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Studies of the Americas: Research and Teaching in American, Latin-American, and Inter-American Studies at the University of Szeged

The article surveys the development and the current status of American, Latin-American, and Inter-American Studies at the University of Szeged with special focus on the research fields and publications of the faculty members from the Department of American Studies, Hispanic Studies, and the Inter-American Research Center of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.

Key words: University of Szeged; Inter-American Research Center; AMERICANA e-Journal of American Studies in Hungary; AMERICANA eBooks; HAAS; AHILA

The University of Szeged has had a compelling history. Its roots can be traced back to the University of Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca, Klausenburg), named Magyar Királyi Ferenc József Tudományegyetem [Royal Hungarian Franz Joseph University] in 1872, which was originally established in 1581 by István [Stephen] Báthory (1571-1576), Voivode and Prince of Transylvania, King of Poland, and Grand Duke of Lithuania. After the Treaty of Trianon in 1920, the university was left homeless and

had to be temporarily relocated as a university in exile to Szeged in 1921 (Minker 23-32). In 1945, the academic institution was called Szeged University and in 1962 it was renamed József Attila University (JATE), after the Hungarian poet Attila József (1905-1937); in 2000, the institution received its current name, the University of Szeged (SZTE) (Szentirmai and Ráczné Mojzes 29-30).

The English and American Studies at the University of Szeged also had an interesting institutional history. For many years, American Studies in Hungary was considered an offspring of the 'mother' field of English Studies. The first phase of the institutionalization of American Studies in Hungary consisted of scattered attempts made by various English Departments to introduce a more focused research and teaching of topics and fields relating to the United States, especially American literature. Among the professors who conceived and prepared the ground for such emerging American Studies programs and departments at a number of Hungarian universities and colleges were László Ország, Sarolta Kretzoi-Valkay, Péter Egri, Zoltán Abádi-Nagy, Zsolt Virágos, Lehel Vadon, Enikő Bollobás, Zoltán Kövecses, Tibor Frank, and Bálint Rozsnyai (Cristian 2016, 18). English Studies in Szeged, as György E. Szőnyi says, was established relatively recently; the founding of an English major and an Institute of English Philology took place in 1946, with Jenő Koltay-Kastner as the first head (1946-1949), followed by Előd Halász (1949-1950), both "outsiders" to the field. Interestingly, during these years no diplomas were issued in English and there is hardly any data about the life of the institute. As a result of the political changes in the country in the 1950s, "the teaching of most Western languages was discontinued until 1960," with the English major being only "revived in 1965, part of programs offered by the Institute of Germanic Philology," Szőnyi observed. However, starting from 1969 there was

an independent Department of English Language and Literature, which thirty years later, in 1996, was upgraded as the Institute of English and American Studies, now consisting of three departments: the Department of English Studies, the Department of American Studies, and the Department of English Language Teacher Education and Applied Linguistics. As of 1993, English Studies in Szeged have also comprised PhD studies, running three accredited doctoral programs: *English and American Literature and Cultures*, *Theoretical Linguistics*, and *English Applied Linguistics*. (Szőnyi)

During the 1970s, the sociologist of culture Elemér Hankiss and the comparative literature scholar Mihály Szegedy-Maszák (the head of the department in 1969-1970) were also teaching in Szeged; László Deme was the chair of the Department in 1970-1973 but the first significant and fully independent leader of the English Studies as such was Sarolta Kretzoi-Valkay. She consolidated both the department and the syllabus of the degree program between 1973 and 1976. As Szőnyi stressed, it was due to her perseverance that young, ambitious, and well qualified staff members were recruited here in the 1970s; they were the pioneering generation that started to design the teaching and research profile of English Studies and emerging American Studies in Szeged.

The next head of the Department of English Language and Literature was Halász Elődné Annamária Szász (1978-1980) followed by Bálint Rozsnyai, who took over as head in 1980 and stayed at the helm of the department until 1992, founding American Studies at József Attila University (JATE) as an independent discipline with

a unique profile to be gradually developed into a major program by the 1990s (Bernáth 160), which was also led by him – and by György Novák as acting head for one academic year (2005). The next chairs of department were Zoltán Vajda (2009–2014) and Réka M. Cristian (2014–present).

