

## **Mata Hari or the Body of the Nation? Interpretations of Katalin Karády**

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**Fame** has a strange way of making individuals more opaque. Audiences assume they know the stars whose faces they see and whose personal lives they follow in popular media. However, the process of creating public personas can significantly alter the individual. Stars both make themselves and are made through media, sometimes in a symbiotic manner, other times in an adversarial one. Such is the case with the Hungarian songstress and actress Katalin Karády. This analysis of the characterizations of Karády, which emerges from a myriad of disjointed descriptions and biographic confusion about the actress, is case in point. There is much we do not know, and thus much legend, surrounding the woman who dominated the Hungarian box office and whose voice reigned over popular music during the Second World War. It is precisely this contradiction — this dominant public personality with multiple semi-private and private personas — that make Karády a superb subject for a brief study of symbolism, nation and gender in the context of a changing Hungary.

Who was this Katalin Karády? This is not an easy question to answer. The story of Katalin Karády, née Kanczler, could have been dreamed up in Hollywood. Karády was born in the Kőbánya section of Budapest in early December 1910, the youngest of seven children born to Ferenc Kanczler and Rozália Lőrinc. The household was “despotic”; her shoemaker father prohibited reading the newspaper, visiting the theatre, and going to the movies. As an adolescent, she received scholarships which allowed her to study abroad, mainly in Switzerland, and briefly escape her repressive home life.<sup>1</sup> Drawn to the stage, she enrolled in acting classes in 1936, when she was 25, but made little progress until the film and theater journalist Zoltán Egyed discovered her singing in a Budapest café in 1938. Convinced of her talent, and the need for new non-Jewish talent due to the stultifying effects of the First Jewish Law, Egyed took Karády’s career into his hands. At his suggestion, she worked with Ilona

Aczél, one of Hungary's most renowned acting coaches, whose greatest pupil prior to Karády was Zita Perczel, the star of one of the most well-known 1930s Hungarian films, *The Dream Car [A meseautó]*. Egyed also suggested that Katalin change her name to Karády, and he helped arrange her debut in 1939 at the Pest Theater in the Somerset Maugham play, "The Lady and the Devil." Her beauty and her voice, from that point on displayed on several of Budapest's most prominent stages, launched her into the world of motion pictures. Between 1939 and 1948, she starred in twenty features and several short films, making her, according to Jenő Király, "the greatest star in Hungarian film history, the first and last of [Hungary's] great divas, our film goddess."<sup>2</sup> Yet her activities and roles also earned the disdain of the radical right, who blamed the actress for spreading the "Jewish pestilence."<sup>3</sup> Her film career was greatly hindered by her 1944 arrests by the Gestapo, for her pro-Allied leanings, and then by the Arrow Cross for her supposed "defeatism" and lack of patriotism.<sup>4</sup> When the tide of war turned and the Red Army occupied Budapest in 1945, Karády again found herself detained, this time by the Communist secret police. Though she returned to the stage and starred in a handful of films after the war, authorities heavily restricted her professional activities. From the late 1940s on, Communist apparatchiks refused her roles in Budapest's top theaters, condemning her for having become a star during the Horthy era and for the types of roles and politics she chose. In 1949, they would forbid reprises of her films. Humiliated, Karády fled Hungary with the renowned singer Oliver Lantos in February 1951, settling temporarily in Salzburg in 1951.<sup>5</sup> Eventually, she emigrated to the US in 1968 after years as a peripatetic in Western Europe (Austria, Switzerland, Belgium) and South America (Brazil).<sup>6</sup> She rarely appeared on stage thereafter, working in relative obscurity in a Madison Avenue hat shop. Her short but storied career in Hungary has made her the object of great affection and admiration, not to mention substantial gendered mythologizing.<sup>7</sup> This Hungarian brunette was, as András Csont asserts, "just as much emblematic of her times" as was Marilyn Monroe for post-war America.<sup>8</sup>

This article will consider various perspectives on Karády and in the process discuss the symbolism of these separate narratives, the ways in which Karády was and was not exemplary of her times. As a film giant in a small country, a *femme fatale* rumoured to be a lesbian, a spy, an émigré, a subject of historical analysis, and even one of the "Righteous among the Nations," Karády inscribed upon herself — and was ascribed by others — a range of meanings. Karády's complexities and the dilemmas she posed, I suggest, help explain how the body of the actress became the canvas upon

which she and other Hungarians painted various narratives of nation and gendered behavior.

