identity. In line with the HSAC 2026 theme of "Reflecting on the Past," this study aims to uncover the "lost layers" of Budapest, arguing that recognizing these marginalized memories is essential for a comprehensive understanding of Hungary's historical complexity and its contemporary cultural landscape.

Bio: Fatih Ekim is an M.A. candidate in the Ethnic and Minority Policy program at Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE) in Budapest. His research focuses on cultural memory, urban identity, and the historical sociology of minority groups in Central Europe. He has been awarded CEEPUS scholarships for research at the University of Vienna and Babeş-Bolyai University, where he explores European memory spaces. Beyond his academic studies, Ekim serves as the Project Director for "The Lost Memory of Budapest," an interdisciplinary initiative that combines archival research with documentary filmmaking and oral history to document the city's pluralistic past. He is also actively involved in international coordination for diaspora studies and oral history

workshops across Europe. He is also the Director and Producer of a Turkish–Hungary Relationship Documentary: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1KR6ddLedEE>

### **Joel S. Fetzer, “Have Hungarian Parties Given Hungarian Slovaks the Laws They Want? A Quantitative Analysis of Slovakia’s National Council Legislative Actions from 1993 to 2025”**

As one of the largest minorities in Slovakia, ethnic Hungarians complain of employment discrimination, anti-Hungarian hate crimes, political gerrymandering, and linguistic and citizenship restrictions. One response has been to form Hungarian-oriented political parties such as Szövetség–Aliancia and Most–Híd to compete in National Council elections and, presumably, help pass pro-Hungarian statutes. This article examines how successful this strategy has been by classifying all relevant legislative actions in [slov-lex.sk](http://slov-lex.sk) as either pro-Hungarian or not and then sorting these actions by policy areas, degree of Hungarian representation, composition of the governing coalition, time period, and type of action. Bivariate empirical results suggest that the National Council was likely to produce pro-Hungarian legislation and related actions on cultural policy but much less apt to do so on citizenship. A greater number of ethnically Hungarians representatives or delegates affiliated with Hungarian parties did not necessarily yield favorable legislative actions. Government coalitions that included Hungarian-linked parties were more likely to produce favorable results than were governments that excluded these groups. However, the probability of friendly policies declined when the right-wing populists Mečiar or Fico were in power. Though decade itself was not significant, all of the relevant legislative actions during the period when Slovakia was trying to enter the European Union (1998-2004) were pro-Hungarian. And the type of legislative action produced no clear pattern. These results suggest that ethnic Hungarians should try to join the governing coalition so long as it is not led by a right-wing populist prime minister. By itself, the actual number of seats won by ethnic Hungarians or delegates belonging to a Hungarian party, however, does not seem particularly important.

Bio: Joel Fetzer is Distinguished Professor of Political Science at Pepperdine University in Malibu, California. Author of many books and scholarly articles on European and Asian politics, he specializes in migration studies, ethnic relations, and religion and politics.

### **Hajnalka Forgács, “Works about Canada in the Ghyczy Collection/Kanadáról szóló művek a Ghyczy-gyűjteményben”**

Ignác Ghyczy (1799–1870) was a book collector from Komárom, estate manager for the Counts of Esterházy and later for Archdukes István and József, and Member of Parliament. He created a thematically and linguistically diverse collection of approximately 14,500 volumes. His children donated the noble family’s private library to the Library of the House of Representatives in 1872. The Ghyczy collection contains numerous volumes on Canada, mainly travelogues and, to a lesser extent, historical works. The works are available in their original German or in translation. The earliest work on Canada is the military history of Swabian Lieutenant Christoph Heinrich

