
AHEA Newsletter: November 2022

1 message

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December 2022 Newsletter

President's Corner

Dear AHEA Friends and Colleagues:

I reflect with gratitude on all the blessings and the many good things that have happened this year.

My family history has preoccupied much of my time these past few weeks. Forty-five years ago, my sister had the foresight to interview our grandmother, a fantastic storyteller, about her life, her experiences during the World Wars, their escape from Transcarpathia, how my parents met and married in a displaced persons camp, and their emigration to the US. In transcribing these interviews, I am struck by how valuable these tapes are; there are so many details of my family's history that were heretofore unknown to me and my family. I am chagrined that the time lapsed is almost a half-century since these were recorded; I am only now appreciating them and realizing their importance and meaning. There are too many stories of courage, grit, and perseverance tucked away in old boxes and in family archives – unknown even to the families of those who experienced them. They need to be heard and to be preserved.

It has been a very good year for AHEA. After a three-year hiatus of in-person meetings, AHEA's Board is planning our [47th annual meeting](#) in April 27-29, 2023 at Quinnipiac University in Hamden, CT. We look forward to connecting and to all the informal conversations and the serendipitous meetings that occur at these conferences. We are working on the best and most reasonable hotel arrangements close to the University. We are also finalizing transportation options from the airport. Watch our website for details in the coming weeks.

I am grateful to the members of AHEA who give selflessly and generously to

advance the mission and grow this organization. Board members tirelessly advance the work of AHEA. You, our members, network and support each other year around. The [HCS journal](#) and this Newsletter are supported through volunteer efforts. The list goes on. We owe each of you a huge debt of thanks. Your contributions to AHEA are invaluable.

As the calendar year winds down, we invite you to renew your [membership](#). This will enable you to register for our conference at reduced rates and participate in our elections next Spring.

We have [scholarships and awards](#) to announce at the 47th Annual AHEA Conference. Please consider applying or submitting a nomination. All applications/nominations are submitted electronically and are due on February 15, 2023.

We ask you to consider donating to AHEA to support its mission using the ["Donate" link](#) found in the top left-hand column.

Here's wishing you all the best for the Holiday season and may 2023 bring you good health, much happiness, and success. Please reach out if you have comments or suggestions on how AHEA might further support your scholarly pursuits.

With the highest regards,
Klara Papp
klarakpapp@gmail.com

Membership Renewal Drive

As we approach the end of the year and look forward to both the next conference and our association's next elections, it is more vital than ever to renew your membership for 2023.

- Only members in good standing can vote in leadership elections;
- Your dues enable you to access "Members Only" section of the website;
- Your annual contribution to AHEA not only helps fund our conferences, but allows us to support your colleagues through our range of [awards and scholarships](#)

 [Click here to renew through a convenient PayPal link!](#) 

Member Spotlight

AHEA is a scholarly organization connecting a diverse set of educators, researchers, professionals, independent scholars and academics who come from many walks of life. Each month we highlight the academic and professional career of a different AHEA member.



This month's featured member is **Helga Lénárt-Cheng**,
President-Elect of AHEA

Please tell us a little bit about your career arc, especially how you came to specialize in biography, autobiography, and memory, collective or otherwise?

I was born and raised in Hungary, where I completed the equivalent of a BA in German and an MA in French. I also studied at the University of Paris and spent significant time studying abroad in Germany and England. In Paris I had the privilege of studying with Philippe Lejeune, who was among the first scholars to pay serious attention to autobiographical literature. He established the French national archive of diaries, so that anyone who finds a diary in an attic or wants to preserve their own without family members peeking inside, can mail it in. Since then, a network of similar archives and diary museums have popped up around the world, and I continue to wonder about the seemingly universal urge to share our stories. Autobiographical storytelling raises fascinating questions about personal and collective identity and memory: How and why, with whom and in what format do we share our most intimate stories? What existential drives compel us to share them? And what's the role of personal stories in writing history and in building community and collective memory? Just think of the recent phenomenon of COVID diaries, or the value of Gulag diaries, Chernobyl diaries or those covering World War II in Hungary. For my PhD at Harvard, I chose the interdisciplinary field of comparative literature because it allowed me to explore life writing without the limits imposed by national literatures. Since then, I have further broadened my research to include blogs, selfies, video narratives, and even the role of AI in contemporary storytelling. My second book, *Story Revolutions* (University of Virginia Press) was just released this month. To learn more about me, visit www.helgalenartcheng.com.

How did you find out about AHEA, and what led you to join?

I first heard about the organization in 2009 when the AHEA conference was held at Berkeley. I teach at a small liberal arts college called Saint Mary's College of California, just a few miles from Berkeley. At the time I was researching the life and works of the Hungarian-born polyglot writer and autobiographer Lénárd Sándor (Alexander Lenard - no family relations!), and the friendly atmosphere of AHEA drew me in immediately. Eniko Basa and Katalin Voros, with their master networking skills, made sure that young scholars felt included, and soon enough they asked me to join the board, first as a member (2016-2018) and then as Vice President (2018-2022). I also attended the 2013 conference at Rutgers, the one in Cluj/Kolozsvár in 2015, and more recently our online conferences. Each time I was delighted by the amazing variety of topics and the myriad connections between Hungarian and American scholars and institutions.