At the beginning of the 1990s, Hungarian higher education witnessed a proliferation of American Studies departments in the country (Cristian 2011, 2). The American Studies in Szeged was for a while an independent program of study that later grew into the **Department of American Studies**, now part of the Institute of English and American Studies of the University of Szeged (Cristian 2016, 20). The Department of American Studies (webpage: <http://amerikanisztika.ieas-szeged.hu/>) was a product of the departmental boom of the early 1990s, with its American Studies program launched in the mid-1980s after the European Association of American Studies (EAAS) organized its conference in Budapest (Cristian 2016, 20). As Bálint Rozsnyai recalls,

1985 was a productive year for Hungarian scholars interested in American Studies: the European Association of American Studies organized its biennial conference in a Communist country for the first time in its history; and the first university program in American Studies was launched in the fall. The time was different from the worst period of Communist dictatorship even though hardly anyone thought the end [of the regime] was not too far away. The importance of the EAAS conference was both political and scholarly, in comparison the significance of the starting of the AS program was very modest. (Rozsnyai)

Similar to other Hungarian and Eastern and Central European American Studies centers, since its outset, the American studies program in Szeged has favored particular dynamics in understanding American culture/s. The program offered a wide, multidisciplinary pool of subjects for study and a teaching portfolio conceived as cultural studies focusing on various aspects of American history, society (racial, ethnic, and religious groups, as well as women) and culture (including literature, film, and the arts), approached from a variety of perspectives, with a multiplicity of topics and methodological approaches (Cristian 2011, 4, 11) applied from the Hungarian, Szeged, vantage point. As Bálint Rozsnyai observed in the inaugural issue of *Americana E-Journal of American Studies*,

American Studies is not American property. In Hungary, we have a special understanding of American culture, in the same way as Poles have their own special understanding of it. The specialty of the understanding is not the product of an essentialist position: rather it is the outcome of an interaction (series of interactions) of various actors – the US is one among them. Hungary and Poland have their particular understanding/interpretation of 'America' – in it, the (ex-)Soviet Union is undoubtedly a significant factor. (Rozsnyai)

Today, the Department of American Studies has four associate professors (among them three colleagues with habilitations) and two senior assistant professors with American Studies currently taught as a distinct program at BA level and also at graduate MA level, with teaching, mentoring, and supervising also at the Faculty of Arts' Doctoral School of Literary Studies, English, and American Literatures and Cultures Program. The teaching staff plays an active role in the academic-scientific

life of the university by cooperating in national and international scholarly societies, such as the Hungarian Association for American Studies (HAAS), the Hungarian Society for the Study of English (HUSSE), and the International Association of Inter-American Studies (IAS) among many other national and international professional associations. Furthermore, an important area of research within our department is related to identity studies, a relatively new interdisciplinary field at the intersection of cultural studies and geography, gender and masculinity studies, minority studies, and area studies. This integrates the study of key social categories, such as race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, and religion, in challenging and innovative ways. Understanding identity as a core concept in postmodernity by which social practices are structured, framed and performed, experienced and evaluated calls for a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches and allows for an investigation of contexts and spaces of social action and interaction, both at the level of the social and the individual, from forms and methods of representation (both visual and verbal) through patterns of migration and impacts of globalization to contemporary constructions of identities and meta-narratives in support of various ideologies and power-structures.

Some of the American Studies colleagues have been involved in intriguing research in this field, among them Irén E. Annus. Her initial project focused on the history of Hungarian immigration to the US and the lives of the immigrants, their assimilation processes, and identity constructions in the New World. Afterwards, she investigated Latter-Day Saints' social practices and revealed the ways in which they defined themselves by their faith and specific beliefs of their religious community. She has also engaged in the study of other American communities in terms of their identity and practices of visual representation, particularly in the Victorian period and the last three decades. Annus's first volume *Social Realities in the Making: The Structuration of Society and the Constitution of American Identity* (2005) investigated the theory of structuration developed by Anthony Giddens, which underlay her investigation of the history of the constitution of American national identity understood as a permanently changing, evolving, highly debated and contested social field. She also investigated certain aspects of Hungarian national identity constructions in some of her studies, such as "Tourism, Self-Representation, and National Identity in Post-Socialist Hungary" (Bonavita Vella 2011, 1-24). A number of her pieces, including "Trans-Culturing Jane Austen: The Mollywood Adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*" (*AMERICANA* 2012, 1-13), investigate contemporary Mormon culture. As a regular reviewer of books on Mormonism, she was also requested to survey the current state of Mormon Studies, which resulted in an analysis in *Nova Religio* under the title "New Studies in Mormonism" (*Nova Religio* 2006, 98-111). Moreover, Annus edited a special issue of *AMERICANA E-Journal of American Studies in Hungary* (Spring 2009) devoted to the role religion has played in American culture and society. More currently, she co-edited with David M. Morris and Kim B. Östman the volume *Mormonism in Europe. Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (Szeged, 2018), which showcases the Old Continent's cultures encountering a religion from the New World, as interpreted by recognized experts in Mormon Studies.