Korn, "Geschichte der Kriege in und ausser Europa..." (1776–1777), in which he wrote about the history of the American War of Independence. Volumes 9–11 of the work entitled "Neuere Geschichte der See- und Land-Reisen" ("Recent History of Sea and Land Voyages"), "De la Rochefaucauld Liancourt Reisen in den Jahren 1795, 1796 und 1797 durch alle an der See belegenen Staaten der Nordamerikanischen Republik; imgleichen durch Ober-Canada und das Land der Irokesen, nebst zuverlässigen Nachrichten von Unter-Canada" (1799) contains the travelogue of French politician François de La Rochefoucauld. The collection includes a translation (1801) of "Travels through the states of North America and the provinces of Upper and Lower Canada..." by English-Irish geographer and explorer Isaac Weld. The author spent 15 months traveling in Canada and the United States. The most famous journey of Scottish explorer Sir Alexander Mackenzie was his east-west crossing of Canada to reach the Pacific Ocean. A translation of his travelogue was published in 1802. British-Canadian writer and botanist Catherine Parr Traill's work "The backwoods of Canada..." was translated by Friedrich Adolph Wiese (1836). British geologist Sir Charles Lyell traveled through North America between 1841–1842 and 1845–1846. His work "Charles Lyell's Reisen in Nordamerika: mit Beobachtungen über die geognostischen Verhältnisse der Vereinigten Staaten, von Canada..." was translated by Emil Theodor von Wolff (1846). The fourth volume (1848) of German educator Wilhelm Harnisch's elementary school textbook "Die Weltkunde..." is a travelogue about Canada. The most recent work is German essayist Johann Georg Kohl's travelogue "Reisen in Canada..." from 1856.

Bio: Hajnalka Forgács currently works at the Library of the Hungarian Parliament. She also holds the position of guard of old documents at the institution. She has a degree in German and Italian language and literature and is also a curator of old and rare prints. She is currently a doctoral student at the Doctoral School of History at the University of Szeged. The topic of her doctoral dissertation is the literary education of Ignác Ghyczy. She works as a lecturer at the Faculty of Humanities of Eötvös Loránd University, at the Institute of Language Mediation, at the Department of Translation and Interpreting. She teaches a course on Italian language and cultural history (the history of Italian-Hungarian cultural relations) at the department. She also works as an external consultant for a student majoring in library science. Her research interests include 18th- and 19th-century cultural history and library history. She publishes regularly and gives conference presentations in this field.

### **Judit Gál, "The Southwestern Balkans in Hungarian Geopolitical Strategy in the Arpadian Era"**

The Southwestern Balkans played an important role in Hungary's foreign relations already during the Arpadian era. From the establishment of the Hungarian state onwards, the region constituted a key area of political and military interaction, as the first territorial expansions of the Kingdom of Hungary were directed primarily towards the south. In this presentation, I examine Hungary's objectives and political strategies in the Southwestern Balkans during the Arpadian period, focusing on the 11th–13th centuries. The analysis addresses the various forms of Hungarian

involvement in the region, including territorial expansion, the establishment of dependent political relationships, and efforts to secure influence along the southern frontier of the kingdom. The aim of the lecture is to outline the main characteristics of Hungarian Balkan policy in the Arpadian era, highlighting the early phases of expansion and consolidation, without extending the investigation to the late medieval period or to the context of the Ottoman advance.

Bio: Judit Gál is a research fellow at ELTE Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of History, Department for Southeast European Studies in Budapest. Her research field is the history of the medieval Balkans and its relationships with Hungary, with a special focus on the history of Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia. She has been researching the history of the Balkans for more than 10 years and has published 3 books on the history of Croatia, Hungary and Serbia.

**Robyn Jensen, “An Archive of Goodbyes: Curating Loss, Reclaiming Cultural Belonging through Hungarian-Canadian Photographs”**

This paper draws on my curatorial research project “An Archive of Goodbyes: Curating Loss, Reclaiming Cultural Belonging” to examine early Hungarian-Canadian photographs as forms of visual life writing, records of migration, separation, settlement, and memory that often survive without names, context, or kin. Working with a photographic collection within the Dr. Martin Kovacs archival holdings in Saskatchewan, I explore how images that entered the archive as “orphaned” objects can be re-encountered through genealogical research, close visual analysis, and community storytelling. The presentation foregrounds the photographs themselves, pairing selected images with brief micro-histories that situate them within Hungarian diasporic experience on the Canadian Prairies. A subset of photographs attributed to my great-great-uncle, István Szmerkovsky, serves as a focal case study, demonstrating how family knowledge and lived memory can restore relational meaning to archival images. These photographs, once detached from their original social worlds, become sites where personal, communal, and institutional narratives intersect. Rather than treating photographs as neutral documents, this paper approaches them as affective and narrative objects that invite interpretation, recognition, and dialogue. I ask: What forms of Hungarian-Canadian history emerge when photographs are read as memoir fragments rather than evidence alone? How does curatorial practice mediate between scholarly interpretation and descendant knowledge? And how might reconnecting images to families and communities reshape understandings of loss and belonging within diaspora archives? By centering photographs as active agents of memory, this paper argues for a reparative curatorial approach, one that reclaims cultural belonging not by filling archival gaps definitively, but by reopening them as spaces of shared remembering.