The first, and the least complicated, portrayal of Karády was as movie star. The youngest of seven children, Karády arrived on stage and screen at a time when the Hungarian cultural industries were in a state of crisis. In the midst of the application of the Second Jewish Law and the purges of creative Jewish talent this entailed, Hungarian film and theater were desperate for new, attractive potential.<sup>9</sup> “This type of actress, which she is capable of becoming, is greatly needed on stage,” wrote Aladár Schöpflin in *Nyugat*.<sup>10</sup> Karády, whose husky voice drew comparisons with Greta Garbo, quickly became a box office winner, and like the stars of her day, a vehicle for defining gendered fashions, patterns of consumption, and behavioral norms.<sup>11</sup> What distinguished Karády was that she transcended and subverted norms, displaying a willingness to tackle roles rarely seen in Hungarian productions, becoming Hungary’s first full-fledged vamp, sex symbol, and liberated woman. Her breakthrough role came in the Lajos Zilahy-written *Halálos tavasz* [Deadly Spring], in which she starred opposite Pál Jávör, the Hungarian Errol Flynn facsimile with whom she frequently found herself paired.<sup>12</sup> In *Deadly Spring*, which premiered in December 1939, Karády played the empowered and uncontrollable *femme fatale* role she would often reprise, driving her co-star Jávör to commit suicide by refusing to commit her love to him alone. In 1940, Karády played Queen Elizabeth, the title character in Félix Podmaniczky’s film *Erzsébet királyné* [Queen Elizabeth] by the same title. In this fictionalized historical film, the daughter of a Hungarian revolutionary convinces Karády’s Elizabeth to learn Hungarian and to back Hungary’s desire for autonomy from Vienna. Karády’s busiest years were 1942-43, when she starred in 14 films. In no less than 9 roles, she played the seductress or dangerous love interest: *Deceived* [*Csalódás*] (1942); *A Heart Stops* [*Egy szív megáll*] (1942); *Deadly Kiss* [*Halálos csók*] (1942); *Guard-post in the Suburbs* [*Külvárosi őrszoba*] (1942); *Opium Waltz* [*Ópiumkeringő*] (1942); *Sirius* [*Szírusz*] (1942); *Machita* (1943); *Szováthy Éva* [*Eva Szováthy*] (1943); *Something Adrift in the Water* [*Valamit visz a víz*] (1943).

In the 1943 film *Machita*, Karády plays a spy from an unknown enemy country dispatched to Budapest in search of plans for a new anti-aircraft gun. Performing as a nightclub dancer under the name Machita, she must use her perfect Hungarian and her other charms to seduce three engineers. Naturally, two of the three are putty in her hands, but the third, company director György Szávody, proves more difficult. As he resists,

her desire for him grows, and she soon is unable to suppress the feelings she has for him. The always competent police inform Szávody of Machita's real identity. Despite this, his love for her appears to trump his love for country, and they flee to the countryside to deliver the blueprints to Machita's handlers. However, in the decisive scene, the world turns right again, both in terms of gendered and national norms. It is Machita who gives in to her heart, abetted by a true Hungarian who, when rubber meets the road, would never betray *his* country. She refuses to turn over the designs for the gun, is shot by the other spies, and dies in György's arms. Thus, the love of country triumphs through the stronger, male, sex, whereas the foreign and female "other" is erased as a potential threat to the national body, but only after she herself is seduced by Hungary's intrinsic allure.

It is, perhaps, this role that defined the myth of Karády more than any other; perhaps because it did, to an extent, accurately reflect a portion of her private life. As she was filming *Machita*, Karády was, in fact, involved in the world of real espionage. Numerous accounts of the activities of Colonel General István Ujszászy, the chief of the Hungarian General Staff's domestic counter-espionage department [*Vkf-2*] from 1939 to 1942 and from 1942 to 1944, the head of the larger internal security apparatus subordinate to the Interior Minister known as the State Protection Center [*Államvédelmi Központ*], confirm that Karády and Ujszászy were engaged in a public love affair that Karády assumed would lead to marriage after the war.<sup>13</sup> Ujszászy, who had contacts with *Abwehr* Chief Admiral Wilhelm Canaris dating back to the late 1930s, with the OSS, and with a highly secretive American intelligence unit known as "the Pond," was, if not an outright opponent of the Nazis, someone who believed that the Allies would ultimately triumph.<sup>14</sup> Ujszászy protected jailed Communists and opponents of the government from execution; and despite numerous opportunities to flee, remained in Hungary, playing a significant role in the attempted negotiations with the Allies to extricate Hungary from the war. Specifically, Ujszászy was the crucial contact in *Operation Sparrow*, the early March 1944 airdrop of American intelligence officers into Hungary to meet with government officials to discuss Hungary's potential withdrawal from the Second World War.<sup>15</sup> This plan, devised by the Office of Strategic Services, the precursor to the CIA, and overseen by OSS head Allen Dulles, was the mission depicted in Péter Bacsó's 2001 film, *The Smouldering Cigarette* [*A hamvadó cigarettavég*].<sup>16</sup> I will discuss this film momentarily, but first I wish to concentrate on Karády's role in *Operation Sparrow*. OSS records indicate that the meeting between

American intelligence and Ujszászy might have occurred in Karády's home.<sup>17</sup> While this report's claim that the Nazis discovered three supposedly English parachutists, executed them, and may have shot Karády as well are patently false, certain facts are less dubious.<sup>18</sup> Karády took an active part in *Operation Sparrow* and likely had a continued role in espionage through contacts with American military intelligence.<sup>19</sup>