Further in the area of identity studies, Zsófia Anna Tóth's research is concerned with the representation of female aggression and violence in American literature and film, the emergence of the New Woman and her historical and cultural reception.

Tóth's first book, *Merry Murderers. The Farcical (Re)Figuration of the Femme Fatale in Maurine Dallas Watkins' Chicago (1927) and its Various Adaptations (2011)* explores trends and changes in the representational history of the *femme fatale* in twentieth-century American culture, discusses the cultural history of this iconic female figure, and presents cultural and theoretical debates around it by focusing on Maurine Dallas Watkins's *Chicago* (1929) and its various adaptations (1942, 1975, 2002). Together with Zoltán Vajda, she joint-edited a special issue of *AMERICANA E-Journal of American Studies in Hungary* entitled *Proceedings of the "American Studies and Visuality – On the Horizon of Information Society" Conference* (Spring 2012) and a collection of essays in Hungarian of the same conference published under the title of *Amerikanisztika és vizualitás. Metszéspontok az információs társadalom horizontján* [American Studies and visuality. Tangential points on the informational society's highway] (Szeged, 2012). Besides gender, Tóth's interest in humor has extended to the ethnic facet of identity as well. Her essay "Borderlands and Humorous Transgressions in *Machete* (2010) and *Machete Kills* (2013)" (Cristian, Dragon, and Lénárt, 2019, 93-104) examines current issues of Latina/Latino identity and the relation of Latinas/os to humor through the analysis of two films by Robert Rodriguez. Tóth's current research topics include humor theories, humor and gender, women's humor, and the life and work of Mae West.

In the context of literary, cultural, and identity studies, Ágnes Zsófia Kovács's work has evolved at an intersection of three areas of interest: Henry James and Edith Wharton studies, travel writing, and contemporary identity prose. Her first book, *The Function of the Imagination in Henry James* (2006) provides a phenomenology-oriented rereading of the Jamesian imaginative act in three 'phases' of James's work to show how cultural influences have a vital role in the formation of an imaginative experience. This volume tests Jamesian 'civilized' acts of understanding, interpretation, and ethical decision-making in his essays, novels, and non-fiction. As a spinoff to the James project, Kovács has written extensively on Colm Tóibín's fictive reinterpretations of James in "Recanonizing Henry James: Colm Tóibín's *The Master*" (*AMERICANA*, 2007) and in "The Jamesian Secret: Representations of Irish Immigrant Experience in Colm Tóibín's *Brooklyn*" (*AMERICANA*, 2016) and edited a special *AMERICANA* thematic cluster on James's contemporary appropriations (Fall 2016). In her second book, *Literature in Context. Reading American Novels* (2010), Kovács extends her inquiries in both the theory and practice of travel writing by surveying the Foucauldian-postcolonial roots of recent critical discourse about travel writing and also by including the study of travel writing by Edith Wharton. Last but not least, Kovács's interest in cultural difference and travel inspired readings in contemporary multicultural identity prose by women in her discussion of Cisneros's notion of 'home,' survey of Morrison's rewritings of African American history and literary history, and explorations of the twenty first-century versions of neo-slave narratives.

The Department of American Studies in Szeged currently does research in American history as well. Zoltán Vajda's research areas include early American intellectual and cultural history, the history of the Old South, Thomas Jefferson and John C. Calhoun, and American popular culture. He has been primarily conducting research on the influence of the culture of sentimentalism on early American political thought and published the results in *A szeretet köztársasága. A szentimentalizmus*

hatása az Amerikai Egyesült Államok korai időszakának politikai gondolkodásában [The republic of love. The influence of sentimentalism on the political thought of the United States in the early period] (2017), where he discusses the ratification debate of the US Constitution in the state of New York, Thomas Jefferson's political thought, as well as John C. Calhoun's political ideas, whom he also analyzed in "Complicated Sympathies: John C. Calhoun's Sentimental Union and the South" published in *South Carolina Historical Magazine* (July 2013, 210-230). Vajda's other theme of research concerns the concept of labor and poverty in early American thought, with special emphasis on the work of Thomas Jefferson. While scholarly discussions of Jefferson's thought have emphasized his role in formulating the dominant normative model for white women (as far as gender roles are concerned in the division of labor), Vajda referred to alternative roles for them in "Thomas Jefferson on Class and the European Perspective" (Ciugureanu, Vlad, and Stanca, 2018, 81-92) and in "Thomas Jefferson az amerikai fehér nők közötti osztálykülönbségekről francia perspektívában," [Thomas Jefferson on class differences among white women in a French perspective] (in *Felvilágosodás – Lumières – Enlightenment – Aufklärung* 6. kötet *Programok és tanulmányok*. Szerk.: Bartha-Kovács Katalin, Penke Olga, Szász Géza, 2017, 209-216).