Bio: Robyn Jensen is a Saskatchewan-based curator, genealogist, and public historian of Hungarian-Canadian descent. She recently completed her MA in Media & Artistic Research at the University of Regina, where her thesis, *An Archive of Goodbyes: Curating Loss, Reclaiming Cultural Belonging*, examined Hungarian-Canadian cultural memory through archival

photographs and curatorial practice. Drawing on family genealogy and the Dr. Martin Kovacs archival collection, her research explores how “orphaned” images can be reconnected to descendants through narrative, interpretation, and exhibition. Her work bridges scholarly research and public history through exhibitions, talks, and collaborative heritage projects.

**Steven Jobbitt, “From Community Practice to Performance Art: The Evolution of Hungarian and Ukrainian Folk Dance in Canada”**

This paper examines the evolution of Hungarian and Ukrainian folk dance in Canada since the beginning of the twentieth century, tracing key similarities and differences between the two. Rooted in “traditional” practices tied to community building within these immigrant communities, both have evolved into a form of performance art intended not just for consumption by local Hungarian and Ukrainian communities, but also for non-Hungarian and non-Ukrainian audiences. The paper will focus in particular on two key factors: 1) the relative influence of folk dance practices in Communist Hungary and Soviet Ukraine on groups in Canada, and 2) the impact that Canada’s “official multiculturalism” had on the evolution of folk dance as a performance art in Canada since 1971, when the Liberal government under Pierre Eliot Trudeau introduced the Canadian Multiculturalism Policy. The openness to and interest in non-Anglo and non-French cultural practices that followed in the wake of this policy, and that gave rise to a wide range of multicultural festivals and celebrations, provided new venues for the staging of both Hungarian and Ukrainian folk dance, and had an important impact on the evolution of both as performance art.

Bio: Steven Jobbitt is Associate Professor of Russian and Eastern European History at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Ontario. His research focuses primarily on the history of Hungarian geography and its intersection with empire, nation building and identity formation. He is the Past President of the Hungarian Studies Association of Canada and is the former Assistant Artistic Director of the Chaban Ukrainian Dance Group in Thunder Bay.

**Róbert Kerepeszki, “Enforced Ego-Documents in the Asylum: Great War Experience and Deviance in the Clinical Records of an Ex-Serviceman in Interwar Budapest”**

The memoir implies a voluntary act of remembering, typically associated with coherent self-representation. However, for those on the margins of society, “life writing” was often not a choice but a requirement of institutional power. This paper explores the concept of “enforced ego-documents” through the microhistorical case study of Elek Sóhár (known in the underworld as “Kokós Lexi”), a notorious figure of the Budapest drug trade in the 1920s. While the contemporary press depicted Sóhár simply as a “cocaine kingpin,” this presentation shifts the focus to a previously unexplored archival source: his psychiatric records from the Lipótmező Asylum. During his treatment, Sóhár was compelled to narrate his life history to psychiatrists. These anamneses serve as enforced ego-documents, wherein the narrator recounts his experiences –

including his WWI service and captivity in Italy – in the context of his diagnosis and criminal lifestyle. The paper analyses the variations between his accounts to understand how personal history is reconstructed within a psychiatric setting. By contrasting these “clinical memoirs” with sensationalist press reports, the presentation highlights the dissonance between public memory and institutional reality. Ultimately, instead of offering a general model of Great War ex-servicemen behavior, the case study illustrates the complexity of individual reintegration, showing how the boundaries between the “traumatized veteran” and the “deviant criminal” were negotiated in the narratives recorded by the asylum.