Was there a division between the real and the screen versions of Karády, the personas of Machita and the actress who did have a confirmed role in the behind-the-scenes drama of the war? Imre Hecht, a Hungarian émigré film distributor who knew Karády personally, told me that he assumed Karády to be a spy.<sup>20</sup> That Karády had an affair with General Ujszászy, as I mentioned, was an open secret. In a recently declassified narrative in the possession of the CIA, the author identified as Tibor Revay alleges this affair was far more than one of love. Public opinion at the time, according to the journalist András Korom and the historian Szabolcs Szita, held that Karády "converted" Ujszászy into an anti-fascist, although Szita dismisses this as myth. Both Korom and Szita agree that Karády was responsible for arranging some of Ujszászy's liaisons with leftists, including meetings with László Rajk and the Smallholder Party leader István Kovács.<sup>21</sup> Revay leaps well beyond these assertions, suggesting it was Karády's covert life, particularly her facilitation of contacts between powerful men, that advanced not only her acting career, but Allied peace efforts and even the Stalinist show trials. While these charges beggar belief, it is worth tracing the logic of Revay's fanciful notions.

Revay speculates that Karády's affair with Ujszászy began before her career took off, and it was in fact Ujszászy's connections that propelled her to prominence, incorporating her into the right circles, finding her appropriate promoters.<sup>22</sup> Further, Revay suggests it was Karády who facilitated contacts between the pro-Allied camp among the Hungarian leadership and the United States OSS through her connections in Switzerland, where she had attended school before her family returned to Budapest.<sup>23</sup> She became, Revay charges, "one of the chief string-pullers of the underground," a woman who had connections not only with Ujszászy, but Miklós Horthy Jr., the son of the Hungarian Regent, Noel Field, the infamous American double agent, and László Rajk, the renowned Hungarian Communist who later became the victim in Hungary's most notorious show trial.<sup>24</sup> She must have been a spy for the Communists, alleges Revay, as the only way she could possibly have fled Hungary in 1951, crossing "unharméd six kilometers of mined and guarded territory of the no man's land between Hungary and Austria...[with the] help of Soviet Russian

officers.”<sup>25</sup>

Numerous errors in the Revay manuscript convince the reader that the text is clearly fiction. The author describes Béla Kun as the Hungarian communist dictator of 1920 (rather than 1919), charges Hungarian Communists of “crimes” against the general population in 1924, and quotes private conversations between Ujszászy and Karády verbatim. Yet for all of its inventiveness, the document reveals a gendered trope, a Mata Hari-esque mindset that is indicative of a pervasive strain of post-war Hungarian thought. Written in late 1951 and early 1952, Revay’s work may have been an early draft of a historical thriller in a Red Scare series that never came to fruition. However, the work also came at a time during which Hungarians, particularly émigrés in the United States, sought scapegoats, people to blame for the perceived disaster of the war and the Communist takeover. Scapegoating, as Attila Pók has shown, involves the desire to assuage one’s own guilt, often for political reasons, and takes typical forms.<sup>26</sup> One form Pók does not consider is the fallen female, the siren/seductress who betrays her nation. Like the Great War’s Mata Hari, Revay constructs an image of a cunningly manipulative woman, a puppeteer of love, who uses her “feminine wiles” to tie together all of the evils that have destroyed Hungary. From her association with film industry Jews, the greedy exploiters who, as many Hungarian authors had argued in the 1930s and 40s, helped to weaken Hungary; to her ties to the well-meaning, misled patriots of the Horthy era; to her links with the party of surrender to the Communist hordes; to her friendships with those of the Left themselves — it is as if Karády is the focal point, the axis around which the vortex of Hungary’s wartime collapse revolves. She is, as Slavoj Žižek has detailed in reference to Ingrid Bergman and Roberto Rossellini, a “woman-symptom”; woman as the cause of and the embodiment of the fall of man.<sup>27</sup>

She wore no scarlet letter, but Karády’s sexuality, her primary identifier in film, became her marker during her film heyday and in early post-war narratives. Most of her roles were “grown up women” with an overt erotic flair. In his text about the myth and magic of Karády, Jenő Király comments extensively on the “wonder” of Karády’s body and screen sexuality.<sup>28</sup> But unlike Count Michael Andrassy, who criticized Karády in the early 1950s as a communist collaborator who was known to be the “biggest whore in Budapest” during the Nazi period, Király does not believe the actress to be restricted to a single so-called feminine identity.<sup>29</sup> Király points out that Karády frequently played the “active, clever, successful working woman” who was not always at the mercy of a

man. Of course, audiences did not always respond positively to these characteristics, interpreting Karády pejoratively as a lesbian man-hater.<sup>30</sup> On this point, Király and Žižek fundamentally agree: whether Karády was liberated from predominant heterosexual mores or the strictures of traditional feminine identity, her liberation was a mortal threat to man. “Carefully educated as fairies,” writes Király, “[the women Karády played] received their top-notch diplomas, and took them straight to hell,” men in tow.<sup>31</sup>

The comments of Andrásy and Király make it appear that, during the wartime and immediate post-war eras, there was an even greater congruence between the Karády of the spy narrative and Karády the film star, than in the fictional Revay account. Combined, these sources present an image of a woman who, whether loved or hated, wrecked havoc on the patriarchal and national institutions of wartime Hungary, even as she became the nation’s most desirable box office consumable. Nevertheless, as Hungary’s image makers changed, particularly after 1989, representations of Karády and her place in the nation also transitioned.