Zoltán Dragon's fields of interest include contemporary American literature, Hollywood film, film theory and criticism, visual culture, digital culture and theory, and the history and theories of photography. His first book, *Tennessee Williams Hollywoodba megy avagy a drama és film dialógusa* [Tennessee Williams goes to Hollywood or the dialogue between drama and film] (2011) discussed Williams's works from the subversive point of the intermedial break providing a critical foundation to elaborate a specifically visual and filmic redefinition of the concept into an operative term. In his approach to Williams' cinematic output, he mapped the adaptation processes not only on the level of textual transfer, but also on the level of the film industry of the day and the cultural context that paved the way to the birth of the new art film tendency in the US, which grew out of the Production Code (PCA) era. Applying a transgenerational and, thus, transmedial approach, Dragon sheds light on an underlying adaptation technique deployed to outsmart the PCA and set the trend for later adaptations of Broadway plays in Hollywood. His recent project, *The Thirdspace of Photography*, concerns the framing of photographic thought beyond the dichotomies that abound in classical and contemporary views on photographic representation: critical approaches operating on the analog/digital, practice/theory, or the photo as death/progress divisions. The topic arose from his preoccupation: the post-cinematic turn in mainstream US films, especially concerning the return of the "cinema of attractions" that reflects on the ontology of the image, especially its mediality and its relation to reality. As Dragon argues in "Platform-mozi: Gazdasági, strukturális és formai konvergencia a hollywoodi kammerszínházfilmekben" [Platform cinema: Economic, structural and formal convergence in Hollywood blockbusters] (*Metropolis* 2017, 38-49), the visual and structural changes in recent Hollywood movies are reflective of the larger scale shifts in the cultural economy, arising from the transition from the late twentieth-century capitalist, neo-conservative mode of production to the current model of platform economy (47-49). As he observed earlier in his study on "Digitized Spaces of Memories and Cultural Heritage: The Future of Archives" (*AMERICANA*, Spring 2015), the change in archival and production

technologies in culture, the move to an entirely digital prosumerism, posits new questions both in terms of the techné and episteme.

Réka M Cristian's research and teaching areas include modern American literature and American modernism, theories of American Studies, film theory, the American film and cross-cultural exchanges of the Americas in American literature and film. She is currently the chair of the American Studies Department, co-chair with Zsuzsanna Csikós of the University's Inter-American Research Center and founder and general editor, together with Zoltán Dragon, of the Szeged-based open access, online Americana publications (journal and ebook publishing). Her book, *Cultural Vistas and Sites of Identity. Essays on Literature, Film, and American Studies* (2011), reflects on an array of American identities assembled in a heterogeneous compilation of New American Studies through examples taken from literature (Rosario and Aurora Levins Morales, Paula Vogel, Edward Albee) and film (José Quintero's and Robert Allan Ackerman's *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone*, Mike Nichols's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, Julie Taymor's *Frida*, and Alejandro Gonzales Iñárritu's *Babel*). Cristian and Dragon authored *Encounters of the Filmic Kind. Guidebook to Film Theories* (2008), a pragmatic guide to theories of film and the cinematic world, written in an interdisciplinary approach with plural modes of addressing films. She was also the editor of *Beyond the Bastard Art. Essays on American Drama and Theatre* (2012), a collection of essays on various issues related to American drama and theatre, adaptations, and on the Hungarian reception of American plays. Together with Andrea Kökény and György E. Szőnyi, Cristian co-edited *Confluences. Essays Mapping the Manitoba-Szeged Partnership* (2017), a volume comprising the results of a ten-year collaboration between researchers from the University of Manitoba, Winnipeg and the University of Szeged. More recently, she co-edited with Zoltán Dragon and András Lénárt the ebook *Transnational Americas. Home(s), Borders, Transgressions* (2019), which gathered the results of many American and inter-American research centers worldwide using various approaches focused on the concepts of home and borders by providing a broad, multidisciplinary discussion on the exploration of boundaries of different kinds, migrations across geographical locations as well as the borderlands of identities and lives connected with the notion of home—all placed in a transnational, inter-American context. This volume was one of many common projects the American Studies Department completed in the past five years together with the Department of Hispanic Studies.