Bio: Róbert Kerepeszki, PhD (1982), is a historian and associate professor at the University of Debrecen, Institute of History. His primary research interests lie in the social history of 20th-century Hungary, with a special emphasis on the interwar period. His current works investigate the history of metropolitan crime, deviance, and the post-war reintegration challenges faced by Great War ex-servicemen in Budapest. He is a recipient of the János Bolyai Research Scholarship of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

#### **Zsolt Máté, “The Reception of Students of Sopron to Toronto and Vancouver”**

One of the most known Canadian contributions to the Hungarian refugee crisis is the reception of the Sopron Forestry students, who became the Sopron Division at the University of British Columbia. Meanwhile, from the Canadian archival sources I could identify a smaller, but intact group from Sopron, who wanted to become mining engineers. The two groups are the biggest and second biggest individual group of refugees who immigrated from Hungary and got accepted in their new homeland together in the following weeks of the 1956 Hungarian revolution. My presentation is based on not just Canadian governmental records, but I also used the personal papers of Kálmán Roller, the dean of the Sopron Division. With these two collections I could follow the path of the two groups to their new universities. Also, with the Sopron Division I could examine the problems of today’s university students (for example the requirement of both work and study, or their financial situation during their studies), what provides a deep and personal level analysis of the students’ early Canadian career. Meanwhile the University of Toronto’s mining engineering students did not become a well-organized, regularly meeting alumni group, the Sopron Division is active even today. Also, the Sopron Foresters became the only Hungarian group in North America, who later thanked to former Canadian political elite for their reception in 1957 with giving an award to the former immigration minister. As the Hungarian Studies Association of Canada will reflect on its past, in my presentation with introducing the alumni meetings, memoirs and newsletters I will show a decades long practice from the Sopron Foresters and Miners.

Bio: Zsolt Máté is a Pro Scientia gold medalist, two times Countrywide Scientific Student Conference (OTDK) winner PhD-student of University of Pécs. His dissertation focuses on the American, Canadian, and Australian governmental reactions to the 1956 Hungarian revolution and refugee crisis. He has participated in conference not just in Hungary, but also in Canada and in France. He published a Hungarian-German bilingual popular science oral-history book about the 1956 Hungarian refugees in Graz. He has also published book reviews and articles in *Századok* and *Múlt-kor*.

### **Julio Lucchesi Moraes, “The Destruction of Reason Revisited: Lukács, Freire, and the Transnational Politics of Erasure”**

This presentation examines the systematic attacks on two iconic intellectual traditions: György Lukács (1885–1971), the Hungarian philosopher, and Paulo Freire (1921–1997), the Brazilian educator and theorist of critical pedagogy. Rather than tracing historical or theoretical connections, it focuses on far-right efforts to erase their legacies. In Hungary, the Fidesz regime has undermined Lukács through archival closures, curriculum reforms, and symbolic interventions, including the removal of statues. In Brazil, the Bolsonaro administration challenged Freire via political rhetoric, curricular revisions, and symbolic gestures. Drawing on news reports, institutional records, and scholarly commentary, the presentation analyzes hybrid ideological warfare—media, administrative, legislative, and symbolic maneuvers—where hostility toward these figures signals alignment with far-right networks. These interventions constitute epistemicide, as theorized by Boaventura de Sousa Santos. Despite national differences, the attacks reveal a shared transnational logic: purported nationalism masks the destruction of local intellectual traditions, limiting the diversity of political culture. Attacks on canonical thinkers thus consolidate ideological authority, homogenize public discourse, and impoverish collective memory.

Bio: Julio Lucchesi Moraes holds a BSc in Economics and a PhD in History from the University of São Paulo, Brazil, with a specialization in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century history. Based in Winnipeg, he teaches at the Université de Saint-Boniface and Brandon University. His research focuses on critical theory, the Budapest School, and the political economy of media and digital technologies, with attention to questions of late capitalism. He is also engaged in a long-term project exploring and reconnecting with his Hungarian heritage.