Karády has become so much a part of the Hungarian “memory” and nostalgia that her songs and films have experienced a revival in the past decades, and numerous websites devoted to her have appeared, constituting what Péter Bacsó has called a “Karády renaissance.”<sup>32</sup> Perhaps even more indicative of her continued presence was a story and doctored picture published in a 2000 issue of the daily *Magyar Nemzet* which placed the chanteuse at the side of Winston Churchill, ostensibly as his mistress on the shores of the Balaton during the summer of 1929.<sup>33</sup> The picture, which we know was fabricated (Karády would have been 18 and Churchill never visited Hungary), is a window into the pre-existing myth of Karády as singer, seductress, and spy. But something new is also implicit in this image: Karády as the social conscience of the nation, the mistress who knew which side was in the right well before the war.<sup>34</sup>

The most significant contribution to this new image was the popular 2001 feature about her titled *The Smoldering Cigarette* by Péter Bacsó. This film foregrounds an enormous part of Karády’s life that the previous spy narratives had diminished, that of Karády’s work to save Jews. While stories of Karády’s actions protecting Jews circulated even during the war and caused her to run afoul of the radical right, one did not publicize one’s pro-Jewish activities in late-1940s and early-1950s Hungary. It has taken two generations and the fall of Communism for her contributions to come to light. This film, made with significant state support, focused on the relationship between Karády and György G.

Dénes, her Jewish lyricist. Dénes' character, known in the film as Miklós Sutberger (Suti úr), is sent to do labour service on the snowy Eastern Front, likely somewhere along the Don. The film intertwines numerous well-connected figures, such as the editor of *Magyar Nemzet* and General Ujszászy, who realize the war to be lost even before the Soviet demolition of the Hungarian Second Army (after the Stalingrad breakout), and contrive to act. The plot of the movie hinges on pro-Allied and pro-Jewish themes, although the film white-washes neither Hungarian anti-Semitism (which Ujszászy shares) nor the aloofness and isolation of Hungary's aristocratic elite. Ultimately, the efforts of a spoiled but well-intentioned diva, Karády, save the life of her inspiration, the songwriter Suti, rescuing him from the Soviet advance through Ukraine. As the plot develops, the affair between Karády and Ujszászy takes center stage, paralleled by a narrative line leading toward *Operation Sparrow*. To tie the entire film together, director Bacsó gives the lyricist Suti a key role in the spy drama. At Ujszászy's behest, Suti, an idealized composite of the cosmopolitan "culture" Jews of interwar Budapest, acts as a Hungarian patriot. Ujszászy, knowing that the Germans are aware of *Operation Sparrow*, realizes that to save the Americans and himself, he needs to devise a cover story. Because Suti speaks both English and German, Ujszászy's epiphany is that Suti should act as the American Colonel who was dropped into Hungary to negotiate with Horthy. Despite his mistreatment by his countrymen — having been forced to do labour service and at one point nearly killed — Suti consents to the charade and does a great service to his country.

I view the *The Smouldering Cigarette* as a transition point, a drama that coincides with the revival of interest in Jews, Judaism, and the Jewish role in Hungarian history that characterizes the last 20 years. Karády's story is central to this transformation. Once again, she is the canvas for Hungarian national identity, in this case Hungary's *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, its coming to terms with the treatment of its Jews. Through the medium of Karády, Bacsó's feature restores the Jew both as patriot and as central to the culture of interwar and wartime Hungary. The film does not, however, fully detail Karády's relationship with the Jewish community during the years of the war. Nowhere are we shown that Karády's efforts depicted in the film to have her Jewish muse recalled from labour service in 1942, resulted in her being hauled before a court and chastised for violation of the Jewish laws. Due to this action and other outspoken efforts, filmmakers began to deny Karády roles. By 1944, she eventually quit acting, in part to protest the industry's offensive treatment of its Jews.<sup>35</sup>