In forming interdepartmental and research collaborations, new technologies played and continue to play a crucial role. Two of the main problems researchers in the field of American Studies in Hungary and in Central Eastern Europe faced at the turn of the millennium were limited access to available secondary literature and limited forum for exposure. While massive digitization of scholarly texts had been underway ever since the end of the 1990s (in Szeged, the University library was one of the pioneers at the time), academic publishers and scholarly traditions slowed the process of adopting new technologies in both the consumption and the production of the texts. While the World Wide Web was available, the academic community eyed it suspiciously as a pool of unsolicited and uncontrolled information, and was not prepared to adapt to or adopt the possibilities that came with this new platform. With innovative technologies introduced by the day, it was becoming clear from the beginning of the 2000s that the future for academic output has to be ultimately

aligned with new technologies. Feeling detached from the circulation of international literature to a certain extent, the Department of American Studies decided to boost proactively publications in its own specialty and launched a non-profit, virtually no-budget online journal in 2005, the *AMERICANA – E-Journal of American Studies in Hungary* with Réka M. Cristian and Zoltán Dragon as founding editors. The name of the journal was inspired by Don DeLillo's 1971 novel *Americana*, which seemed to declare aptly the aim of the endeavor: to go out and search for the meaning of current topics and collect pieces of knowledge from both emerging and established researchers in the field to define what "America" meant in Szeged for the colleagues from our immediate vicinity and from around the globe. In a bold move, following the most progressive ideas of academic publishing, the first issue was released online, subscribing to the then emergent idea of radical open access.

In 2005, being solely online and publishing with open access seemed both a genuinely naive step and a complete mismatch with the academic tradition of the region. Even with a continuously rising number of citations, unique visitors, and references online, the print tradition, well-established in scholarly perception, held fast. It took time for this to change. Recently, the requirements of open access publishing policies at more and more universities across Europe together with world refereed journals' policies aligned with a new academic agenda gained terrain for more and more publications online. As early as the mid-2000s, the American Studies program at the University of Szeged introduced courses and topics related to the increasing digitization of culture both in terms of production and consumption, with critical reflection on theoretical levels as well. The pervasive presence of new media applications in the midst of a new generation of students necessitated an exploration of contemporary technology and its effect on our definitions of culture and the "cultural software" (Balkin) that operates as an underlying logic. It is this line of looking at culture today, weaving teaching methodology, topics from various fields of knowledge within American Studies, and the academic output via our e-publishing that constitute the gist of the contribution of the programs offered by the Department of American Studies towards the greater academic community.

In this context, *AMERICANA – E-Journal of American Studies in Hungary* quickly became a forum for scholars prepared to join the conversation on topics related to the field in a transnational and interdisciplinary manner. The double-blind peer-reviewed system for publication along with distinguished members of the advisory board from all around the world, across a multitude of disciplines related to the field of American Studies, ensures the level of academic quality. As of 2005, the e-journal has been putting out two issues per year and topped it occasionally with special editions focusing on given areas; as of 2019, the journal publishes one issue per year. On average, the number of unique visitors who do not stop at clicking on specific essays but spend some time with them, download and interact with the texts approaches 50,000 with more than 73,000 pageloads in a typical year. The top ten countries users of the journal website come from are the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Canada, India, Germany, Australia, Peru, Hungary, France, and Spain, following the widening of the scope from a strictly American Studies perspective to an inter-American interest.

In 2011, with another bold bolt of enthusiasm, the Department of American Studies added another publishing label publishing label to the enterprise: *AMERICANA*

