

Migrating Memories: Central Europe in Canada
Volume 1 – Literary Anthology

Editor-in-chief: Vesna Lopičić (Serbia)

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Technical Editor: Milan Randelović (Serbia)

Cover & typo: Darko Jovanović (Serbia)

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Contact: www.cecanstud.cz
ceacs@phil.muni.cz

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Commerce International Canada

List of Contributors

BULGARIA

Main contributor: Alexandra Glavanakova-Yaneva
Bruce Whitfield

CROATIA

Main contributor: Gordan Matas

THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Main contributor: Květa Kunešová
Daniel Paul Sampey

HUNGARY

Main contributor: Mária Palla

ROMANIA

Main contributor: Crina Bud
Ana Olos
Monica Bottez
Dana Puiu

SERBIA

Main contributor: Vesna Lopičić
Dušan Stamenković
Milena Kostić
Tanja Cvetković
Nataša Bakić-Mirić

SLOVAKIA

Main contributor: Jana Javorčíková
Lucia Otrisalová
Consultants: Ilja Čičvák
Peter Petro
Translators and editors: Michael Dove
Richard Betts
Zuzana Hlubinová
Katarína Koreňová

SLOVENIA

Main contributor: Urška Strle
Igor Maver
Jason Blake
Marko Farič

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MIGRATING MEMORIES 1: Diaspora Making Its Story in Canada

In his exceptional book, *If This Is Your Land, Where Are Your Stories?*, Edward Chamberlin poses the following questions: “Can one land ever really be home to more than one people? To native and newcomer, for instance? Or to Arab and Jew, Hutu and Tutsi, Albanian and Kosovar, Turk and Kurd? Can the world ever be home to all of us? I think so. But not until we have reimagined Them and Us” (Chamberlin, 1). Though universally relevant, the issue that Chamberlin raises is perhaps most pertinent to Canada, a country that includes both native and newcomer, and where the notions of “newcomer” and “native” raise further questions: by *newcomer* do we mean the early French and British settlers (or rather, all Europeans who came to the new world) in relation to First Nations People? And/or does *newcomer* refer only to relatively recent immigrants to Canada in relation to those who arrived earlier? Such questions further lead to the logical question: when does one start to *feel* “Canadian,” or when does an immigrant begin identifying with his/her adoptive country to the extent that he/she feels *truly* “Canadian;” for how long is an immigrant merely a *newcomer*? And similarly, can Canada become a home for all, and how is this feasible? Chamberlin perhaps gives the best single answer to these questions, however laconic: “not until we have reimagined Them and Us.” Such sentiment was also the goal envisioned when we first imagined collecting the texts included in these two Diaspora volumes.

All the credit for birthing this idea in the minds of Canadianists throughout Central Europe (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, Hungary, Romania, Serbia, and Bulgaria), for imagining a project that would represent the diasporas of these eight countries in Canada, goes to Dr. Ana Olos. Dr. Olos realised the significance of recording the oral testimonies of newcomers to Canada and using them as oral histories that could perhaps tell a more complex and even more truthful story than the official history books of Central European immigrations to Canada; she realised the significance of the varied experiences of such people who were driven by various reasons from different parts of the world and with miscellaneous ambitions to Canada. During a brainstorming meeting of the Executive Committee of the Central European Association for Canadian Studies (CEACS) in 2006, Dr. Olos’ original idea was developed into a comprehensive project under the name “Central Europe in Canada: CEACS Diaspora Project.” In 2007, a project team was created – the same year the Diaspora Project was approved for funding by the ICCS – and the team met again in 2008 and 2009. The results of these labours are presented in two volumes: a collection of literary