



Scholars share current work-in-progress in the fields of Memory Studies and Trauma Studies (Memory Studies Association), with discussion and helpful insights to follow. All are welcome.

April 23, 2026 at 10:30 am EST

Anna Menyhért is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Anna Menyhért's Zoom Meeting

Time: Apr 23, 2026 16:30 Vienna

Join Zoom Meeting

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Meeting ID: 853 2983 4979

Passcode: 480028

Presenters:

Kelsey Madsen (Grove City College in Pennsylvania)

Andrea Fedorková (Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice)

Kelsey Madsen, "Interrogating the *Roman National* (National Novel): Genre and Ethics of Family Narratives in Contemporary French Literature"

Abstract: Looking specifically at books written by contemporary French novelists reflecting on or processing traumatic 20th-century events in their parents' past (i.e., la *Retirada* [refugees fleeing from Franco's Spain to France], WWII, the Algerian War), I will examine the narrative strategies the authors engage in as they complicate a simplified and romanticized view of the nation. The latter view is referred to in French discourse as the *roman national* (national novel) or the *récit national* (national narrative); note that this functions like the concept of "national myth" – the terms are abstract and do not refer to an actual written text. So, how do novelists endeavor to question the amorphous *roman national* with

their own literary contributions, especially narratives (novels, non-fiction, or an ambiguous hybrid) that are based on events witnessed by their family members? And what are the ethical dimensions of engaging in a novelized or autofictionalized narrative? This can draw a veil of privacy over familial specifics, but does it risk destabilizing the reliability or perceived veracity of the text? To what extent do authors make implicit or explicit ethical demands of their readers? Authors under consideration will include Patrick Modiano, Lydie Salvayre, and Zahia Rahmani, among others.

Kelsey Madsen is an Associate Professor of French at Grove City College in Pennsylvania (USA). She grew up in the US, Germany, and Australia, and earned her PhD in French from the University of Oklahoma. Her research is in 20th and 21st-century French-language literature and culture, with a focus on historical memory, immigration, monuments, and national identity. Her article "Monuments, Tombs, and Texts in Zahia Rahmani's *Moze*" was published in *Women in French Studies*. In recent years, she has led students in a project to translate additional French letters and documents pertaining to Jewish residents of the Somme region of Occupied France for Dr. David Rosenberg's website and exhibit www.jewsofthesomme.com; the translation project aims to engage another generation in the act of transmission of Holocaust memory.

Andrea Fedorková: Trauma in contemporary Slovak prose.

This paper presents a work in progress focused on the representation of trauma in contemporary Slovak prose. Although trauma has become a prominent theme in recent literature, it has not yet been systematically examined within Slovak literary scholarship. The project addresses this gap by analyzing how traumatic experience is narrated, which types of trauma are most frequently depicted, and which narrative strategies are used in their representation. The study is situated within the Slovak historical and cultural context, where literary engagement with major twentieth-century traumas—such as the Second World War and the communist regime—emerged relatively late, particularly after 1989. Contemporary prose reflects an ongoing tension between memory, trauma, and narration, as well as between what can be articulated and what resists expression. The theoretical framework draws on trauma studies (e.g. Cathy Caruth, Dominick LaCapra, Aleida Assmann, Astrid Erll) and seeks to incorporate cognitive and semiotic approaches, which remain underexplored in the Slovak context. As a preliminary step, the research proposes a working classification of trauma in contemporary Slovak prose, distinguishing between historical, individual, and ethnic trauma. At the same time, my current research focuses on the representation of trauma and sexual abuse in works by authors such as Ivana Gibová, Nicol Hochholczerová, and Kristián Lazarčík. The paper concludes by outlining the next stages of the project and raising methodological questions concerning the study of trauma in literature.

Andrea Fedorková is a postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Slovak Studies, Slavic Philologies and Communication at the Faculty of Arts of the Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice. In her research, she focuses on contemporary Slovak prose and the concept of the literary character. She has long been engaged with questions of how literature represents psychological states, identity and memory in relation to the aesthetics and poetics of narration. Currently, she is examining artistic approaches to depicting trauma in contemporary literature, and their interconnection with narrative strategies and textual categories. She defended her dissertation entitled *On the Problem of the Character in Slovak Prose after 2000* (in the works of I. Dobráková and M. Kopcsay), in 2021. In addition to her research, she is active in teaching and regularly publishes scholarly studies and reviews on contemporary Slovak literature in both domestic and international academic journals.