eBooks, a digital-first shed for books and longread form essays that go beyond the length of traditional journal articles. From the onset, the declared mission of this type of publication venture has been to initiate collaboration among scholars of various academic and cultural backgrounds and to encourage editors of proceedings and volumes as well as authors of monographs to put their works online for a wider readership around the globe. To encourage readers, this publishing label offers ebook versions (published under the Creative Commons licence) of all of its releases in the open source format standard (.epub) as well as probably the most widely used and accepted industry standard proprietary format (.mobi), alongside possibilities of print-on-demand (POD). *AMERICANA eBooks* has solicited manuscripts in English (being the primary language), but also in Hungarian and Spanish to introduce the underrepresented field of American and Inter-American Studies for the Hungarian and European audience and also to let a variety of authors find their unique voices through more than one language. A number of important inter-American undertakings of this type include the volume by Zsuzsanna Csikós and Ágnes Judit Szilágyi (eds.) *Román és vértanúság. Nők a hispán világ történetében* [Romance and martyrdom. Women in the history of the Hispanic world] published in 2015, by Judit Ágnes Kádár and András Tarnóc (eds.) *La Frontera. Reflections on Borders in American Culture* (2016), and the most recent release, *Transnational Americas. Home(s), Borders, Transgressions* (2019), edited by Réka M. Cristian, Zoltán Dragon, and András Lénárt. Quite early on, the imprint also started to release literary books: either original novels, such as *A Life Less Damnable* by Jack Roberts (2013), short stories and poems, like *Having Said That* by Jack Roberts (2014), or translations of both Hungarian authors into English – Miklós Radnóti's *Eclogues and Other Poems*, translated by Jack Roberts, (2015), András Sütő's *The Suza Wedding*, translated by Csilla Bertha and Donald E. Morse (2015), and Danilo Kiš's *An American Story. Uncollected Fiction*, translated by John K. Cox (2016) – and works written originally in English and translated into Hungarian, such as the Métis Canadian playwright Ian Ross's *Isten engem úgy segélyen!* [*FareWell*] translated by Zsanett Barna and Nóra Borthaiser (2011). On a yearly basis from the start of 2011, *AMERICANA eBooks* serves more than 3,700 unique visitors for the 26 books that have been published in two ebook formats (with optional print-on-demand), which amounts to more than 46,000 unique downloads and counting. The top visiting countries for the *AMERICANA eBooks* are Hungary, the United States of America, France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Finland, China, Romania, Austria, and the Czech Republic, which shows a strengthening of regional interest from the academic community. The challenges digital-first publishing faces and the road to take are clear: research methodologies involving a multitude of topics require new technologies to showcase results and, as such, online academic spaces and digital formats have had to introduce forms and frameworks that conform to the established traditions and requirements of academic excellence, as well as making space for more contemporary methodologies and modes of presenting new research results.

The internationalization of American Studies and the joint research venture resulting in new avenues in Inter-American Studies needed enhanced collaboration within the immediate academic community to form a strong and cohesive core for academic stability and to open up to regional and international research options with an aim of strengthening ties and creating research opportunities for scholars from all around the globe. A strong collaboration of this kind with colleagues from

the nearby academic community was established by the Department of American Studies with the Department of Hispanic Studies in Szeged.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the Hispanic world was a rather unknown territory for Hungarian intellectuals, but a number of Latin American events (such as the Cuban revolution), the appearance of several dictatorships throughout Central and South America, and the worldwide popularity of Latin American literature provided an unprecedented interest in the region. Scientific research and education related to the Hispanic world have a long and unique tradition at the University of Szeged. In the effervescent year 1968, the Department of Medieval Universal History and History of Latin America was established under the supervision and leadership of Tibor Wittman, founder of the Hungarian scientific investigations on Latin America and the author of the first Hungarian monograph on the history of this region. Wittman's work which focuses on Latin America's role in universal history, the Cuban plantations, the Spanish absolute monarchy and the Spanish intellectual history indicates also the main directions in which he guided his students' research (Anderle 41-69).

Following the founder's footsteps, Ádám Anderle created the Research Center on the History of Latin America at the same university in 1982. This was the first research group of this kind in Hungary. The center achieved international recognition in 1987 when its members organized the Eighth Conference of the Association of Latin American Historians of Europe (AHILA / Asociación de Historiadores Latinoamericanistas Europeos) in Szeged on the theme of "Church, Religion, and Society in Latin American history (1492-1945)" with the participation of more than 200 international scholars. Between 1987 and 1990, Anderle was the president of AHILA and the Szeged-based research center gained wide recognition both in Europe and in Latin America owing to its publications on the history and politics of Cuba and Peru along with extensive research projects on the history of Hungarian emigration to Latin America. In addition to scientific research, the center was also instrumental in establishing programs and other teaching activities and helped in launching the History of Latin America specialization for History major students. As a result, some of the students joined the research center and soon turned teachers of what was to become the Department of Hispanic Studies (Csikós 11).

In 1990, the University of Szeged emerged as the second university in Hungary (after the University Eötvös Loránd in Budapest) offering training for future Spanish teachers. After the fall of the iron curtain, there was a great demand for teaching Western languages, including Spanish, in Hungary. In 1993, the Research Center on the History of Latin America was transformed into what is today the Department of Hispanic Studies. Between 1994 and 2015, more than 500 students graduated from there. Right after its foundation, the research work of the Department of Hispanic Studies was incorporated into the scientific activity of the Faculty of Arts History Doctoral School, where Ádám Anderle initiated the History of the Hispanic World program that focused on the modern and contemporary history of the region (Anderle 59-61). Until 2019, 28 students have earned their PhD in this program. Furthermore, between 1999 and 2002, the Department of Hispanic Studies also housed the Hispanic Studies Research Group of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, which focuses primarily on the relations between Spain and Hungary.

