
AHEA Newsletter: February 2025

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February 2025 Newsletter

President's Corner

Dear AHEA Members,

A heartfelt thank you to all who have paid their 2025 membership dues—your support enables the important work of AHEA. As a reminder, our organization is entirely volunteer-run, with board members and contributors working pro bono to sustain our mission. Your contributions are essential in ensuring the smooth operation of our programs and initiatives—thank you for being a vital part of our community!

I'm delighted to share some exciting updates as we move closer to our annual conference! We are honored to welcome Professor Enikő Bollobás as our keynote speaker. She will deliver a lecture titled *The Evolution of American Studies in Hungary, 1970s to the Present*—a topic that promises to offer invaluable insights into the field's development.

A reminder that applications for the \$500 presentation awards are due by February 28—the links are available on the conference website: [Presenter Resources](#). Other award applications have later deadlines, so be sure to keep an eye on them. Also, the conference registration and hotel reservation forms are now live—visit [the conference website](#) to secure your spot.

Finally, I'd like to extend my deepest gratitude to the Program Committee members who dedicated their time to reviewing abstracts. Your expertise and commitment are truly appreciated: Profs. Mártha Pereszlényi-Pintér, Mari Réthelyi, Krisztina Fehér, Andrea Parapatics, Péter Kristián Zachar, James P. Niessen, Ákos Farkas, Zsuzsanna Varga, Sarah Lucas, Judith Olson, Andrew Lee, Katalin Vörös.

As always, please reach out to me personally if you have any questions or suggestions: hl4@stmarys-ca.edu.

Looking forward to hearing from you!
Warm regards, üdvözlettel,

Helga Lenart-Cheng

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 **Mártha Pereszlényi-Pintér**,
Associate Professor Emerita at John Carroll University in Cleveland, Ohio

Please tell us a little bit about your career arc—especially how you came to study French language and literature?

I was born in Braunau-am-Inn, Austria, in a DP (Displaced Persons) refugee camp after WW2. Because of the turbulent political upheavals of the times, my parents were neither able to return to Hungary nor able to remain in Austria. Eventually, they were faced with the choice of emigrating to France, Australia, or the USA. They decided that France was too French, Australia was too far away, so the USA seemed like the best choice. We were sponsored by fellow Hungarians already here in the USA, but my father, who had a doctorate and a comfortable position back in Hungary, had to work off the passage for himself, my mother and me by laboring on a farm in Iowa. We were all alone there. He knew just a little English, my mother none, and I was still a baby. We lived in a refurbished chicken coop that the farmer had provided. We had an inside cold-water pump for water and an outhouse for our bathroom needs. In retrospect, I am still awed about how my parents and fellow Hungarian refugees survived those times, and how hard my parents, like those of many of my friends, always dreamed of and strived to make a better life for their children.

After my father worked off the passage, we moved to Cleveland where there were already Hungarian communities and good jobs for emigrants and immigrants. I have read that between 1947 and 1953, approximately six thousand Hungarian DPs (Displaced Persons) arrived in Cleveland. They were generally from the middle and upper middle classes in Hungary and from urban areas. Many of them were lawyers, doctors, politicians, army officers and educators. Most were handicapped by the fact that they were middle-aged. Losing everything and having to start anew proved to be extremely difficult for most, even traumatic for some. Hundreds were too old to begin new careers. They obtained employment in factories or machine shops, hoping to work long enough to secure a minimum amount of Social Security for their retirement. At the Ford assembly plant in Cleveland there was an entire contingent of Hungarian DPs.

My father, like many of his Hungarian contemporaries, worked in that Ford factory, my mother as a seamstress making 10 cents an hour in a sweatshop. We never got nor asked for any government assistance. My parents, like those of most of my Hungarian friends, made sure their children got a good education so that they could make up for what their parents had lost because of WW2. Many of the DP generation dreamed of returning to Hungary, and just as many had their hopes dashed when the 1956 Hungarian Revolution occurred. So, we became American citizens, myself included, when I was in third grade in elementary school.

Growing up in the Cleveland Hungarian community in the 1950s and '60s was like growing up in a Hungarian bubble. As children of emigrant Hungarian parents, we led double lives. We had our American friends and activities at school, but for the most part, our lives revolved around our Hungarian churches, Hungarian School, Hungarian Scouts, and later Hungarian parties and dances. Not speaking Hungarian at home was unheard of, and for the most part even as children and teenagers we spoke Hungarian to each other, and many of us still do.