### **Gdalit Neuman, “Zionist Youth in Post-Holocaust Hungary: Memoires and Life Writing”**

Zionist youth movement members in the immediate post war period in Hungary had a ton to contend with. As young Holocaust survivors, they had lost family and friends in the war and suffered greatly. Without exaggeration, their entire world had shattered, as had their worldview. They needed to pick up the pieces in order to move forward. Survivor guilt was common, as was anger and resentment regarding the loss of their innocence. Some even sought revenge. Instead, while still living among their oppressors and perpetrators, Jewish youth found solace among their particular peer group. Ideology turned into religion. Zionism and socialism were their hope for the future. The dream of escape and building a kibbutz in the Land of Israel was their goal. The Jewish Hungarian Zionist youth of the period in question lived many lives before their twentieth birthdays; normal childhoods, antisemitism, war, autocratic regimes, months-long journeys to the promised land, integration, kibbutzim as well as army training and service, all the while redefining their identities, beginning with informal name changes in the Movement. Luckily for the researcher,

some individuals wrote memoirs and retrospective texts on their experiences at various periods in their lives. Most of these intimate and important narratives haven't been disseminated widely, and certainly not outside Israel. For this talk, I hope to share the sentiments of members of the leftist-Marxist Zionist youth movement *Hashomer Hatzair* ("the young guard") in Hungary. Themes of despair, grief, hope, confusion and joy weave through this collage of collections.

Bio: Gdalit Neuman is a PhD candidate in the Department of Dance at York University and is affiliated with the Israel and Golda Koschitzky Centre for Jewish Studies. For her dissertation research, she investigates a specific case of Zionist dancing in Hungary in the immediate post-war period. Gdalit's writings on dance and Israel have been published in *Dance International* and *Dance Current* magazines in Canada, *Dance Today* journal in Israel, *Performance Matters* online scholarly journal and the *Oxford Handbook of Jewishness and Dance*. She taught at York University's Department of Dance as well as Canada's National Ballet School for many years.

**Márk Rácz, "Personal Sources and Lived History in Hungary before 1989 as Reflected in the Recollections of Marxism-Leninism Lecturers/Személyes források és megélt történelem az 1989 előtti magyarországi marxizmus-leninizmus oktatók visszaemlékezéseinek tükrében"**

In my online lecture, I would like to show how former ideological lecturers experienced the process of regime change and the period preceding it. It is well known that during the decades of socialism, ideological subjects were compulsory in Hungary, so students at all higher education institutions in our country studied Marxist philosophy, political economy, and scientific socialism. I conducted numerous life story interviews with former lecturers who taught the subjects listed above. The focus of the study could be the presentation of social group identities in the light of biographical interviews, or the narration of various traumas based on personal sources. In this case, group identity can be described as a situation within the workplace. Within the framework of the Marxism-Leninism departments (institutes), a unique situation developed during the four decades of socialism, in which lecturers served as ideologues, propagandists, and researchers all at once. My presentation provides an opportunity to learn about the nature of political power and the life of lecturers in the university environment through their recollections. I will show how the careers of these educators developed, how they dealt with their failures, and how they influenced events in their city and university over many years. We will learn not only about their professional challenges, but also about the dilemmas of propagandists, lecturers, and researchers, as well as how the events of their childhood and young adulthood influenced their later decisions, personalities, and successes. I process their thoughts and their internal view of Marxism-Leninism education and all its participants through their own self-analysis. I focus mainly on Marxism-Leninism lecturers in Debrecen, so I highlight the events at the former Kossuth Lajos University. I have recorded numerous experiences related to the change of regime and anomalies related to education. My research questions are as follows: how did ideological

lecturers experience the regime change? How did they see their own identity in Hungarian higher education in the 1980s?

Bio: Dr. Márk Rácz was born in Mátészalka in 1981. He is a lawyer, primary school history teacher, and boarding school teacher. He obtained his degrees from the University of Debrecen (political science and history), Károli Gáspár Reformed University (law), and Milton Friedman University (sociology). He has worked as a legal administrator at the Transport Supervision Department of the Pest County Government Office, a history teacher at Virányos Elementary School, and a boarding school teacher at the Budapest Educational Institute for the Hearing Impaired. He previously worked as a lecturer at the Department of Political Science at the University of Debrecen, where he held seminars (on the history of the Smallholders' Party between 1908 and 2006 and the quarter-century history of Hungarian parties). He also completed training as a codification lawyer at the Faculty of Law and Political Science at Pázmány Péter Catholic University. His field of research is the history of Marxism-Leninism education in Hungary.