Over the past 25 years, the faculty of the Department of Hispanic Studies has considerably changed although it has retained the thematic continuity; the work of

the retired colleagues was taken over by their ex-students, who are also carrying out high-level scientific and educational work. Almost all of them have earned a number of prestigious Hungarian and international scholarships and grants. Furthermore, Ádám Anderle was decorated with the Spanish Order of Civil Merit in 1997 and with the Commander of Number of the Order of Isabella the Catholic in 2008, while the present head of the Department, Zsuzsanna Csikós was granted the Commander of Orden de Isabel la Católica / Order of Isabella the Catholic in 2018 (Csikós 11-12).

The Department of Hispanic Studies of the University of Szeged (webpage: http://hispanisztikaszeged.hu/?page_id=161) is not a conventional department of foreign philology, and even its name indicates the founders' assertive mission. Hispanic Studies goes well beyond language-teaching and philology. It covers several scientific fields and includes all regions of the Hispanic world. In the last twenty-five years the members of the department have found the research and teaching balance between different areas and, as a result, the department has become a modern, internationally recognized training center with a unique profile in Hungary due to offering courses in the field of social studies as well. In the teaching and scientific activity of the Department of Hispanic Studies, Latin America and Spain are equally important; students can obtain in-depth knowledge of the history, politics, literature, linguistics, culture, ethnography, cinema, arts, and international relations of the Hispanic world, the relations between the European Union, Spain, and various countries of Latin America. Likewise, the relations between Hungary and the Hispanic world receive a special attention in both research and teaching, while language courses give students the opportunity to become acquainted with the language of tourism, journalism, and business alike. In addition, other languages and cultures of the Iberian Peninsula are also present in our department's curriculum: we also have Catalan, Basque, and Galician Studies (Berta 15-16) with native speakers teaching these; they work as language teachers on the basis of agreements signed with the Spanish State, the Catalan Ramon Llull Institute, and the Basque Etxepare Institute. Besides the Spanish BA and MA majors, the Department participates in the modules of the Teacher Training (Teaching Spanish as a Foreign Language) and in the Translation and Interpreting MA Program. Furthermore, the department has also created a minor in Spanish American Studies for students specializing in the history, political system, culture, and international relations of Latin America. At the level of the university, the department cooperates with other doctoral schools including the PhD schools in history, literature, and linguistics. Owing to international mobility programs and scholarships, such as Erasmus+, CEEPUS, and Stipendium Hungaricum, the department often hosts foreign students and scholars, while Hungarian colleagues and students frequently travel to foreign universities thanks to international agreements and memorandums of understanding. The department plays a prominent role in the activity of the Center for Hungarian Studies established at the University of Huelva, Spain, with the support of the Hungarian Ministry of Human Resources.

Throughout the decades, both retired and active members of the department have become well-known researchers of Hispanic Studies both in Hungary and abroad. The founder of the Department, Ádám Anderle (1943-2016) is still considered one of the main researchers in Hispanic Studies, not only in Hungary, but also in Europe and in Latin America. He authored 40 books, edited 41 volumes, and wrote around 150 essays, articles and book chapters, both in Hungarian and in Spanish. One of his

internationally renowned books, *Movimientos políticos en el Peru entre las dos guerras mundiales* (1985), was a pioneering text about Peruvian political movements.

Two of the Department's now retired colleagues still continue their scientific activities: Ágnes Tóth, whose article "El veguero en la historia de Cuba" (*Acta Historica*, 1980: 3-16) is a milestone essay for many Latin Americanists, specializes in the history and social problems of Spanish America, especially Cuba and Mexico. Mária Dornbach has been active in the field of ethnography and published an acclaimed monograph on the Yoruba cults in Cuba entitled *Orishas en soperas. Los cultos de origen yoruba en Cuba* (1993) as well as on literature, and currently she is one of the most notable Spanish literary translators in Hungary.