The bubble may have been unrealistic because our elders at times presented life in Hungary before the war as a kind of paradise. As an adult, I can understand the painful and intense longing for a return. This was often reinforced at Hungarian School and Scouts. When I was about 19, I spent a year abroad at the *Institut de Touraine* in Tours, France sponsored by the University of Toledo (Ohio). I would say my love for the French language and culture caused me to choose Romance Languages, Literatures, and Cultures as a profession. Later, I also studied abroad in Avignon, France with Bryn Mawr College.

In 1969, at the end of my first year in France, I visited for the first time and alone my relatives in Hungary, whom I had never met in person. While there, one time I glanced at a map on a billboard and casually asked, "*What country is that?*" My relatives looked at me incredulously and said, "*Where do you think you are? What country do you think you are in?*" It was a map of present-day Hungary, not the nostalgic pre-Trianon map that had always been my reference point of my upbringing in Cleveland.

So, despite that embarrassing gaffe, I loved being in Hungary and I felt incredibly sad for my family that was so painfully torn apart for decades because of the war and the Soviet occupation. But if I could not have grown up in Hungary with all those warm family ties, I believe I was incredibly fortunate to have landed in the Cleveland Hungarian community, because it gave me strength and my identity. And, I might

add, my entrance to AHEA.

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

In 1974 I was working on my PhD in Romance Languages and Literatures at The Ohio State University, but was home for Thanksgiving break. This was the traditional weekend that the Cleveland based Hungarian Association was holding its annual Congress and my family always attended. A small group of very dedicated Hungarian scholars, most of whom were professors at colleges and universities or other academe-related institutions, had decided to hold a meeting there during the Congress to establish what became the birth of the AHEA. I am so proud to say that I was one of the founding members. Sadly, I believe most, or maybe even all, have passed on, and the only ones left may well be Enikő Molnár Basa and myself.

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

2025 is the 51st anniversary of my membership. At the AHEA conference in 2024 my colleagues decided to honor me with the Péter Basa Award. That had to be one of my most proud as well as most humble moments. Thank you again! Looking back on my AHEA years, I was elected president for two terms (1984-88), and again for two terms 2000-2004. I chaired or co-chaired four AHEA Conferences, including at The Ohio State University (1984), the University of Pittsburgh (1988), and twice at John Carroll University in Cleveland with colleague Katherine Gyékényesi Gatto (1999, 2011). I also assisted the conference chairs for AHEA at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh (2008) and Cleveland State University (2018). I have also served on the AHEA Advisory Board for several terms, the AHEA Conference organizing committee several times, and served as a session chair at numerous conferences.

I have read numerous papers on Hungarian Studies at AHEA conferences as well as other venues here and abroad. While at the Ohio State University in the 1980s and with grants from the Annenberg Foundation, I authored fourteen manuals on the study of Hungarian language, some of them co-authored with Julianna Nádas Ludányi. I have also published articles in refereed journals or books on Hungarian topics and published several book reviews in *Hungarian Cultural Studies*, *Journal of the American Hungarian Educators Association*.

One of my best AHEA memories is the following and it happened at the 1992 AHEA at the University of Toledo (Ohio). It was my first year as a faculty member at John Carroll University (Cleveland, Ohio) and I invited a JCU colleague to accompany me. I drove and when we got there, I excused myself for a moment saying that I had to go and say hello to my friends. When I rejoined my colleague, she seemed totally gobsmacked and said, "*You just go to say hello to some friends and all of a sudden you are surrounded by 20-25 people! Do you really mean to say those are all your 'friends'?*" I myself was astonished at her question, because I must have replied something to the effect of, "*Why yes, those are all my friends and there are even more coming. We are like family having a family reunion.*" But that is what AHEA has meant to me over 50+ years, not just my colleagues, but treasured members of my family.

I try to stay as active as possible in AHEA and attend all the Conferences. It is such a joy to see colleagues and yes, my friends, every year. I especially treasure my Cleveland area AHEA member friends. Please excuse me, dear Cleveland as well as other friends, from not attempting to mention every one of you by name, because for sure I would inadvertently leave someone out and I would feel terrible. But do know that I treasure all of you.