**Soma Rédey, “Telkes and the Olgyays: A Solar Synergy: The Relationship Between Mária Telkes and the Olgyay Brothers (1949–1960)”**

Who were Mária Telkes' Hungarian contacts during her time in America? Who influenced her work, and whom might she have influenced? What is the broader significance of these relationships? Exploring these questions is valuable for several reasons, not least of which is because it highlights the importance of maintaining Hungarian connections for Mária Telkes during her life in America, both professionally and personally. By examining these interconnections, we can also gain a richer understanding of the experiences, motivations and backgrounds of Hungarians who immigrated to America during this period. One of Mária Telkes' most fascinating and multifaceted relationships was with the Olgyay brothers, architects with whom she collaborated on the Princeton Solar Energy Project between 1957 and 1960. Viktor and Aladár Olgyay, successful twin architects, emigrated from Budapest, Hungary, in 1947, seeking new opportunities in the United States at the invitation of Marcel Breuer. After a period at MIT, they joined the Princeton School of Architecture in 1953. Shortly after arriving in America, in 1950, Aladár Olgyay married Elizabeth Andrassy, the daughter of Imre and Stella Andrassy, who had moved to the United States in 1948. Later, in 1955, Mária Telkes, as a friend of the family, became the godmother of Joy Olgyay, Aladár and Elizabeth's daughter. Mária and Aladár worked together at Curtiss-Wright Corp on the Solar Energy Project in 1958. Later, the Olgyay brothers became known for their climatic architectural works. Drawing primarily on interviews with descendants and the *Mária Telkes Papers* archive at Arizona State University, the presentation explores the personal histories and professional achievements of these individuals.

Bio: Soma Rédey (MSc, MA) is a PhD candidate at the Debrecen University (DE), Doctoral School of Literary and Cultural Studies. After graduating in engineering and management at Budapest University of Technology and Economics he earned another diploma at Eötvös Loránd University in theory and history of film studies. In his research he mainly focuses on Mária Telkes and her solar research projects, science communication, science documentaries and the history of science. Between 2006 and 2020 he had been working at the Communication Division of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, since 2020 he has been running a start-up business concerned with renewable-resourced materials.

**Agatha Schwartz, “Resisting Ethnic Nationalism through Music: Remembering the 1980s Vojvodina Hungarian *Sógor Együttes*”**

The highly popular Vojvodina-based band *Sógor Együttes* was active on the musical scene of former Yugoslavia and of Hungary between May 1986 and the end of 1990, and they released five albums in total (one platinum, one gold, and one silver). This paper will analyze their innovative musical fusion (Hungarian csárdás in a rock style, new arrangements of interwar Hungarian and other chansons in addition to Hungarian adaptations of rock’n’roll classics [Chuck Berry] and Balkan folk songs, blended with original compositions by band members) as an expression of Vojvodina Hungarian cultural hybridity. The paper will interpret this musical phenomenon during the last decade of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia as a challenge to the rising ethnic nationalism promoted also through music in both Serbia and Croatia at the time, and as a demonstration of civic nationalism (Ignatieff) on which multiethnic and politically tolerant Yugoslavia had been built. This civic nationalism was being aggressively eroded to become destroyed in the 1990s Yugoslav wars. It is therefore not surprising that the outbreak of the armed conflict coincided with the end of the band’s (and of other Vojvodina Hungarian bands’ that came to life during the same time period) activity.

Bio: Agatha Schwartz (PhD, Queen’s University, Canada) is Emeritus Professor in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures at the University of Ottawa, Canada. She is currently president of the Hungarian Studies Association of Canada. She has taught German language, literature and culture and World Literatures and Cultures at the University of Belgrade, Memorial University of Newfoundland, and the University of Ottawa. She has published 7 academic books (in German and English) and 1 book of short prose (in Hungarian) in addition to numerous book chapters and articles in scholarly journals, and has presented at dozens of international conferences on Austro-Hungarian literature, culture, and feminism; on contemporary women writers from East Central Europe; on cultural hybridity; and on narratives of trauma. Her most recent publications include “Trauma, Erinnerung und Erzählung in Autobiografien von Donauschwäbinnen aus der amerikanischen Diaspora” [Trauma, Memory and Narration in autobiographies by Danube Swabian women in the American diaspora] (Bad Kissingen, 2025);

and “Writing the Roots and Routes of Violence: Melinda Nadj Abonji (Nagy Abonyi)’s novel *Tortoise Soldier (Schildkrötensoldat)*” (*Hungarian Studies Review*, 51.2, 2024).