The faculty members of the department conduct investigations in various fields and are members of several prestigious international associations and have been visiting professors in various foreign (mostly Spanish) universities. Zsuzsanna Csikós, head of the Department since 2014, has taught several generations of students of Hispanic philology since the 1990-1991 academic year; her research focuses on both historical and literary issues with special interest in Hungarian-Hispanic literary relations. One of her major works on the topic of Spanish-Hungarian literary relations is "La recepción del boom hispanoamericano en Hungría: algunas aportaciones" (*Cuadernos del CILHA*, 2018, 17-33). Tibor Berta's investigations on the history of the Romance languages in the Iberian Peninsula, for example his monograph on *Clíticos e infinitivo. Contribución a la historia de la promoción de clíticos en español y en portugués* (2003), is an internationally recognized work among Hispanic linguists; he was also the director of the department between 2008 and 2014. Veronika Praefort is an expert in Spanish language and methodology courses; she is the author of one of the most widely used Spanish grammar workbooks in Hungarian higher education, *Práctica gramatical española*, Vols. I-II (2003). Eszter Katona, Katalin Jancsó, and András Lénárt belong to the younger generation: they graduated in Hispanic philology at this department and later received their PhD in the History of the Hispanic World program. Since then, Eszter Katona has shifted her main area of interest from history to literature and she does research and teaching on the works of Federico García Lorca, contemporary Spanish dramas, and the reception of Spanish stage plays in Hungary, a complex phenomenon she discussed in *Así que pasen sesenta años. Los dramas de Federico García Lorca en los teatros húngaros, 1955-2015* (2015). Katalin Jancsó, alongside her historical research focusing on indigenous minorities, immigration, and travel literature of Hungarians in Latin America, which she examined in "Húngaros en los trópicos: Rosti Pál y otros viajeros en el Caribe y en América Central en la segunda parte del siglo XIX" (*Acta Hispanica*, 2013, 73-82), is also specialized in the methodology of teaching Spanish as a foreign language. András Lénárt's research interests include Spanish and Latin American contemporary history and cinema, the relation between film studies and universal history, as well as inter-American studies; one of his most cited essays on Hispanic cinema is "Hispanic Hollywood. Spanish-language American films in the 1920s and 1930s" (*AMERICANA*, Fall 2013).

The thirty volumes published by the members of the department together with the organization or co-organization of nine international conferences reflect the academic activity of the staff. Furthermore, in 1996, the department's indexed scientific journal, *Acta Hispanica* was established and now it is available both in print and online, while the recently founded *Serie Didáctica* focuses on methodological topics.

The department's third journal, *Homo Hispanicus* has been publishing students' poems, translations, short stories, and interviews since 1994.

Every second year the department organizes an international conference with the participation of researchers from Spain, Latin America, and Hungary's neighboring countries, with the material of these conferences usually published in a volume. For example, the department organized a thematic seminar on the life and works of the Peruvian intellectual José Carlos Mariátegui in 1994, another seminar on the Cuban national hero José Martí in 1995, and held conferences that examined the history of the Gypsies and the Jews in the context of the Hispanic world, and also the reaction to the Hungarian revolution of 1956. The Department of Hispanic Studies also organized a congress on the 200th anniversary of the independence of Latin American states and, in the autumn of 2015, an international conference on democratic transitions in the Hispanic world and in Central Europe. In 2019, the same department organized the XIX Conference of FIEALC (La Federación Internacional de Estudios Sobre América Latina y el Caribe/International Federation of Latin American and Caribbean Studies) with more than 400 participants from 41 countries. Moreover, from 2019 and 2021, a member of the department, András Lénárt, holds the presidency of the FIEALC.

The Szeged-based Inter-American Research Center (webpage: <http://centro.interamerican.hu/en/>) was founded in the fall of 2015 by the joint effort of the Department of American Studies and the Department of Hispanic Studies with the aim to enhance the complex study of the American continent through common conferences, publications, group and individual research, and lecture series on the Americas as an interconnected area of study by focusing on various topics including Native issues, immigration and migration, transnational and trans-regional subjects, gender and environmental questions, multiculturalism, political connections, economic cooperation, American literatures and their contexts, visual cultures of the Americas, current linguistics, and many more, with the hope to build bridges of cooperation with local, regional, national, and international partners working in the area study of the Americas. The bilingual website of the research center aims to foreground the active collaboration between the departments and the joint projects that reach beyond the institutional bounds, such as conferences, public talks, or publications. The site also played a crucial role in organizing the 2017 conference and its functionality was extended to include a mobile application that enabled quick push notifications for participants as well as encouraging instant communication and helping to form long-term research cooperation by way of facilitating interaction and exchange of ideas on the spot.

This collaboration also sets to analyze thoroughly the relations between the countries of the American continent through a historical, cultural, literary, and diplomatic approach. With this view in mind, in 2017 the Research Center organized its first international conference, "Transnational Americas: Home(s), Borders and Transgressions," with several volumes in both printed and e-book formats published afterwards, as well as a special anniversary bilingual issue of *AMERICANA. E-Journal of American Studies in Hungary* (Lénárt 20-21). This cooperation is a milestone for the research on Americas in Hungary because this is the first time that the entire American continent and inter-American relations received thorough scientific attention within a research center in the region set up with a strong, viable interdepartmental cooperation.

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