These contemporary accounts of Karády's actions have recently been augmented through the initiatives of the historian Szabolcs Szita. Based on Szita's research, Yad Vashem posthumously honoured Karády as one of the "Righteous among the Nations," primarily for saving Jewish children and sheltering them through the winter of 1945 until the liberation of Hungary by Red Army troops. According to István Domonkos, who had personal interactions with the actress, Karády also assisted the Jewish actor Imre Ráday and his wife, enabling them to survive the Holocaust.<sup>36</sup> János Gömöri, one of the several Jewish youths saved by Karády, described a separate act of salvation in the early winter of 1944. Gömöri was taken from his Wesselényi Street ghetto home by the Arrow Cross, and dragged to the banks of the Danube, along with other Jewish children. Accounts indicate that Karády, possibly accompanied by Ujzászy, pulled up in a large black vehicle and managed to convince or bribe the Arrow Cross militia men not to take the freezing children on a death march or toss the children into the river, which they apparently intended to do.<sup>37</sup> Gömöri and a number of other Jewish children were sheltered in the basement of villas owned by Karády, on Városmajor út and Pasaréti út, for the duration of the war.<sup>38</sup> All of these actions were taken at great risk to her own life and property. The Gestapo arrested Karády on 18 April 1944. Whether the charge was "defeatism"; "liberalism," a code word for any purported pro-Jewish sentiment; or treason — a charge repeated, incidentally, by the Russians less than a year later — Karády languished in jail for somewhere between a week and three months.<sup>39</sup> While holding her in custody, the Germans allegedly starved her, beat her, robbed her apartment, and ultimately accused her of being a spy.<sup>40</sup> She was interred again during the Arrow Cross interregnum, in the fall of 1944, and eventually gained release through the intervention of higher authorities. Struggling through the Siege of Budapest, she survived, but like Hungary, emerged from the war psychologically scarred.

This new evaluation of Karády, based less on her appearance or screen personas and more on her actual acts, began in the early 1980s with a series of interviews and texts, and took off in 1989 with the republication of Karády's biography *How I became an actress* [Hogyan lettem színésznő], and a series of obituaries published after her February 1990 death, accelerated further with her selection as "Righteous among the Nations" in 2003.<sup>41</sup> This current iteration of Karády makes her simultaneously a symbol of what was attractive about, and right with, old Hungary and what present day, influential image-makers, including those of the post-communist state, hope new Hungary would be.<sup>42</sup> When con-

textualized this way, Karády the deadly seductress morphs into Karády the liberating angel, the saviour ascribed with traditionally masculine fighting qualities as she salvages a usable, albeit flawed, past.<sup>43</sup> Thus mythologized, and only after the fall of the communist regime she fled, she embodies a cosmopolitan, inclusive, European, progressive, and economically successful Hungary, a Hungary with agency — the ability to act positively and thrive.

My brief attempt to situate, historicize, and provide new empirical evidence concerning the mythology of Katalin Karády demonstrates that as concepts of gendered practice and Hungarian identity changed, so did interpretations of the roles, life and actions of Karády. Changing historical contexts allow us to re-read the famous figures we thought we knew and as a result, to ascribe to them new personas. Not only, we find, was Karády representative of her time, but because we want her to be, she is also reflective of the present, and even a model for the future.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> István Takács, “Karády Katalin életrajza” [The life of Katalin Karády], Színészkönyvtár, <http://www.szineszkonyvtar.hu/contents/k-o/karadyelet.htm> accessed January 5, 2010, Karády’s actual birth date is subject to debate, as this website explains. Karády also studied in Holland before returning to Hungary. A recent biography estimates, however, that she spent only about three total months studying abroad. László Pusztaszeri, *Karády és Ujszászy. Párhuzamos életrajz történelmi háttérrel* [Karády and Ujszászy, Parallel biographies against a historical backdrop] (Budapest: Kairosz Kiadó, 2008), 35.

<sup>2</sup> Jenő Király, *Karády, mítosza és mágiája* [Karády, her myth and her magic] (Budapest: Háttér Lap- és Könyvkiadó, 1989), 5.

<sup>3</sup> András Korom, “Karády, a legendák kémje” [Karády, the spy of legends], *Délmagyarország*, April 26, 2008, [http://www.delmagyar.hu/szines\\_hirek/karady\\_a\\_legendak\\_kemje/2055370/](http://www.delmagyar.hu/szines_hirek/karady_a_legendak_kemje/2055370/).

<sup>4</sup> John Cunningham, *Hungarian Cinema from Coffee House to Multiplex* (London: Wallflower Press, 2004), 42.

<sup>5</sup> The details of Karády’s flight were recently brought to light by Csaba Szabó using trial records related to Karády’s exfiltration. Csaba Szabó, “Meghalt Karády Katalinért. Adalék a Rákosi-kor ‘igazság’ szolgáltatásához” [Died for Katalin Karády. To the history of “justice” in the Rákosi era], in *Megértő történelem: Tanulmányok a hatvanéves Gyarmati György tiszteletére* [Empathic history; Studies in homage of the sixty-year-old György Gyarmati], ed. Magdolna Baráth, Gábor Bánkúti, and János M. Rainer (Budapest: L’Harmattan kiadó, 2011), 113-123.