What impact has your involvement with AHEA made on your career and/or your work?

As I learned more about the nearly 50-year history of AHEA, I realized the tremendous power of human connections within academia. As scholars we are trained to do research, but nobody talks in PhD programs about the value of personal relationships. AHEA stood out to me among other scholarly organizations in that it prioritizes connections over competition. My work with AHEA helped to confirm what I have long believed: that all that we do is enhanced by the daily collaborations and interactions with others in the community. I'm always impressed by the generosity of my colleagues, and AHEA consists of such a rich network of researchers that even though Hungarian studies is not my primary field of research, I found a home in this organization. My involvement with AHEA also helped renew my ties with colleagues based in Hungary, and on the US side I support Hungarian studies by also being Chair of the Executive Committee of the Hungarian Forum at the Modern Language Association.

Tell us, please, about your current project.

My most exciting current project is of course [my new book, *Story Revolutions*](#), which came out this month. I wrote [my first book, co-authored with Zsuzsa Vajdovics, in *Hungarian on Alexander Lenard*](#) (2016). With this new book I return to my main research field, autobiography, to explore the role of personal storytelling in democracy. Two decades into the twenty-first century, the collective sharing of personal stories is on the rise. The Moth, StoryCorps, #metoo or Humans of New York attract millions of users, not to mention the so-called “story products” recently introduced by social media companies with nearly a billion users. We are on the cusp of a new era in which personal stories will play a key role in social and political engagement. My book traces the connection between personal stories and democracy back to the Enlightenment. I focus on three historical periods—the Enlightenment, the 1930s, and the 21st century—because all three were marked by a convergence of mass movements and new methods of data collection and aggregation, which led to a boom in story activism. I study a variety of case studies from eighteenth-century memoir-collections to contemporary Web 2.0 databases, including memoir contests, oral history, digital story-maps, and crowd-sourced pandemic diaries. Ultimately, the book offers a critical perspective on the concept of community, with reflections on what it means to use storytelling to build democracy in the twenty-first century.

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For Students: Hungarian Diaspora Scholarship Information



Hungarian
DIASPORA
Scholarship

Fulfill your professional dreams while you explore your Hungarian heritage – the Hungarian Diaspora Scholarship program is now available for students around the globe.

The Hungarian Diaspora Scholarship was established by the Hungarian Government for those who live in a Hungarian diaspora outside the European Union, Serbia, and the Zakarpattia Oblast of Ukraine, and wish to study at a Hungarian higher education institution to develop their personal, professional, and cultural relations to Hungary.

Students can choose from almost 30 top-tier Hungarian higher education institutions and 1300 programs offered mainly in English and Hungarian, covering all study fields and levels. The scholarship is available for both full-time studies leading to a degree and non-degree studies including one- or two-semester-long exchange studies. The scholarship covers tuition-free education at the available higher education institutions, medical insurance, and upon request a monthly stipend, accommodation contribution, and travel allowance.

Submit your application for the Hungarian Diaspora Scholarship online until 31 January 2022. For more information, visit www.diasporascholarship.hu!

For Students: European Studies Summer Program at University of Pécs

You are invited to spend two weeks in a beautiful Central European city with a Mediterranean atmosphere, learning about European history and culture for academic credit. Our **European Studies Summer School is being held from July 9 – 22, 2023.**

You will study the political, economic, cultural, and social achievements and challenges of the European Union, as well as expand your knowledge on topics such as the art history, gastronomy, and folk traditions of Europe. You will learn with students from many different countries for two weeks and broaden your perspectives about the contributing factors that led to contemporary Europe, including migration, cultural diversity, and gender issues. The classes will be taught by internationally renowned professors.

The application period for summer school is now open through April 1, 2023.

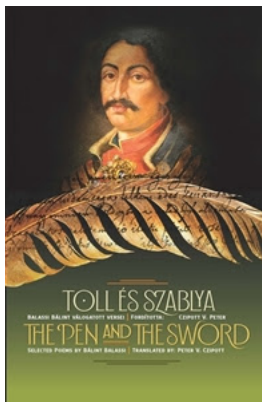


Best regards,
Boglárka VECSÁNIN
Study Abroad Program Coordinator
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Member Publications

The listing of publications is for our members' information and does not signify endorsement by AHEA.

Submitted by the translator: "Kairosz Kiadó has released a bilingual volume of selected poetry of Bálint Balassi, translated by AHEA member **Peter Czipott**. The book, ***Toll és***



szablya / The Pen and the Sword, is edited and introduced by Pál Molnár, president of the Balassi Arts Foundation. The 38 poems comprise nearly forty percent of Balassi's lyric oeuvre and may constitute the largest single collection of his poems available in English. Dr. Czipott, who received the Hungarian Gold Cross of Merit in 2020 for his work as a literary translator, has been announced as recipient of the 2023 Balassi Memorial Sword for translation."

Have a New or Upcoming Publication?

We would love to help share news of the impressive and diverse work that AHEA members are doing! If you have a recent book, article, or other scholarly/artistic work you would like your fellow members to know about, send a brief description/promotional blurb and a link to further information to aheanews@gmail.com. Requests will appear in the order in which they were received and may be edited for space.



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