**Balázs Venkovits, “From Rerouted Migration to Enduring Community: One Hundred Years of Hungarian Diaspora Organizations in Montreal”**

This paper builds on the rare opportunity that one can study Hungarian immigrant organizations in Montreal across a full century, as several institutions founded during the first major wave of Hungarian immigration to the city reach their centennials in 2026 or in upcoming years. The Hungarian diaspora in Montreal emerged as the result of a rapidly restructured migration pathway following World War I, shaped by U.S. immigration quotas, selectively open Canadian policies, migration intermediaries, and extensive internal migration within Canada. Against this backdrop, early Hungarian immigrants established religious, benevolent, cultural, and commercial organizations that addressed the immediate challenges of settlement, employment, linguistic adjustment, and social integration. In the longer run, many of these organizations became central hubs of the diaspora. Focusing on Montreal as a case study, the paper examines the foundational years of these organizations and the key challenges they confronted, particularly concerning issues of acculturation and integration. It then traces how these institutions adapted to shifting political, economic, and demographic conditions, including the Great Depression, postwar transformations, and subsequent migration waves. Special attention is given to their role in supporting later arrivals, most notably Hungarian refugees after 1956, who relied on—and revitalized—existing organizational infrastructures. By analyzing continuity, adaptation, and intergenerational transfer (relying on archival research as well as oral history interviews), the paper highlights that these organizations functioned as durable pillars of diaspora life, offering a unique longitudinal perspective on immigrant experience and integration, focusing on the community and individual stories alike.

Bio: Balázs Venkovits is Associate Professor of American Studies and director of the Institute of English and American Studies and the Canadian Studies Centre at the University of Debrecen. He earned his Ph.D. in 2014 and completed his habilitation in 2021. Among others, he is the recipient of the Hungarian OTKA (2022-26) and Jedlik (2013-14) grants, a JFK Research Fellowship (2013) and a Fulbright (2010-2011). His academic interests include travel writing and migration studies, he is currently researching Hungarian immigration to Canada in the 1920s and working on a digital mapping project on Hungarians in Montreal in the past 100 years.

**Agnes Zana, “Digital Memory and Grief in Hungarian Families: Personal Loss, Collective Narratives, and Communication in a Polarized Society”**

Over the past two decades, practices of grief and remembrance have undergone significant transformation in Hungary and across the Hungarian diaspora. The growing presence of digital

spaces has introduced new rituals and new dilemmas: from deathbed recordings to postmortem social media pages, emerging forms of digital memory both support and complicate mourning. Questions surrounding digital legacy—who has access, who preserves, who deletes, and who curates—often reveal family tensions, generational differences, and contrasting styles of grieving. Beyond personal loss, layers of Hungarian cultural memory also surface in digital environments. Historical traumas—including the Holocaust, the 1956 revolution, Trianon, and successive waves of migration—continue to live on in online archives, commemorative platforms, and diaspora communities. These collective narratives shape communal identity and influence individual experiences of grief: personal mourning often becomes intertwined with broader national or communal losses. All of this unfolds within a context of strong political polarization in contemporary Hungary, which increasingly affects family communication. Conversations about remembrance, ritual, and historical interpretation frequently intersect with ideological divides, leading to competing narratives and fragmented meaning-making. This presentation examines how digital memory practices, family communication patterns, and collective historical narratives interact to shape experiences of grief within Hungarian communities. It will also briefly consider intercultural aspects by comparing these Hungarian digital memory and mourning practices with emerging North American patterns, highlighting both shared challenges and culturally specific dynamics. Together, these perspectives offer an interdisciplinary framework for understanding how personal and collective remembrance become intertwined, and how a polarized social environment affects the ways families navigate mourning in the digital age.

**Bio:** Agnes Zana holds a doctorate in psychology and works as a family therapist and CBT consultant. She is currently based in New York and serves as an Associate Professor in the Institute of Behavioural Sciences at Semmelweis University, while also teaching at CUNY City Tech and Yeshiva University. For twenty-one years, she has conducted research in the behavioral sciences, with a particular focus on the psychology of death, dying, and grief. She also serves as General Secretary of the Selye János Society of Behavioural Sciences and Behavioural Medicine. Her teaching and clinical practice are grounded in an interdisciplinary approach and a strong commitment to Hungarian communities.



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