<sup>6</sup> According to István Takács, Karády was tainted in both the eyes of the right and the left (including representative émigré communities), which was one of the reasons it took as long as it did for her to obtain an entry visa to the United States. Her family, not surprisingly, was punished for her flight. Several family members were jailed for 13 months and forced to do hard labour. They remained under police observation for over 20 years. See Takács, “Karády Katalin Életrajza.”

<sup>7</sup> In Karády’s heyday, her popularity was so great that fans formed numerous “Katalin Karády circles” throughout Hungary, see Cunningham, *Hungarian Cinema from Coffee House to Multiplex*, 44; “Smouldering Cigarette — Interview with Péter Bacsó,” *Filmhu*, January 25, 2002, <http://www.magyar.film.hu/object.5520F252-2B5F-4573-A63F-34D9FDCA8EF0.ivy>.

<sup>8</sup> András Csont, “Hamvadó cigarettavég, a múltak ütemén” [Smoldering cigarette], *Filmvilág* 2002/1, accessed October 27, 2007, <http://www.c3.hu/scripta/filmvilag/0201/csonthtm>.

<sup>9</sup> For a description of the trauma wrought by the application of the Jewish laws in film, see David Frey, “National Cinema, World Stage: A History of Hungary’s Sound Film Industry, 1929-44.” PhD diss., Columbia University, 2003, chap. 5.

<sup>10</sup> Cited in Takács, “Karády Katalin Életrajza.”

<sup>11</sup> For more on Karády as star and commercial object, see Cunningham, *Hungarian Cinema from Coffee House to Multiplex*, 44. For the star system and its ambivalence, see Jana F. Burns, *Nazi Cinema’s New Women* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 284-335.

<sup>12</sup> Approximately one-third of Karády’s films also featured Jávor.

<sup>13</sup> Pusztaszeri, *Karády és Ujszászy*, 272. See also the well-researched Wikipedia.com entry on Ujszászy. In a 1970s interview given in New York and rebroadcast during the December 2005 RTL Klub *XXI. Század* program, Karády made this claim as part of an explanation of Ujszászy’s disappearance at the hands of the Soviets. “Ujszászy István,” *Wikipedia*, accessed September 11, 2012, [http://hu.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ujsz%C3%A1szy\\_Istv%C3%A1n#cite\\_ref-0](http://hu.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ujsz%C3%A1szy_Istv%C3%A1n#cite_ref-0).

<sup>14</sup> According to a report by the head of “the Pond,” his agents had a “direct pipeline” to Hungary’s leadership via the General Staff and Hungary’s military attaché system, overseen by Ujszászy. See John V. Grombach, Chief, Coverage and Indoctrination Branch (Former Chief, Special Services Branch), “For the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2” Subject: Coverage and Indoctrination Branch (Special Service Section, formerly Special Service Branch), 4 December 1945. TAB A: Initiation, Development, and Specific Accomplishments of the Coverage and Indoctrination Branch, p. 6. National Archives and Records Administration (hereafter NARA), RG 263, Entry P 12, Series 1, Box 1.

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<sup>15</sup> Douglas Waller, *Wild Bill Donovan* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011), 195-98.

<sup>16</sup> Document 2-93, Telegram 1309-11, 14 December 1943; Document 2-112, Telegram 205-7, to Algiers, 6 January 1944; and Document 3-37, Telegram 2288-92, 3 March 1944. In Allen W. Dulles and Neal H. Petersen, *From Hitler's Doorstep: The Wartime Intelligence Reports of Allen Dulles, 1942-1945* (University Park: Penn State Press, 1996), 178, 194, 233-34.

<sup>17</sup> Document 3-114, Telegram 3320, 4 May 1944. In Dulles and Petersen, *From Hitler's Doorstep*, 283. The telegram indicates that the meeting between the Americans and Aramis (Ujszászy's OSS code name) occurred in the home of his mistress.

<sup>18</sup> *Operation Sparrow* failed because two of the key Hungarian go-betweens were double agents. See Agostino von Hassell, Sigrid MacRae, and Simone Ameskamp, *Alliance of Enemies: The Untold Story of the Secret American and German Collaboration to End World War II* (New York: Macmillan, 2006), 181-182. See also the account of one of the OSS officers involved, Colonel Florimund Duke, recounted in Russell Miller, *Behind Enemy Lines. The Oral History of Special Operations in World War II* (New York: Macmillan, 2002), 212-218.

<sup>19</sup> Memorandum dated 9 June 1944. Subject: Secret Intelligence – Turkey and Hungary. This memorandum discusses the arrest of a “COL Kadar” who is “a trusted friend of the Regent” and his girlfriend, “a popular Hungarian actress”, who is hiding “a portable wireless transmitter” delivered to her by American intelligence. Kadah or Kádár were OSS references to the chief of the 2nd Bureau (Counter-espionage), which likely was Ujszászy's successor in the Vkf-2, Gyula Kádár. Ujszászy and Kádár shared responsibilities for contacts with the OSS. The references could have confused Ujszászy and Kádár, mistakenly identifying Kádár's girlfriend as Karády. In the same folder, soon after this memorandum, appears an article on Karády and Ujszászy from the post-war period, suggesting a link between the two documents. NARA, RG 263, Entry P 12, Series 1, Box 1, Folder “Hungary.” See also Szabolcs Szita, “Ujszászy István tábornok playafutása” [The career of General István Ujszászy], *Múltunk* 2 (2006): 19-21.