As a senior member, I now find myself in a mentoring position. But if I myself had a mentor, it would have to be founding and longtime member Ruth Ghering Bíró. In 1990, she had even asked me to be her assistant for a Fulbright Hays Group Project to Hungary at Pécs for fourteen university faculty members from various disciplines. Sadly, Ruthie passed in 2021 but left a legacy and a loving memory for AHEA for anyone who knew her. I really miss her. I would also like to mention special thanks to Louise Vasvári for all her help with my research projects.

Tell us, please, about your current project.

Now that I am semi-retired from JCU but still teaching part-time at John Carroll University, I am trying to catch up on turning several of my AHEA presentations into books and scholarly articles for academic journals. My topics have been on the eclectic side, so it would be hard to name a favorite one. But I would include a monograph on the 1932 French film *Marie, légende hongroise* by Hungarian director Pál Fejős, and papers on the African American performer Joséphine Baker in

Hungary, French influences on the Hungarian poet Miklós Radnóti, and the topic of gastrationalism/globalism/gastronomy as it refers to Hungary.

Since 1974, AHEA has been a remarkable journey, and I wish the organization and all its members and supporters all the best for the next 50 years — and well beyond!

Fulbrighter Profile: Anilla Till

In this new, occasional series of spotlights, we will feature either a Fulbright scholar from Hungary who's completing a fellowship in the United States, or one from the United States who's completing theirs in Hungary.



Anilla Till is a PhD candidate in Communication Science at Corvinus University of Budapest. Currently, she is a Fulbright Visiting Student Researcher (VSR) at the [Institute of Social and Economic Research at the University of Alaska Anchorage](#).

I'm originally from Hungary and currently pursuing my PhD at Corvinus University of Budapest. My broad research interests include sustainability communication and the rhetoric of planetary health. For my dissertation, I focus specifically on these themes within the circumpolar regions of Iceland, Greenland, and Alaska. In 2024, I spent one month conducting research at Ilisimatusarfik in Nuuk, Greenland, and six months in Reykjavík, Iceland. You can find [my LinkedIn profile here](#) if you're interested. Also, I gave [a talk about my research at an Arctic Circle side event](#) in October.

My current work involves interviewing stakeholders in the broad fields of environmental sustainability, climate change mitigation, and planetary health; you can also find a one-pager about my research [here](#). I'm submitting the first draft of my manuscript in August and hope to continue my research afterward, ideally at an academic institute or think tank, possibly in the Netherlands or elsewhere in Northwestern Europe.

In my free time, I enjoy travel destinations; those close to nature are my favorite: one of the reasons I'm so drawn to Arctic regions is their beautiful, open spaces that allow me to enjoy the natural world fully.

Member Publications

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

Andrew Behrendt (Missouri University of Science & Technology) announces that he has a chapter, "Strangers' and Friends: Promoting Tourism and Defining Relationships in Post-Imperial Austria and Hungary," appearing in the recently-published [*Das Erbe der Habsburgermonarchie in den Nachfolgestaaten: Brüche und Kontinuitäten*](#), ed. Ulrike Harmat (Verlag der OEAW, 2025).

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.

Conference Call for Papers: "Interweaving Languages"

This third-party announcement is included for the benefit of our readers.
AHEA is not directly affiliated with the program described below.

Call for Papers: "Interweaving Languages: Multilingualism in Art and Education"
Budapest and online, 9–11 October 2025

Organisers: Hungarian Academy of Arts, Research Institute of Art Theory and Methodology, Language Center University of Bielefeld and LangueFlow

We are inviting submissions for a three-day interdisciplinary conference dedicated to exploring the themes of **multilingualism and translingualism in art and education**.

This conference seeks to examine the creative, pedagogical, and sociocultural dimensions of language as it traverses disciplinary, linguistic and cultural boundaries.

Please note: A special section will focus on multilingual multimodality in works that incorporate **Hungarian elements in global arts** and how multilingualism is reflected in Hungarian education.

Submission deadline: **before 31 March 2025!**

Read and download the full CfP as PDF (728 kB): [Interweaving Languages: Multilingualism in Art and Education - MMA Művészetelméleti és Módszertani Kutatóintézet](#)



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