<sup>20</sup> David S. Frey interview with Imre Hecht, June 18, 2007. Hecht's claim, specifically that Karády spied for the US, is supported not only by evidence cited above, but also by other circumstantial archival evidence. Tens of State Department files related to Karády are classified, and have been removed from State Department files at the National Archives and Records Administration. I made several FOIA requests and the National Archives and State Department are convinced that the files have been destroyed, while the CIA claims not to have material related to the starlet, despite the fact that I have discovered documents like the one cited in note 22.

<sup>21</sup> Korom, “Karády, a legendák kémje.”; [http://www.delmagyar.hu/szines\\_hirek/karady\\_a\\_legendak\\_kemje\\_/2055370/](http://www.delmagyar.hu/szines_hirek/karady_a_legendak_kemje_/2055370/); Szabolcs Szita, “Ujszászy

István tábornok pályafutása” [The career of General István Ujszászy], *Múltunk* 2 (2006),” 21. Szita quotes Gyula Kádár.

<sup>22</sup> Tibor Revay, “Partisan der Liebe/Partisan of Love,” dated 20 January 1952, part one, 5-6, 9-10. CREST, CIA-RDP80R01731R000500110014-4. Revay’s writings were apparently a serialized set of articles meant to be published outside of the United States. There is no evidence that Karády met Ujszászy prior to beginning acting.

<sup>23</sup> Revay, “Partisan der Liebe/Partisan of Love,” dated 27 January 1952, part two, section one, 1-2.

<sup>24</sup> Revay, “Partisan der Liebe/Partisan of Love,” dated 27 January 1952, part one, section two, 5ff.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, part one, 6 caption one. As Csaba Szabó shows, her escape was made possible not by connections with the Communists, but with the aid of an American intelligence organization. Szabó identifies it as the Counter Intelligence Corps, an espionage unit linked to US Army Military Intelligence, and as Igor Lukes has recently written, very active in Czechoslovakia and Austria in the late 1940s. I believe the CIC may have had connections to “the Pond,” the rogue US spy agency described in footnote 14 which had extensive practice extracting dissidents from Hungary, or with former Pond agents working with the CIA. See Igor Lukes, *On the Edge of the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Szabó, “Meghalt Karády Katalinért. Adalék a Rákosi-kor ‘igazság’ szolgáltatásához,” 114; Christopher Felix [James McCargar], *A Short Course in the Secret War*, 4th ed. (Lanham & New York: Madison Books, 2001), 262; Mark Stout, “The Hazards of Private Spy Operations. The Pond: Running Agents for State, War, and the CIA,” *Studies in Intelligence* 48, no. 3 (2007): 69-82. See esp. page 75, <https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/kentcsi/vol48no3/html/v48i3a07p.htm>

<sup>26</sup> Attila Pók, “Atonement and Sacrifice. Scapegoats in Modern Eastern and Central Europe,” *East European Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (Winter, 1998): 531-48.

<sup>27</sup> Slavoj Žižek, “Rossellini: Woman as Symptom of Man,” *October* 54 (Autumn, 1990): 20. Žižek goes on to discuss woman as the suicide impulse, the negation of man, an allusion extremely apt in reference to Karády. In several of her films, (*Halálos tavasz*, *Egy szív megáll*, *Hazajáró lélek*) Karády drives her co-star to contemplate suicide, take his own life, or make a decision that causes his own death.

<sup>28</sup> Király, *Karády, mítosza és mágiája*, 10-11, 17-18ff.

<sup>29</sup> NARA, RG 59, Dept of State Decimal File 1950-1954, Entry: Europe, File designation 940.40/6-451. “Catherine Karadi,” dated 4 June 1951.

<sup>30</sup> Recent accounts of Karády’s life indicate that her sexual proclivities were the subject of endless gossip, a point confirmed by the historian Peter Pastor, in conversation with the author, November 2008. See also “Katalin Karády, the Hungarian ‘femme fatale’, was born one hundred years ago,” *Hungarian Ambiance*, December 8, 2010, <http://www.hungarianambiance.com/> 2010/12/

katalin-karady-hungarian-femme-fatale.html accessed December 9, 2010.

<sup>31</sup> Király, *Karády, mítosza és mágiája*, 10.

<sup>32</sup> “Smouldering Cigarette - Interview with Péter Bacsó.” *Filmhu* (25 January 2002), [http://www.magyar.film.hu/object.5520F252-2B5F-4573-A63F-34D9FD\\_CA8EF0.ivy](http://www.magyar.film.hu/object.5520F252-2B5F-4573-A63F-34D9FD_CA8EF0.ivy) For examples of websites devoted to Karády, see <http://karadykatalin.lap.hu/#b19342222> and [http://www.mommo.hu/media/Karady\\_Katalin\\_4](http://www.mommo.hu/media/Karady_Katalin_4). Numerous websites contain clips of her movies or her songs.

<sup>33</sup> I could not locate the original article, but John Lukács discusses it in a 13 June 2001 *Budapest Sun* article titled “New Insight on Churchill’s View of Hungary,” *Budapest Sun*, June 13, 2001. Lukács declares the picture a forgery. See also Gabriel Ronay, “Hungarians go to war over legacy of Winston Churchill,” *Sunday Tribune [Ireland]* August 3, 2003, accessed July 9, 2008, <http://www.tribune.ie/archive/article/2003/aug/03/hungarians-go-to-war-over-legacy-of-winston-church/>.

<sup>34</sup> Her flight from Hungary adds to this lore, as she also knew what was right during the Rákosi era. Szabó, “Meghalt Karády Katalinért. Adalék a Rákosi-kor ‘igazság’ szolgáltatásához,” 122-23.

<sup>35</sup> Karády claimed to have kept her Jewish lawyer, hid Jews, spoken out against the Germans, and even to have walked out of a film in the middle of the production because Jewish colleagues had been fired. She was also closely connected with Pál Jávör, the film industry’s leading man from 1931 through 1943, who was married to a Jewish woman. Jávör was kicked out of the Film Chamber and banned from production ostensibly for his leftist leanings and his long-running feud with former Film Chamber President Ferenc Kiss. Undoubtedly, part of the feud and part of the reason for his expulsion from the Chamber traced to Jávör’s defense of the Jews, particularly his wife. Jávör was eventually jailed by the Arrow Cross and ultimately sent to Germany in early 1945. Karády was one of his most steadfast defenders, and she certainly suffered for it. See the 1989 edition of Katalin Karády’s autobiography, *Hogyan lettem színésznő* [How I became an actress] (Budapest: Kentaur könyvek, 1989), 193. See also Tibor Sándor, *Őrségváltás után. Zsidókérdés és filmpolitika 1938-1944* [Following the changing of the guards. The Jewish question and the politics of film 1938-1944] (Budapest: Magyar Filmintézet, 1997), 212.; László Kelecsényi, *Karády Katalin* (Budapest, 1982), 40.

<sup>36</sup> István Domonkos letter to Hungarian Auschwitz Foundation Holocaust Documentation Center, Budapest 24 February 2003. Yad Vashem Karády Dossier. I thank Irena Steinfeldt for providing me with these documents.

<sup>37</sup> János Gömöri letter to Holocaust Documentation Center, Budapest 30 September 2003, pages 1-2. Yad Vashem Karády Dossier.

<sup>38</sup> Gömöri may have meant Lepke utca (near Pasaréti).

<sup>39</sup> András Mezei, “Beszélgetés Karády Katalinnal” [Conversation with Katalin Karády] in Katalin Karády, *Hogyan lettem színésznő* [How I became an actress], 192-93. Mezei indicates the reason for Karády’s arrest was that she sang

“defeatist” songs on Hungarian Radio on 19 March. See also Gömöri, letter to Holocaust Documentation Center, 2, see esp. concerning the charge of treason.

<sup>40</sup> Korom, “Karády, a legendák kémje.” [http://www.delmagyar.hu/szines\\_hirek/karady\\_a\\_legendak\\_kemje\\_/2055370/](http://www.delmagyar.hu/szines_hirek/karady_a_legendak_kemje_/2055370/) See also the testimony of István Domonkos, who claims Karády endured a beating at the hands of the Gestapo yet did not betray the children whom she protected.

<sup>41</sup> Karády first spoke of being a “human opposed to inhumanity” in an interview with András Mezei in 1980, but the positive mythologizing took off after publication of her autobiography. András Mezei, “Megkérdeztük Karády Katalint...” [We asked Katalin Karády...], *Élet és Irodalom*, February 2, 1980.

<sup>42</sup> In 2012 alone, for example, Karády was further mythologized by a short biographical drama performed by Emese Fay titled “Budapesti epizód – monodráma Karády Katalin életéről” as part of the summer Jewish Festival, and her inclusion in an government-supported exhibit at Budapest’s Metró Galéria on “Righteous among the Nations” in Hungary titled “Emberségről példát...” Numerous singers has been remaking her music as well.

<sup>43</sup> Part of the reconsideration of Karády includes acknowledgement of her selfish “diva” side, her representation of capitalist materialism as a high-earning, high-living, hard-to-control star. See, for example, the catalogue associated with the 2003 Ernst Museum [Budapest] exhibit *Dívák, primadonnák, színésznők*, [Divas, primadonnas, actresses], edited by Tamás Gajdó.

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**Interview**

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